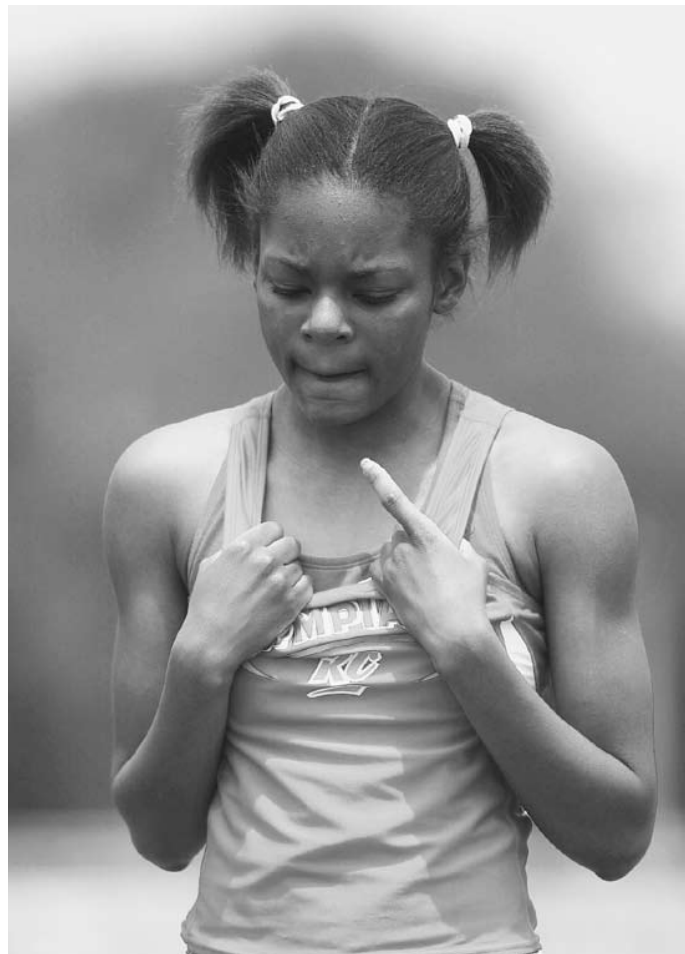


# 7

## *Self-Talk*



***After reading this chapter you should be able to***

- understand what self-talk is and how it works;
- explain eight strategies to program positive thinking;
- describe the types of negative thinking used by your internal critic;
- explain how to optimize self-talk; and
- understand how to accomplish the three phases of developing athletes' smart-talk skills: education, acquisition, and implementation.

**S**elf-talk is the steady stream of thoughts and internal dialogue in our minds. Used purposefully, it can be a versatile and powerful technique for improving performance. Although self-talk occurs constantly, it becomes more extensive—for coaches and athletes—in more important situations, so we tend to engage in abundant self-talk in our most important competitions. Here is a collegiate runner's self-talk in preparation for an important competition (notice the blend of positive and negative thoughts):

I am standing in the paddock where everyone must stand thirty minutes prior to their race without any warm-ups on. There are 40,000 spectators surrounding the track and 15,000 athletes competing, including most of the nation's best collegians. The temperature is cold, about 40 degrees, the wind is blowing, and sprinkles are beginning to fall. I am extremely excited to be at such a big meet. At the same time, I have butterflies and nervous feelings. I also feel lots of anxiety. I am tired of waiting. I want to get out there and run. Positive as well as negative thoughts run through my mind. There are so many people watching. It is so cold. The wind is blowing strong. The competition looks fast and strong. Everyone has to run in these conditions. I need to relax. All I can ask is to do the best I can. I am prepared to run. I know I can run a fast leg. . . . I need to run well so I don't let my teammates down. This is our biggest meet next to nationals. . . . Why do we have to stand for half an hour? I'm not going to be loose. Hey, I can't control those things—let them go. If we don't qualify for nationals, it does not mean we will never qualify. If I don't run as fast as I am expected, it is hardly the end of the world. All I can do is give my best. If we don't run well in this relay, it doesn't mean we are a bad relay team.

Did you notice the two distinct voices going back and forth as this runner waited to compete? One voice is rational and supportive, and it will help the athlete stay positive to perform her best. The other voice is the **critic**, our self-doubting side that focuses on negatives and worries about performing poorly. To make self-talk work for you and your athletes, you want to increase positive thoughts and decrease negative thoughts. This chapter shows you how to design self-talk programs to do just that. You and your athletes can master your own thoughts and use your improved competitive mind-set to perform better.

## What Is Self-Talk?

Human beings think almost every waking moment. Have you ever tried to turn off your thoughts? Try it! For the next 30 seconds, try to think about absolutely nothing. Eliminate all thoughts and empty your

mind of all conscious activity. How did you do? Was it tougher than you thought? Most of us find this a virtually impossible task. Any effort to empty the mind usually prompts a flood of thoughts to rush in and fill the void, often causing us to think about the worst possible things at the most inopportune times. This continuous stream of thoughts, positive or negative, is self-talk, and it plays an important role in determining mood and emotions. Have you noticed how much happier you feel when the sun is shining than you do on gloomy days? The external environment plays a big role in altering your mood and emotions. But your internal environment—what's in your head—often influences your mood even more.

As you might expect, then, self-talk can affect sport performance. The more a thought gets repeated, the more automatic it becomes. Both positive and negative thoughts can be repeated enough to become **beliefs**. Playing in front of a large, hostile crowd on the road may prompt you to feel anxious because you want your team to play well, impress these fans, and show them you're a top coach. If this worry is repeated often, it may lead to a belief that causes you to feel anxious whenever your team plays in front of large road crowds, even though you may no longer be aware of specific thoughts that trigger your anxiety. Your athletes can experience the same process—thoughts (positive or negative) get automated and lead to beliefs. Recall from chapter 3 that flow is an almost magical state of concentration that results in complete absorption in the game. Athletes describe it as being "in the zone" or completely caught up in the activity without interference from outside thoughts. Notice the differences between positive and negative self-talk in table 7.1. Positive self-talk leads to a flow mind-set in which athletes excel. Negative self-talk leads to a choking mind-set in which irrational thoughts cause athletes to underachieve.

## How Self-Talk Works

Most coaches and athletes believe that emotions and behavior are the products of the situations in which they compete. Put yourself in the following situations and think about how much you feel the situation determines your emotions and behavior: You call a blitz on third and long, and your opponent completes a long pass for the winning touchdown. Your best player misses a free throw with three seconds to go, and your team loses the state title by one point. Your favorite athlete pulls a hamstring that threatens to keep her out of the Olympics after training with you for seven years.

