TALK YOURSELF INTO EXCELLENCE

A systematic review of the impact of self-talk on sports performance

Many athletes believe that their coach is indispensable. Of course most coaches believe that, too. And without doubt, a coach can play an important role in an athlete's success—and failure. But when it comes to the psychological component of your performance, perhaps your coach is in fact dispensable. Why? Because, believe it or not, there is another coach who is always around and always sending you messages—*you*. What we are referring to is the messages you are constantly sending yourself in training and competition. In sport psychology terms, these messages are referred to as self-talk. Scientists in the field of sport psychology have conducted a great deal of research into this phenomenon and to what extent it can either improve your performance or be detrimental. Research has also looked into what you need to focus on in your sport self-talk to allow you to deal successfully with adversity of many types. Based on the current comprehensive review of the self-talk scientific literature, some viewpoints regarding this mental skill can be rejected, meaning you are left with more solid options to enhance your performance both in training and competition.

Lidia Valentín Pérez bombed the 2010 IWF Worlds and placed 5th in 2011. Some notions about self-talk are dispelled so that you may enhance your performance with greater precision, too.
Photo: József Szaka

Original Research

Tod, D., et al. Effects of self-talk: A systematic review. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 33:666-687, 2011.

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