

# STRESS AND PERFORMANCE

## *Mindfulness and Athletes*

Feeling worried, anxious, angry, frustrated, annoyed, tired, fatigued, exhausted, unhappy, and/or unmotivated causes a physiological reaction in the body. Hormones are released in response to these negative emotions, which take control of our body's ability to physically and mentally perform well. This causes a downward spiral that correlates with declining physical sensations. This means negative emotions reduce your athlete's ability to perform and minimizes the potential of their outcomes. One way to reduce stress and the negative emotions often associated with it is to practice **mindfulness**. Oxford Dictionaries defines mindfulness as *a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations*.<sup>1</sup>



### HEALTH BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- Reduced stress
- Reduced muscle tension
- Increase pain tolerance
- Encourages self-awareness
- Promotes mental and physical relaxation
- Enhances the body's immune system
- Improves tolerance and understanding
- Natural reward to your body



### PERFORMANCE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

- Improves learning ability
- Improves memory function
- Improves concentration
- Enhances academic performance
- Enhances emotional resilience
- Improves pain tolerance
- Helps to mentally prepare
- Helps visualize success

### SHARE THESE POSITIVE MESSAGES WITH YOUR ATHLETES<sup>2</sup>

- The brain interprets doubt as a signal that the body is not ready for high level performance. Have confidence in yourself and your training. Know that you can succeed in your upcoming game—stay positive!
- The goal in a day is not to see how much stress you can accumulate, rather to reduce as much as possible the stress and stressors that impair and degrade mental and physical performance.

***Minimize Stress → Maximize Performance***

- No more negative self-talk. It's time to rise up and be all you are meant to be—good mood, high enthusiasm, healthy attitude, positive outlook, and high expectations will lead to great reward!
- Mental preparation, psychological readiness, and physiological function equate to positive mood. Make positive mood a part of your training!

<sup>1</sup>Mindfulness|Definition of mindfulness in English by Oxford Dictionaries. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/mindfulness>.

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from John Underwood's Life of an Athlete Human Performance Project.