TABLE 7.1

### Positive Versus Negative Self-Talk

Positive	Negative
positive and optimistic	negative and pessimistic
logical, rational, and productive	illogical, irrational, and unproductive
boosts confidence	deflates confidence
heightens focus/concentration on the task at hand	reduces focus and increases distractions
focuses on the present	focuses on the past or future
stimulates optimal arousal where energy is high, positive, and process-oriented	stimulates under- or overarousal
motivates you to push your limits	motivates you to give up easily
appraises problems as a challenge or opportunity	appraises problems as threats to be eliminated
attributes (credits) success to replicable internal factors	attributes success to external factors that are not replicable
attributes (blames) failure to surmountable factors	attributes failure to insurmountable factors
alleviates stress	promotes stress
minimal process-oriented thinking	extensive product-oriented thinking
performance enhancing	performance debilitating

Each situation represents a unique competitive challenge, but does it automatically dictate stress or confidence, choking or flow? No. In the ABCs of self-talk (Ellis, 1996), the situation represents A, the **activating event**. This is whatever happens to you or your athletes, such as needing to make a critical defensive adjustment or having to defend against a potentially game-winning penalty kick in the state championship. The C represents the consequences—how you feel or what you do in response to the situation. In the example shown in figure 7.1, negative consequences might include emotions (e.g., stress, anxiety) and disruptive behaviors (e.g., poor concentration in seeing the kick come off the opponent's foot and slow reaction to the ball). Beneficial consequences would include positive emotions (challenge, excitement) and helpful behaviors (good concentration, anticipation, quick reaction, and a secure trap).

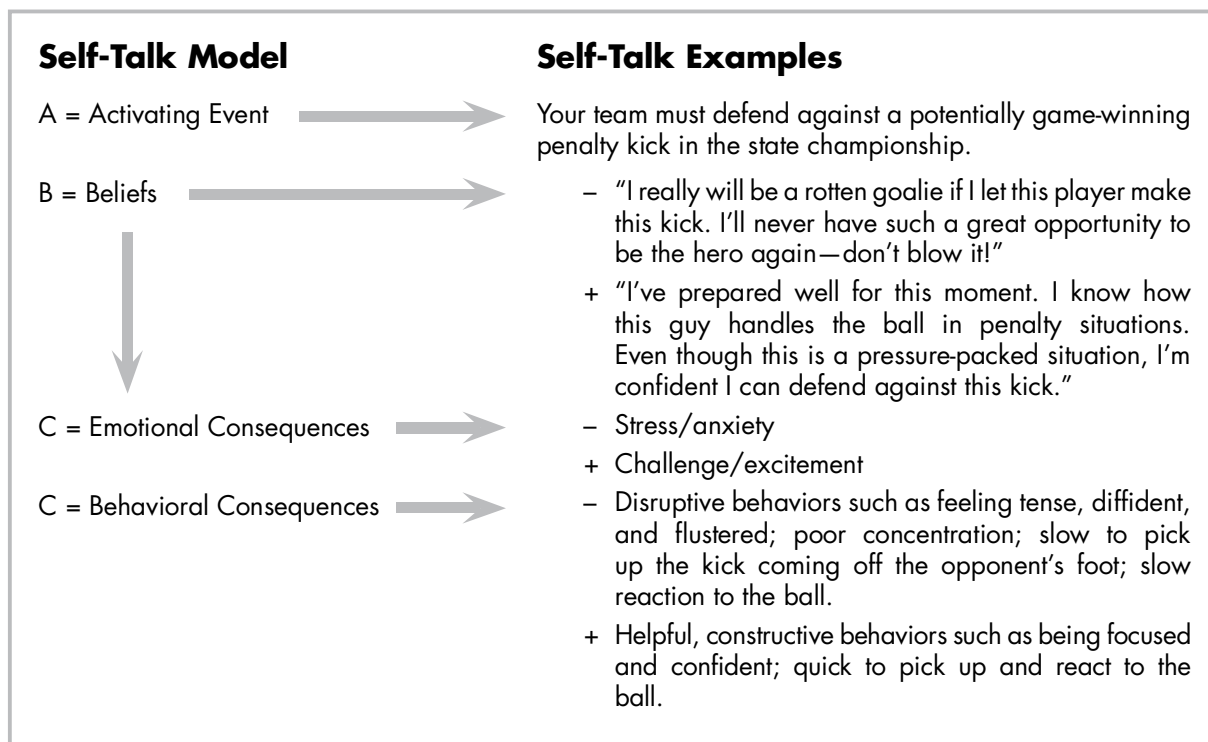
Finally, the B in the figure represents your beliefs about the situation, or what you are thinking between points A and C. This is your interpretation of the situation, and it determines your emotions and behavior to a much greater extent than does the situation itself. Positive thoughts ("I've prepared well for this moment. I know how this guy kicks the ball in pen-

alty situations. Despite the pressure, I'm confident I can defend against this kick.") should lead the athlete to feel positive emotions and perform skillfully.

Negative thoughts, on the other hand, can lead to unproductive consequences. Negative thinking ("This is their best shooter—I don't stand a chance against him") will probably prompt negative emotions, leading to tense muscles and slowed reaction. Destructive thoughts ("No one will think I'm as good a goalie as Boggs if I let them score here") will probably cause different unproductive emotions, such as anger or frustration, which can lead to tunnel vision and reduced anticipation. The basic principle of self-talk is that we can't always control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to uncontrollable events. You and your athletes can do this by learning self-talk skills.

### Positive Versus Negative Thinking

To enhance self-talk, it is important that you fully understand positive thought patterns that facilitate performance and how they compare with negative thought patterns that impair it.



**FIGURE 7.1** The ABC model of self-talk.

## Positive Thought Patterns

Positive thought patterns help create a flow mindset by boosting confidence, maintaining an optimistic attitude, promoting concentration at crucial moments, enhancing motivation to push your limits, creating an optimal level of arousal, and ensuring poise and mental toughness when confronting failure or adversity. To develop these positive thought patterns, which we term **smart-talk**, you must become familiar with eight strategies that help us use self-talk proactively and effectively. We call these the "smart-talk commandments":

- *Be an optimist, not a pessimist.* Self-talk is always a choice—it can be positive or negative. Be a good role model for your athletes and focus on the positives in every situation. Concentrate on what your athletes can do rather than what they can't. Emphasize your athletes' strengths, correct their weaknesses, and help them see every success as a building block to reaching longer-term objectives. Smart-talk always favors the optimistic choice.

- *Remain realistic and objective.* Self-talk must be more than just "thinking positively" in a way that confuses reality with daydreams. Quickly translate dreams and visions into specific goals and action plans. Not

everyone will be an Olympic athlete, but with careful planning, realistic goals can be achieved. Smart-talk keeps our thoughts well grounded and realistic.

- *Focus on the present, not the past or future.* We perform better and enjoy it more when our attention is focused totally in the present (see chapter 3). Past failures cannot be changed, and we cannot guarantee future victories, such as hitting two homers in the championship game next week. The present is the only time that any of us can act. Athletes who fixate on a poor play or a missed opportunity can become so distracted or panicked that they make more mistakes. Smart-talk forgets the "if only's" and "what if's" and concentrates on staying in the moment and enjoying the here and now.

- *Appraise problems as challenges rather than threats.* Athletes who view problems as challenges bring out the best in themselves; they remain motivated and perform up to their capabilities. Help athletes avoid seeing problems as threats, so that they don't become consumed with avoiding failure, feel stressed out, and perform poorly. With your team down 6 points with 54 seconds to go, you want them to view the situation as a challenge and be motivated to go all out. Smart-talk casts problems as challenges rather than threats, helping athletes maintain an optimistic, competitive outlook.

- *View successes as replicable and failures as surmountable.* When athletes believe that their success is due to ability and effort, rather than luck, they see the success as replicable (something they can do again). Likewise, help athletes attribute failure to factors they can control, such as effort level (“I’ll work harder next practice”), skill development (“I can learn to read defenders better”), and mental preparation (“next time I’ll improve my focus”). Smart-talk focuses on replicable reasons for success and surmountable causes of failure.

