

## **Factors Affecting Performance**

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### **Introduction:**

Anxiety can be described in many ways, one is, “a negative emotional state with feelings of nervousness, worry and apprehension associated with activation or arousal of the body” (Weinberg and Gould 1995) It is a natural part of performing, you become excited, your heart beats faster and your muscles tense. You respire and may even become light headed and shaky – these feeling do not necessarily ruin performance but when focused upon they can either have a positive or negative impact upon performance.

Due to netball not being as publicised as other major sports like football, I don't think there is a chance for anxiety to come in to play as much. There isn't a vast amount of money involved and player's careers do not depend upon every match. However when I play netball I find that some situations can provoke anxiety in myself. For example competition for positions, spectators and bad past experiences with certain teams.

When I am nervous about an important match or am put against a more experienced player I tend to make bad passes, incorrect judgements and silly mistakes, unless I am concentrating completely. This then reduces my concentration and I will focus upon the wrong cues, and miss vital opportunities. Robert Nideffer (1976) has studied the role of anxiety in sport and my experiences relate to his findings – with increased arousal I narrow my attention field resulting in a worsened performance.

Following my results from Eysenck's Personality Inventory (1952) I have found out that I am both predominantly extrovert and neurotic. These findings tell me that I am outgoing, active, impulsive and sociable – all traits that can be used to my advantage when playing sport. Eysenck said that extroverts were more attracted to action orientated sports, which explains to my enjoyment gained from playing netball. It also indicates that I can feel impulsive and sometimes even aggressive during a vital match. The humanistic perspective explains my enjoyment for sport because I am quite good at it so I seek more of it – it gives me a thrill to know that I am needed there to be part of a team.

When looking at Yerkes Dodson Law of the Inverted U Hypothesis I can see that I am an extrovert and I need to be excited more before a game than an introvert would be – I know this is true as it takes a lot to psych me up during a netball game.

In a game of netball the skills would be described on this arousal graph as level 2 – high arousal in less fine skills (as in a gross motor skill like a netball pass), requiring strength, endurance and speed. This is because higher arousal levels ensure that the muscles are in an alert state ready for action.

### ***Diagram***

However I must be careful as too much arousal has a hyperactive effect on me. Elite performers can cope with high levels of arousal before their performance deteriorates. This links with Hull's drive theory but in need more experience and practice before I reach that level.

diagram

McGrath (1974) looked at the multidimensional approach which detailed the tolerance limit of ones daily function and that stimulation might be perceived as pain at extreme levels. He also concluded that what one person might find stressful would be challenging and exciting to another. I often find that I will look upon an important match as exciting whereas others will find it daunting and scary. Although I do find

that when I get negative feedback from teammates my anxiety levels rise quickly, this leads to distress where I become unfocused and frustrated.

Factors such as seeing my team winning and positive feedback from my coach help me to reach my optimum arousal resulting in a more dominant response. This dominant response is dictated by experience and practice and Cattrell (68) calls the worry that people have when they are being observed “evaluation apprehension”. This phenomena is called ‘drive theory’ by Zajonk who focused on how performance changes when people are put in front of an audience. He noticed a clear difference between performing alone and in front of an audience. Some improve whilst the performance of others deteriorated.

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### Application To Performance:

I want to overcome these problems by using a cognitive stress management technique called goal setting. It involves providing goals for yourself to achieve, this both motivates and focuses attention away from the stress of competition and onto something achievable. They can be outcome related or performance related.

The use of goals should be: Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Time related

Accepted by the performer

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. By setting goals, you will also raise your self-confidence, as you recognize your ability and competence in achieving the goals that you have set. The process of achieving goals and seeing this achievement gives you confidence that you will be able to achieve higher and more difficult goals. Failure to meet goals does not matter as long as you learn from it and they minimise the chance of the player being distracted in his training and practice.

There are three distinct types of goals.

1. **Subjective goals** - focus on getting fit or doing your best. These goals are general and provide no definite target.
2. **Performance goals** - focus on improvements relative to one's own past performances. Performance goal setting has been clearly shown to improve performance. Difficult goals are more effective in enhancing performance than easy goals and explicit ones are more effective than general 'do your best' ones.
3. **Outcome goals** - focus on making a team or winning a competition. These goals focus on the results of a contest, a goal over which players have at best only partial control - they may put in their best-ever effort and yet fail to achieve their aim.

*My experiment:*

I chose to focus upon 'performance goals' in my experiment and came to the conclusion that due to my position as centre in netball it would be based upon centre passes. My goal will be to make at least 10 successful centre passes in my next game. First of all I must play a game to compare to my game with the set goals.

## Conclusion:

From looking at my results I can see that it was beneficial to my performance to have set goals. It helped to take my mind off the anxiety that builds up, however I did feel that because I was so focused upon this one part of my game I started neglect other parts. I think I would rectify this by setting more goals for other parts of my game. I will also have to be careful in future not to set unrealistic goals as it may knock my confidence.

It is important that you recognise that you are responsible for your own anxiety levels. Very often they are a product of the way that you think. Learn to monitor your anxiety levels and adjust them if you need more or less.



## Bibliography:

<http://www.mindtools.com/goalsett.html>

[http://home.austarnet.com.au/coaching/cole\\_g.html](http://home.austarnet.com.au/coaching/cole_g.html)

*Your physical anxiety triggers negative thoughts, which leads to more physical anxiety – these distractions keep you from organising your thoughts and suddenly you cant solve simple programmes or keep your eye on the ball.*

*In contrast to fear, which is a realistic reaction to actual danger, anxiety is generally related to an unconscious threat. It can be in many forms, including:*

- *causes of personal harm*
- *threats to self harm*
- *creation of uncertainty or fear of unknown*
- *creation of frustration*
- *creation of pressure*

*All form a concern over lack of control: firstly, the desire to always be thoroughly competent. This is unrealistic because you only achieve competence at a new level by making mistakes. Everybody has bad days and makes mistakes. One of the benefits of training with better athletes is that you can see them making mistakes and having bad days too. Secondly, the belief that external factors cause all misfortune. Often negative events can be caused by your own negative attitudes. Similarly your own negative attitudes can cause you to view neutral events negatively. Another athlete might find something positive in something you view as a problem. Thirdly, the desire that events should always turn out the way that you want them to and people should always do what you want. Other people have their own agendas and do what they want to do. Finally, the belief that everything that has happened in the past will inevitably condition and control what has happened in the future. Very often things can be improved or changed if you try hard enough, or look at things in a different way.*

*In this assignment I plan to study my own anxiety levels during a game of netball and see how they affect my performance by conducting an experiment. Then I will test a method of controlling my anxiety and see if it improves my performance.*