- *Concentrate on process, not product.* Focus self-talk on process goals—hard work, mental preparation, skill and strategy development—that help us achieve desired product goals. With the game riding on his hitting both one-and-one free throws, Matt uses the time-out designed to ice him to focus instead on relaxing and going through his preshot routine using imagery. At the line, Matt faithfully follows his routine, concentrates only on “a good, high release point and a strong follow-through,” and calmly hits both shots to win the championship. Smart-talk focuses on process, secure in the knowledge that as skills improve, so do athletes’ and teams’ chances of attaining valued product goals such as winning.

- *Concentrate on things you can control.* This may be the most important aspect of self-talk. We create stress for ourselves by trying to change people and events beyond our control, but when we focus self-talk on things that can be controlled, our emotions and behavior remain positive and constructive. We cannot control an opponent’s behavior and performance, but we *can* control our own. We cannot control officials’ decisions, playing conditions, or luck, but we *can* control how we react to these situations. Smart-talk keeps self-talk focused on what you can control rather than what you can’t.

- *Separate your performance from your self-worth.* Your worth as a human being has nothing to do with how you perform as a coach or an athlete. It has everything to do with who you are, particularly your values. Help your athletes see that they are unique human beings with their own gifts to offer the world, regardless of their sport performance, and apply this view to yourself as well. Every coach was a worthwhile human being before starting to coach and will remain worthwhile long after hanging up the whistle. Smart-talk reminds us that we are not our behavior or performance—our self-worth is innate, not earned.

## Negative Thought Patterns

Negative thought patterns interfere with athletes’ flow mind-set and create a failure mentality by deflating confidence, promoting pessimism, reducing concen-

tration and motivation, disrupting optimal arousal, and weakening the mental toughness needed to deal with failure or adversity. To recognize and change negative thought patterns, you must become familiar with five types of distorted thinking and five common **irrational beliefs** that your inner critic uses to promote negative thinking and a failure mind-set.

### The Critic

“The critic” is the term that psychologist Eugene Sagan used to describe the inner voice that attacks and judges you (McKay & Fanning 1992). **The critic** blames you when things go wrong and negatively compares you to others; sets impossible standards of perfection, then blasts you for falling short; and maintains an album of your failures but ignores your successes. The critic has your life planned out in detail and castigates you whenever you break one of the unwritten rules you’re supposed to live by. The critic calls you names (*stupid, untalented, slacker, weak, slow, selfish*) and tells you they’re true; reads others’ minds and tells you they consider you wanting because they are bored, frustrated, threatened, or unhappy around you; and exaggerates the size and impact of your weaknesses. If you miss an easy shot, the critic says, “A good player never misses a shot like that!” And the critic sometimes uses your values against you: “Great players always play hurt,” the critic says, even though it’s not true.

In short, the critic is the most negative part of each of us, and it hits you where it hurts, where your self-esteem is low. To develop effective smart-talk, then, we must be able to silence the critic and focus on more positive thought patterns. The next two sections expose some of the critic’s weapons—distorted thinking and irrational beliefs.

### Distorted Thinking

**Distorted thinking** involves drawing incorrect inferences based on inadequate or incorrect information, or failing to separate fantasy from reality (Beck 1976). Five common types of distorted thinking are catastrophizing, overgeneralization, blaming, “mustification,” and polarized thinking. As you read about each, think about whether it affects your own or your athletes’ thought patterns and about what **counterarguments** might help.

- **Catastrophizing** means expecting the worst and exaggerating the consequences of real or imagined negative events. To counter catastrophizing, ask yourself what really is the worst thing that can happen in this situation. Generally, even though your worst-case scenario may not be pleasant, it’s

something that you've lived through before and can again if necessary.

- **Overgeneralization** is the process of erroneously forming conclusions based on an isolated incident while ignoring broader facts. For example, a basketball player who misses a crucial free throw may in the heat of the moment come to believe that she chokes under pressure, even if in fact she has hit two game-winning shots for every one she has missed. To counter overgeneralization, help your athletes take the time to accurately assess the big picture and understand where this event fits into the larger scheme of things. You might also look at statistics over an extended time (e.g., a season) or even at game footage to see if the generalization is supported by facts.

- **Blaming** involves holding others responsible for negative events in your life. Blamers have myriad excuses for their failings and shortcomings, and they lay blame on coaches, players, parents, and officials. Blaming others lessens the threat of failure, but it also allows little hope for future success. To counter this distortion, help your athletes recognize that they must accept the blame for failure in order to make positive changes that will bring more success next time. You can model this as a coach as well. Clearly, coaches must accept their fair share of the blame for their athletes' or team's failures, and you can use this as a chance to view the causes of failure as surmountable, then concentrate on what you can do to be more successful in the future.

- **Mustification** involves one of two beliefs: that life should be lived according to a rigid set of rules that everyone must or should follow without deviation, or that things in your life *have* to be the way you want them to be. Athletes who take this approach usually end up feeling frustrated, angry, or indignant when things don't go their way. To counter "must thinking," help athletes recognize that life is often unfair and that we simply have to accept this fact and make the best of it. Model this attitude by not escalating your personal preferences into musts. Of course you would prefer that your team carry its high quality of play in practice this week over to the conference tournament tomorrow, but don't feel that the team *must* be at its best, because teams often underachieve and encounter adversity in major competitions.

- **Polarized thinking** frames things in all-or-nothing terms—black or white, good or bad. Polarized thinkers take extreme positions and give themselves little room to be human and make mistakes. They see themselves as either stars or flops, and this self-labeling in absolute terms can directly affect performance. To counter this distortion, help athletes

recognize that there is much gray in the world and that it is okay to adopt a more pragmatic position somewhere between the extremes.

Which of these types of distorted thinking do you see in your own self-talk or that of your athletes? Use counterarguments to reduce or eliminate them. The next section examines how irrational beliefs can fuel the critic and contribute to negative emotions and subpar performance.

### *Irrational Beliefs*

Irrational beliefs can be detrimental to your own and your athletes' performance. In fact, they may be at the core of anxiety, depression, and stress (Ellis, 1996), so it is important to learn to recognize and reframe them. Irrational beliefs involve cognitive distortion—in the form of unsound evidence and questionable logic—but are even more highly seductive because they are also based on partial fact. **Reframing** often requires intense debate to convince athletes of the irrational nature of their thinking. Let's look at five irrational beliefs detrimental to sport performance:

- **Perfectionism.** "I should be thoroughly competent in every aspect of my game at all times, never have ups and downs or make mistakes." How many flawed game plans, poor adjustments, or faulty decisions did John Wooden make in coaching UCLA to 10 national championships in 12 years? How many turnovers, defensive lapses, and missed shots did Michael Jordan have in his Hall-of-Fame career? How many times did Babe Ruth strike out? Champions expect mistakes and failure, and they are committed to learning from them without fearing them. John Wooden believes the team that makes the most mistakes usually wins, because aggressiveness prompts mistakes but also is key to winning. Help your athletes develop excellence thinking, where criticism is used to learn and improve, and self-esteem is based on performing up to one's capabilities, not on winning. Use these counterarguments to reframe perfectionist thoughts:

- Mistakes are a normal part of learning. Only performers who are content not to get better can avoid making mistakes.
- Mistakes are stepping stones to future success.
- The world's best performers make just as many mistakes as you do; they are just more subtle and harder to notice.
- Don't fear your mistakes—learn from them. It's better to be aggressive and accept mistakes as the price of improving than to stagnate because you're afraid to make mistakes.
- Strive to keep your self-talk focused on excellence, not perfectionism.

- **Fear of failure.** “I’m worried my team won’t play well today.” “I’m afraid I won’t make this shot.” “We must win this tournament.” Whenever you or your athletes say such things, you fall victim to an irrational fear of failure. Some fear of failure is normal, but when your concern about failing overwhelms your enthusiasm to succeed, it is irrational. Use these counterarguments to reframe your thoughts:

- When you say something must occur, you really mean that you won’t be able to endure if it does not happen. In fact, while an undesired outcome might be inconvenient or even unpleasant, it’s not beyond endurance.
- Everyone plays poorly sometimes, but playing poorly does not leave you without friends, give you a life-threatening disease, or ruin your love life.
- What is the worst thing that can happen? It may not be pleasant, but you’ve probably already survived something similar before.

- **Social approval.** “I must win the approval of others and impress everyone who sees me perform.” “I can’t face my players if this play doesn’t work.” “They won’t think I’m a good athlete if I can’t shut my opponent down.” Do you recognize these thoughts in yourself or your athletes? Everyone wants social approval, but when coaches and athletes overfocus on pleasing others or fearing disapproval, their desire has become irrational. Use these counterarguments to reframe your thoughts:

- You can’t control what others think or how they behave.
- People can find fault even with Hall of Famers. Critics have called Joe Torre too laid-back, Phil Jackson too touchy-feely, and Vince Lombardi too hard-nosed. If people can pick at the greatest coaches in history, they can find fault with anybody.
- Accept the fact that what others think about you can’t hurt you.
- Please yourself and have fun coaching or performing. Make sure you can feel good about facing the person you see in the mirror every morning.

- **Equity.** “Life should be fair, and if I diligently work at my craft, I should improve, play well, and get the rewards I deserve.” Coaches and athletes who irrationally believe that everything in life should be fair make statements such as, “We should be improving more with all the hard work we’re putting in,” “It’s unfair for a bad call to cost us this game,” or “It’s not right that one bad race cost Jill a chance at the state finals.” Wanting equity is normal, but it becomes irrational when we insist that life always be fair and follow our preferences. Use these counterarguments to reframe your thoughts:

- Life is often unfair.
- Improvement is not steady or predictable. Quality of performance tends to spurt, oscillate, and plateau. Even if improvement is not visible, you are often laying the groundwork for future growth.
- Forget about what you can’t control and concentrate on doing your best on what you can control. Persistence does pay off! Inequities usually even out in the long run.

- **Social comparison.** “The behavior and performance of other competitors is important to me and can destroy my game.” Social comparison is one of the most insidious irrational beliefs in sport, and it is operative in comments such as, “We never play well against this team,” “They really put the pressure on us with that big inning,” or “Winning is the only thing that matters.” Social comparison places too much importance on largely uncontrollable outcomes, such as winning and outperforming others, rather than concentrating on controllable factors, such as playing your best. Use these counterarguments to reframe your thoughts:

- Winning is ability-limited. You often can’t win even if you play your best. You should have no regrets if you’ve made your best effort and performed up to your capabilities.
- The real goal in sport and life is to pursue excellence by making the most of the talent you have.
- You have no control over how others perform, nor can they control your performance unless you let them. Concentrate on playing your best and sticking with your game plan.

## Optimizing Self-Talk

Making your self-talk more positive can improve your performance, and the process of optimizing self-talk is relatively simple. Athletes must first develop a solid understanding of their current self-talk patterns (both positive and negative), then use a variety of strategies to proactively increase the quantity and quality of their positive thoughts. Finally, they must correct any remaining negative thoughts. Let’s briefly review each of these steps.

### Heighten Awareness of Current Self-Talk Patterns

Athletes can choose from a number of strategies to become more aware of their self-talk patterns. Possibilities include imagery recall of good and bad performances, **negative thought counts** in practice, and keeping postpractice and competition logs.

### *Imagery Recall of Good and Bad Performances*

Ask athletes to use imagery to recall a competition in which they played very well. After they reexperience this successful competition for several minutes, ask them to write down specific thoughts they had during that performance—that is, self-talk they used to help themselves succeed. Then repeat the process using a poor performance. After athletes have recorded their thought patterns from both good and bad experiences, have them compare the two lists and identify positive and negative self-talk patterns that most affect their performance.

### *Negative Thought Counts*

Another way to become more aware of self-talk patterns is to count your negative thoughts. Some athletes find this more enlightening than examining their self-talk patterns. The best way to conduct a practice-related negative thought count is to video-record it and play it back to stimulate athletes' recall of their negative thoughts. Some coaches and athletes, however, need to conduct their negative thought count for an entire day because problems in daily life intrude on their sport performance. To perform an all-day count, we suggest putting a number of paper clips, pennies, or sunflower seeds in a pants pocket. Each time you catch yourself using a negative thought, move one item to a different pocket. Totals for athletes will vary based on how vigilant and picky they are (we have seen counts range from 5 to 150), so it is unimportant how their counts compare with each other. What matters is whether negative thoughts decrease with the use of smart-talk.

### *Postpractice and Competition Logs*

Athletes can probably best identify their sport-related patterns of self-talk by completing logs after practice and competition. Postpractice logs can be kept daily, several days a week, or occasionally, when you want to highlight certain situations in which athletes need to control their thoughts. Competitive logs can be completed after every competition or only after selected ones. You can have athletes start by completing the Self-Talk Log Form (figure 7.2) for a few practices and at least one competition. Have athletes select up to three positive and three negative situations from each practice or competition. A positive situation is any event in which athletes execute correctly, show improvement, demonstrate team unity and cohesion, or have fun. In the log, athletes briefly describe each situation, highlighting its positive nature, then record a predominant positive emotion for each situation (e.g., happiness, satisfaction, excitement,

or pride). Next, they identify and record the specific positive thoughts they recall. In learning a new play, an athlete's thoughts might include, "I got it! My hard work paid off. I'm excited to try it against our rival next week."

Next, athletes repeat the process for up to three negative situations, in practice or competition, in which they or the team played poorly and experienced negative emotions. They briefly describe each negative situation, record their predominant negative emotion for each one (e.g., sadness, dissatisfaction, anxiety, anger, or embarrassment), and identify the specific negative thoughts they had during the experience.

If athletes have trouble getting an accurate overall picture of the practice or competition by assessing only individual positive and negative situations, encourage them to record an overall **positive mental attitude** (PMA) score for each day. Rate PMA from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most negative day of your life, 5 an average day, and 10 the most positive day of your life. The PMA score should represent the quality of the overall day across a number of situations. It reflects one's overall mind-set. Now that you understand the first step in optimizing self-talk—developing awareness of self-talk patterns—let's look at how to use this information to program positive thoughts.

### **Program Positive Thoughts**

Most athletes can make significant changes in their self-talk by focusing on positive thoughts and repeating them frequently. This can be done by **programming** positive thoughts, and athletes can use this mental training tool to increase confidence, improve concentration and focus, enhance motivation, control stress, and, of course, perform optimally.

One way athletes can proactively program positive thoughts is to use **positive affirmations**, team mottos, and motivational slogans to remind themselves of their skills and abilities: "I'm a talented athlete with the skills to get the job done." As a coach, you can use a positive affirmation, motto, or slogan (e.g., "Footwork is the key to success!") to focus players' attention on a key team goal for a practice or competition. Or you can use a slogan on an ongoing basis to emphasize a characteristic or goal of the team: "Suffocating defense!" or "Tradition never graduates." Another way to program positive thoughts is to use **cue words**, quick reminders (often closely linked to goals) of how you want to focus your thoughts at a particular time. Cue words help trigger automatic responses. They can be used with mental skills such as relaxation (e.g., "relax"), concentration



# Self-Talk Log

**Daily PMA** \_\_\_\_\_ **Day** \_\_\_\_\_

Positive Situations	Predominant Emotions	Positive Thoughts	Times Script Read or Played
1.			1.
			2.
			3.
			4.
			5.
			6.
Negative Situations	Predominant Emotions	Negative Thoughts	Counterarguments
1.			
2.			
3.			

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.2 Athletes can use a log form such as this one to keep track of their positive and negative thoughts.**

### ***General Self-Talk Script From a High School Volleyball Player***

I like school because of the opportunity it gives me to learn. I learn things that will help me in my job and in other areas of life. Because I have had these experiences, I know I will be successful. When I am having problems, I know I have great friends to help me out. They care about me and want me to succeed. I like to be with my friends, but I also like spending time alone—I am my best friend. This time by myself gives me a chance to relax and enjoy life, not stressing out about school or who to impress. I don't need to impress anybody because I like the way I am.

I like to go to weights because they make me feel good and strong. I know they will help me be a better volleyball player in the fall. Hard work pays off! If I work hard, I will be successful and have fun. I love the way I feel after a hard-fought match, knowing I gave it my all. When I get tired during practice or during a match, I want to push harder because I will gain more from it and will be a good example to my teammates. I am a good example and constantly try to help my younger teammates.

I am an assertive person. I have no need to be shy and quiet. I have confidence that people want to know what I have to say and what I think. My opinion or input is important because I am an intelligent person and everyone knows that.

I have time to get everything done because I have the capability to manage my time. My life is very busy because I can handle it. I like being busy and accomplishing many things because it makes me a better, well-rounded person.

("one play at a time"), and confidence ("we play well every time we take the floor"). Encourage your athletes also to develop performance-related cue words that focus attention on aspects of technique ("smooth tempo") and strategy ("stick with what's working") to promote automated execution.

While motivational slogans and cue words are helpful, we believe the best way to program positive self-talk is to develop a **self-talk script** that can be read or played four or five times a day. Scripts can be quite short (one or two sentences) or somewhat longer (up to 3–5 minutes), and they often include positive affirmations and cue words along with other types of positive thoughts. Scripts can be general, for use in a variety of situations, or highly specific, for a particular game or a specific purpose such as prepractice readiness. We focus here on developing a general self-talk script, but you can customize self-talk scripts to reduce stress, heighten concentration, adjust arousal, increase motivation, enhance self-confidence, or perform optimally. To develop a general script, follow these steps: Decide the purposes of your script; identify specific thoughts to include for each purpose; arrange the thoughts to facilitate flow and strengthen the impact of each section; arrange the sections to create the best overall flow and impact; and develop a catchy introduction and a powerful conclusion.

To walk your athletes through these steps, have them use the Smart-Talk Script Development Form (figure 7.3) and the Purposes and Thoughts for Smart-Talk Scripts handout (figure 7.4). Athletes should identify the purposes from the handout (section 1) that they want to include in their script and write them in separate sections on the blank form. Next, for each purpose, they write specific thoughts that capture its essence (the handout suggests specific thoughts, affirmations, and counterarguments, but athletes can also use their own or borrow from song lyrics or famous quotes). Athletes then arrange the specific thoughts for each section to achieve optimal flow, placing the most powerful ideas first or last to maximize their impact. They can place numbers in the parentheses before each thought to reflect their order in the script. Now athletes should arrange the overall sections, putting the most powerful purposes first and last, and placing numbers in the parentheses before each purpose to indicate final order.

The next step is to develop an effective introduction and conclusion. Both should be short, powerful, and memorable. Introductions might include such phrases as these: "I hold the secret to winning the 5000 meters at the conference championship." "Making my move into the starting lineup is just a few thoughts away." Scripts might close with something memorable such as these statements: "Now that I've got my plan in

## Smart-Talk Script Development Form

**Directions:** **Step 1** is to identify the purposes of your smart-talk script. Look at the accompanying Purposes and Thoughts for Smart-Talk Scripts (figure 7.4) and select one or more of the seven purposes for developing a self-talk script. Write each of the purposes you choose on a separate section of this form (i.e., write your first purpose in Section 1, your second purpose in Section 2, etc). **Step 2** is to study the form and select one or more specific thoughts to convey each purpose and record them under the Specific Thoughts that correspond to each purpose. Sample thoughts are listed for each purpose, but you may also make up your own thoughts or borrow them from other sources. **Step 3** is to number the specific thoughts in each section in the order that maximizes the flow of your script and strengthens its impact. Place a numerical ranking reflecting the order you want thoughts listed on your script inside the parentheses provided at the beginning of each thought. **Step 4** is to reorder each section to create ideal flow for your script and heighten its impact by placing a ranking inside the parentheses at the beginning of each purpose. Finally, develop a catchy introduction and a powerful conclusion that will maximize the effectiveness of your smart-talk script.

*Example:*

### **Purpose (1) Reminders of strengths and assets**

#### **Specific Thoughts:**

- (1) I have the ability, dedication, and work ethic to excel in whatever I do.
- (2) I am a talented person with skills and abilities that allow me to be successful in life.

### **Section 1 Purpose (1) \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **Section 1 Specific Thoughts:**

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Section 2 Purpose(2) \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **Section 2 Specific Thoughts:**

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued)*

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.3** With guidance, athletes can use this form to develop a personalized smart-talk script.

**Section 3 Purpose (3)** \_\_\_\_\_**Section 3 Specific Thoughts:**

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4 Purpose (4)** \_\_\_\_\_**Section 4 Specific Thoughts:**

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 5 Purpose (5)** \_\_\_\_\_**Section 5 Specific Thoughts:**

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) \_\_\_\_\_

**Catchy Introduction:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Powerful Conclusion:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.3 (continued)**

mind—just do it.” “The best is yet to come now that I am confident; I am thinking the right way.” Have athletes do a final check of the script for length and vivid language. Scripts should be short enough to be read frequently (1.5 to 3 minutes is recommended) and specific enough to trigger images of the desired performance or the type of person the athlete wants to be. Finally, athletes write out the script and make a self-talk audio recording. Many athletes like to add background music to create the right mood, to incorporate an appropriate rhythm to help adjust their

arousal level, or to provide another way to cue positive thoughts during practice and competition.

Self-talk scripts are a powerful way to program positive thoughts, and we encourage you to use this technique with your athletes and even on your own as a coach. Scripts vary in length and language and can be adapted to specific events or contests. Thus far, then, to optimize self-talk, athletes have heightened their awareness of their self-talk patterns and increased their positive thoughts. Now they need to deal effectively with any remaining negative thoughts.

## Purposes and Thoughts for Smart-Talk Scripts

**Directions:** Select the main purpose for your smart-talk script from section 1. You may select one purpose, all seven, or any number in between. Next, for each purpose, select from section 2 any of the specific thoughts, affirmations, or counterarguments that convey the nature of that purpose for you. You can also use your own thoughts or borrow ideas from other sources. Write a smart-talk script based on these thoughts.

### Section 1: Purposes for Script Development

1. Remind yourself of your assets, strengths, and desirable personal qualities.
2. Establish priorities and goals as well as action plans for how to achieve them.
3. Recall past successes, particularly in similar situations or when overcoming obstacles, failure, or adversity.
4. Emphasize the quantity and quality of your preparation.
5. Appraise all situations as challenges rather than threats and implement effective problem-solving strategies.
6. Reframe negative thoughts.
7. Attribute success to hard work and improving ability and failure to internal/controllable/unstable factors such as the need to try harder, to improve your mental preparation, or to develop your skills more fully.

### Section 2: Sample Positive Thoughts, Affirmations, and Counterarguments

#### 1. Reminders of Assets, Strengths, and Desirable Personal Qualities

- a. I'm a talented person with skills and abilities that allow me to be as successful as I want to be in life.
- b. Ultimately I'll be judged by who I am, not by what I accomplish.
- c. I have the ability to make myself into a better performer who can help my team in many ways.
- d. I have rich, rewarding relationships with my close friends and family.
- e. I like who I am and enjoy being me. I like the person I see in the mirror.

#### 2. Priorities and Goals Plus Action Plans to Achieve Them

- a. I have a dream or vision of what I want in life.
- b. I have set my goals, established my priorities, and developed action plans to make them a reality.
- c. Dreams become reality through hard work and sacrifice.
- d. I have the time, energy, and wisdom to accomplish all my goals.
- e. This is a "can do," "will do," and "get things done" day.

(continued)

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.4** Once they've clarified the purpose or purposes of their script, athletes can select the positive thoughts that are most meaningful and effective for them.

### **3. Remember Past Successes in Similar Situations or How You Overcame Adversity**

- a. I have been very successful in similar situations in the past.
- b. I have overcome difficult obstacles in the past and I can do it again.
- c. Failure makes me stronger by helping to identify areas where I need to improve.
- d. I know it's only a matter of time until my hard work pays off and I become successful.
- e. Overcoming failure and adversity requires a commitment to work even harder and an effective plan to get better and eliminate my weaknesses.

### **4. Recall the Quantity and Quality of Preparation**

- a. Nobody works harder than I do, and at crunch time, I'll be in better condition and more willing to pay the price than my opponent.
- b. My physical, mental, technical and tactical training were carefully designed to prepare me perfectly to excel in this competition.
- c. My coach has taught me to understand my opponent's game and to counter these tactics successfully.
- d. I have prepared myself well to maximize my strengths and minimize my weaknesses.
- e. I get a little bit better every day in practice and move a step closer to being the best I can be.

### **5. Appraise Situations as Challenges, Not Threats, and Problem-Solve Effectively**

- a. Everyone encounters failure and adversity. Champions rise above adversity by viewing problems as opportunities for excellence.
- b. I recognize that mistakes are a normal part of learning. As long as I'm learning and trying to get better, mistakes are inevitable. I will look at each mistake as an opportunity to learn and grow as I strive for excellence.
- c. I will approach each problem as a challenge—an opportunity to learn and get better as a person and as an athlete.
- d. No matter how bleak the outlook or how difficult the obstacle, I will accept the challenge to perform my best and come up with a strategy that will allow me to be successful.
- e. I take constructive criticism well, using that feedback to make myself a better person and athlete.

### **6. Reframe Negative Thoughts**

- a. I'll concentrate on doing my best right now because I can't change what has happened in the past or what may happen in the future. All I can do is to strive for excellence at this moment.
- b. I accept what I can't change or control. I can't control what others think of me or how they play, I can't control my God-given ability or how fast I learn skills. I can't control official's decisions, playing conditions, or luck. I can control my own effort level, attitude, mood, and performance. I'll concentrate on what I can control and not worry about what I cannot control.
- c. Life is often unfair, and that is OK. I will continue to work hard because persistence pays off in the long run.
- d. I can't control what others think and how they behave. People can find fault with even Hall-of-Fame performers. I will strive to please myself and enjoy competing. The person I have to answer to is the one in the mirror.
- e. Playing poorly is disappointing but not awful or unbearable. My life will go on, even if I don't play well. I will try to learn from my mistakes so that I can be more successful in the future.

*(continued)*

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.4** *(continued)*

### 7. Attribute Success to Hard Work and Failure to Low Effort or the Need to Develop Skills

- a. Working hard and developing my skills will allow me to continue to achieve success as I progress up the competitive ladder.
- b. I know my hard work and consistent practice have paid dividends and allowed me to achieve the success I've had.
- c. This failure is temporary and can be overcome with hard work and persistent skill development.
- d. All failure is surmountable with enough time, patience, hard work, and careful planning.
- e. When confronted with failure, I focus on the things I can control such as trying harder, getting better prepared mentally, developing my skills more fully, and enjoying the opportunity to test my skills.

From D. Burton and T. Raedeke, 2008, *Sport Psychology for Coaches* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics).

**FIGURE 7.4** (continued)

### Reframe Negative Thinking

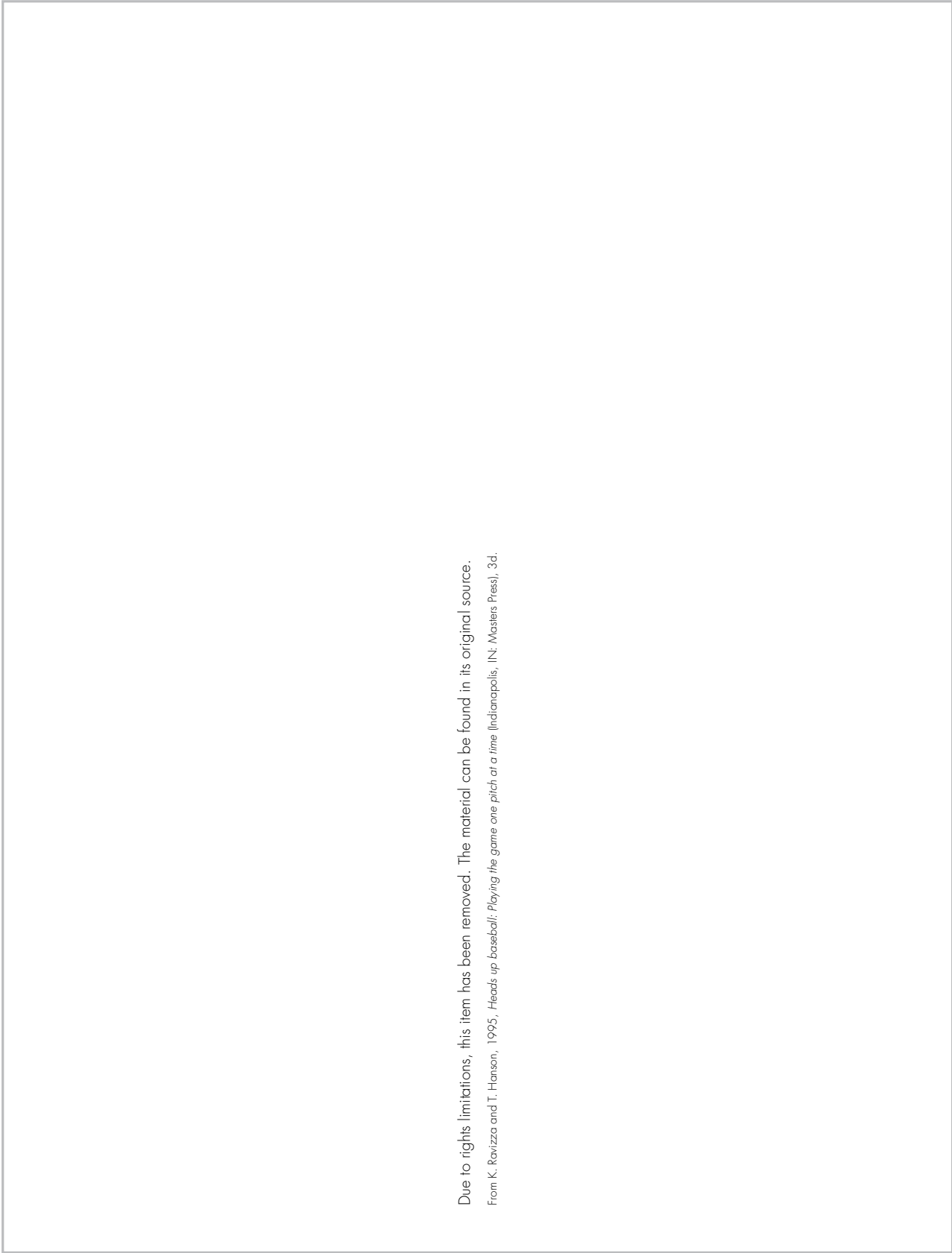
No matter how effective smart-talk programming is at enhancing positive thinking, some negative thoughts will remain, and they can lead to negative emotions and subpar performance. Correcting negative thoughts is more complicated than just substituting positive thoughts for negative ones. Typically, three steps are required, and we call them the three Ds of reframing: Detect negative, unproductive, or irrational thinking; disrupt negative thoughts by means of thought stopping or thought changing; and dispute negative thoughts by using effective counterarguments. First, athletes must learn to detect, or notice, their distorted or irrational thoughts. These thoughts can be difficult to spot since they are often automatic and lightning fast, and athletes differ in their ability to notice them. Encourage athletes to look for the thoughts that precede feelings of stress or other negative emotions.

Once aware of negative thoughts, athletes can act quickly to disrupt or alter them through thought stopping or thought changing. Thought stopping is a self-talk technique that forcefully disrupts the stream of negative thinking before replacing it with more constructive thoughts. Stopping negative thoughts requires using a sudden, intense stimulus that grabs your attention, such as saying "Stop!" to yourself. Athletes may also incorporate an intense color or image (e.g., a stop sign, red flag, or flashing red lights). Some athletes have better luck stopping their "stinkin' thinkin'" with behavioral cues, such as snapping their fingers or wearing a rubber band and snapping themselves at each negative thought.

Thought changing works like a television remote control to simply change the channel from one with negative thoughts to another that is more positive and productive. Whichever strategy is employed, it is important to disrupt the negative thought quickly and forcefully.

Athletes complete the reframing process by disputing negative thinking with counterarguments. In this step, athletes use logic to establish that a negative thought is irrational and counterproductive, then develop a better way of looking at things (Ellis 1996). Athletes can use figure 7.5 to learn how to reframe negative thoughts. We discussed counterarguments to negative thoughts earlier in the chapter. Unlike positive thinking, which tends to simply hide negative thoughts, counterarguments are solutions, not cover-ups. They function like a good attorney, putting faulty beliefs on trial; refuting them with logical arguments; and identifying logical, realistic, productive thoughts to take their place. If Mary wants more playing time, she can't worry about her coach not liking her. A counterargument will reduce her anxiety: "I can't control what my coach thinks or how much she decides to play me. I need to concentrate on what I can control and play my best by focusing on footwork and positioning off the ball." Counterarguments promote problem solving, thus reducing or eliminating threats. By detecting, disrupting, and disputing negative thoughts, athletes can become more positive and productive.

You have now learned a lot about self-talk skills. But how do you work these concepts into practices and competitions to help athletes develop their smart-talk skills?



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From K. Ravizza and T. Hanson, 1995, *Heads up baseball: Playing the game one pitch at a time* (Indianapolis, IN: Masters Press), 3d.

**FIGURE 7.5** Athletes can use this worksheet to learn how to reframe negativity and produce a flow mind-set.



## Developing Athletes' Smart-Talk Skills

Smart-talk represents our best effort to combine scientific findings and practical experience into a program to enhance athletes' self-talk skills. Smart-talk skills are developed through the same three phases used for other mental training tools: education, acquisition, and implementation. Throughout the process, help athletes remember the self-talk dos and don'ts listed in table 7.2.

### Education Phase

In this phase, your athletes should learn about self-talk and become aware of their current self-talk patterns. In general terms, they need to know what self-talk is,

understand how specific beliefs dictate their emotions and behaviors, and learn the difference between positive and negative thinking. They also need to know how to optimize self-talk by programming positive thoughts and reframing lingering negative thoughts. We recommend holding one or two team meetings to provide your athletes with general self-talk information. You should also distribute handouts that highlight key self-talk principles and application strategies. To help your athletes become more aware of their current self-talk patterns, have them complete self-talk logs after practice for several days (see figure 7.2 on page 109) and conduct one negative thought count. The focus of keeping a baseline log is to identify the types of self-talk that help and hurt performance, so that performers can build on their good patterns and change their negative ones.

TABLE 7.2

### Self-Talk Dos and Don'ts

<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<b>BEFORE PRACTICE OR COMPETITION</b>	
Focus on positive self-perceptions and strengths.	Don't focus on negative self-perceptions and weaknesses.
Focus on your effective preparation.	Don't focus on inadequacy of or problems with preparation.
Remind yourself of previous successes.	Avoid thinking about previous failures.
Focus on positive expectations and goals.	Avoid unrealistic expectations and negative goals.
Reframe any irrational beliefs using effective counterarguments.	Don't allow irrational beliefs to go unchallenged.
<b>DURING PRACTICE OR COMPETITION</b>	
Limit thinking and rely on automated skills.	Don't think too much, overanalyze, or try to make it happen.
Focus on the present, not the past or future.	Don't dwell on past mistakes or potential future problems.
Focus on process, not product, using effective cue words.	Avoid thinking about the product too much.
Appraise the situation as a challenge, and maintain positive expectations and goals.	Don't appraise the situation as a threat.
Reframe negative thoughts, and use effective problem-solving strategies.	Avoid haphazard reframing or unsystematic problem-solving.
<b>FOLLOWING PRACTICE OR COMPETITION</b>	
Attribute success to internal, controllable factors such as effort and mental prep that will increase perceived competence.	Don't attribute success to external factors or failure to stable, internal ones that will reduce perceived competence.
Develop positive future expectations and goals, complete with action plans for how to achieve them, and minimize oversights.	Avoid negative expectations and goals.

## Acquisition Phase

We recommend holding another group session to launch planning and implementation of the smart-talk program. The goal of smart-talk is to help players make positive changes in the quantity and quality of their current self-talk patterns. This involves two steps: programming thought patterns to make them as positive and productive as possible, and using counterarguments to reframe any remaining negative thoughts.

Programming simply means repeating thoughts frequently enough that they become automated, eventually developing into beliefs. Self-talk scripts are an excellent way to program positive thoughts. Athletes can use the process described earlier (and figures 7.3 and 7.4) to develop their own scripts with minimal input from coaches, making this a manageable process to implement. They should start by reading or playing their script four or five times a day. When they report memorizing their script, they are beginning to reach the automated stage. Prime times to read or play scripts include first thing in the morning, last thing at night, on the way to class, during study breaks, while waiting for appointments, and before and after practice. Even after your athletes program their smart-talk, they will have to deal with lingering negative thoughts. Remember the three Ds of the reframing process: Develop an awareness of your negative self-talk patterns so you quickly *detect* negative thoughts. Use thought stopping or thought changing to *disrupt* negative thoughts. Then use effective counterarguments to *dispute* each negative thought and replace it with one that is more positive and productive.

Be sure to monitor self-talk patterns periodically. After a few weeks, collect several more days of data using the self-talk log. Monitor positive and negative situations, emotions, thoughts, counterarguments, and positive mental attitude score. If possible, conduct a second negative thought count using a video of practice to stimulate recall. Normally, with increasing practice, athletes use smart-talk programming to create a more positive mind-set and use counterarguments more effectively to resolve negative thoughts that still arise. Athletes should see an increase in PMA and a decline in the frequency and severity of negative thoughts.

## Implementation Phase

Monitoring and programming can be streamlined during this phase. In addition, athletes can start

practicing smart-talk skills in imagined, practice, and competitive situations.

### *Advanced Self-Talk Monitoring and Programming*

Once you've acquired basic smart-talk skills, how do you automate and maintain them? Encourage your athletes to continue using the self-talk log, but in a more limited way. If an athlete handles a negative event ineffectively, he or she can use the log to describe the situation and identify effective counterarguments. Athletes also continue to monitor their PMA each day. Any time athletes' PMA dips below level 5, they should identify any problematic negative situations and generate effective counterarguments. Similarly, any time PMA drops below 5 for three or more days, athletes should keep the log for the next three days to identify any new negative thoughts that may be causing problems. Finally, athletes may reduce how often they read or play their self-talk script (from, say, 4 or 5 times daily to 2 or 3 times), as long as positive thoughts remain automated.

### *Imagery Practice*

We encourage athletes to keep a list of negative situations that they have difficulty reframing. Several times per week, they should spend a few minutes imagining recent situations from their list. For each situation, they should intensely imagine the problem and experience the corresponding negative emotions before using reframing skills to counter their faulty thinking. Athletes should practice reframing their thoughts until the situation ceases to cause problems. They might build counterarguments for situations that are particularly problematic into their smart-talk scripts.

### *Using Smart-Talk in Practice and Competition*

If programming is effective, the incidence of self-talk problems in practice and competition should decline. When problems do arise, have athletes detect, disrupt, and dispute negative thoughts as quickly as possible. (Refer back to table 7.2 for self-talk dos and don'ts.) They can also add these situations to their list after practice and begin developing appropriate counterarguments as time permits.

## SUMMARY

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1. Self-talk is the steady stream of thoughts and internal dialogue that goes on in our heads almost constantly. Your thoughts have a major impact on your mood, emotions, and performance.
2. The ABCs of self-talk describe how thoughts affect emotions and behaviors. The A is the activating event or whatever happens in the situation. The C is the consequence—how you feel and act afterward. The B is your belief or interpretation of the situation, and it determines your emotions and behavior to a much greater extent than the situation itself does.
3. The eight positive self-talk commandments are be an optimist, not a pessimist; remain realistic and objective; focus on the present, not the past or future; appraise problems as challenges rather than threats; view successes as replicable and failures as surmountable; focus on process, not product; concentrate on things you can control; and separate your performance from your self-worth.
4. The critic is the inner voice that attacks and judges you, blaming you when things go wrong and negatively comparing you with others. The critic sets impossible standards of perfection and blasts you when you fall short of them. It exaggerates your weaknesses and minimizes your strengths. Smart-talk can be effective only if it silences the critic.
5. Successful self-talk requires recognizing and changing negative thoughts—particularly distorted thinking and irrational beliefs.
6. The five most common types of distorted thinking are catastrophizing, overgeneralization, blaming, mustification (must thinking), and polarized thinking.
7. Irrational beliefs are highly seductive negative thoughts based on partial fact, unsound evidence, or questionable logic. Five common irrational beliefs in sport are perfectionism, fear of failure, social approval, equity, and social comparison.
8. You can combat distorted thinking and irrational beliefs by using counterarguments to reframe your thoughts.
9. Optimizing self-talk involves becoming aware of current self-talk patterns, programming positive thoughts, and reframing remaining negative thoughts.
10. Athletes can heighten awareness of their self-talk patterns by using imagery recall of good and bad performances, video replay to stimulate accurate negative thought counts in practice, and postpractice and competition logs to investigate the quality of thought patterns.
11. Coaches can teach their athletes to program positive thoughts through self-talk strategies, including positive affirmations, team mottos, and motivational slogans; cue words; and self-talk scripts.
12. The best way to program positive self-talk is to develop a smart-talk script. Scripts should be kept short so that they can be read or played often, up to four or five times daily.
13. Reframing negative thoughts involves using the three Ds: *detecting* negative, irrational, or unproductive thoughts; *disrupting* negative thoughts using thought stopping and thought changing; and *disputing* unproductive negative thoughts by using effective counterarguments.
14. Developing athletes' smart-talk skills involves three phases: education, acquisition, and implementation. First, athletes learn the concept of self-talk and evaluate their current self-talk patterns. Second, they start programming positive thoughts, reframing remaining negative thoughts, and monitoring improvement in self-talk patterns. Finally, they build thought control into normal sport practice and competition.

## KEY TERMS

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activating event	fear of failure	positive mental attitude
beliefs	irrational beliefs	programming
blaming	mustification (must thinking)	reframing
catastrophizing	negative thought count	self-talk
counterarguments	overgeneralization	self-talk script
(the) critic	perfectionism	smart-talk
cue words	polarized thinking	social approval
distorted thinking	positive affirmations	social comparison
equity		

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

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1. What is self-talk?
2. How does self-talk work?
3. What are eight strategies for proactively programming positive thinking?
4. What is the critic, and what are the five types of distorted thinking it uses?
5. What are the five predominant irrational beliefs common to sport?
6. How does self-talk programming work?
7. What is the three-Ds process for countering negative thoughts?

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

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1. Develop a script to program your self-talk. Use the Smart-Talk Script Development Form as well as the Purposes and Thoughts for Smart-Talk Scripts handout to facilitate your work.
2. Identify three to five negative or irrational thoughts that athletes in your sport have and provide several counterarguments for each one.