

## **A Basic Start to Sport Psychology for Judo**

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The first indication of the need to introduce sport psychology into my training program occurred in the 1989 semi-finals of the Senior National Championships when I was winning the match and then started thinking about the finals. The next thing I know I was on the side of the mat, I lost the semi-final and had to recover mentally to compete for the bronze medal. This was the start of my interest in becoming mentally stronger for competitions, I started talking with coaches, athletes, Sport Psychologists and reading many books, it became a self-help program. One thing I that learned early on was in the hardest times I had to rely only on myself because I could trust only myself – **if you want to get some thing done trust yourself and don't be overly dependent on a coach or team mate, do the work yourself.** I think Sport is all about opportunities – you have to be ready to take advantage of these opportunities when they present them – being ready mentally is one the key factors and is the difference in **success & failure.**

Improvement in sport many times is about looking at areas of weakness and working outside of your comfort zone. For many athletes **it is not an easy task to identify their weakness & to work on something that is difficult and very taxing** – many people give up on working on a program because they do not see progress – more people will quit and fail rather than do it and succeed. ***Sport Psychology is not like weight training where you will see the results fast- it takes time an effort to succeed!*** It is important not to give up on a program or on yourself if you have set backs, stay positive and push forward.

- One thing to remember about developing your sport psychology skills is that it is you recognize that you will never fully become an expert – you need to keep practicing your skills throughout your career

### **Confidence**

One of the important factors about sport and performances is confidence, without confidence in a competition or in life you are dead - it is very difficult to succeed without confidence. In sport confidence is everything but during a judokas career he or she will have too much it, to little of it or lose it all together for one reason or another. It is important to for athletes and coaches to know how to build confidence and how to maintain it for a long period of time.

**Confidence can be calculated into a very simple formula:**

Realistic/Specific Goals + commitment = Confidence

**Goal Setting:** Setting a goal will help you to know where you are going and to increase motivation towards that goal – if you have no goals you will just be going through the motions and it will be hard to improve.

**Realistic:** It is important to know where you are starting from – this is the key factor.

To many people don't have a clue were they are or what level they are at in life or in sports, athletes need someone to help them evaluate where they are. Knowing your starting point before you start will make everything easier.

**Specific:** It is important that you are as specific as possible because general goals will lead you somewhere else than where you want to be.

Example: I want to be world champion:

- What is your present level?
- Who is going to help you?
- How are you going to achieve this?
- Why are you going to do this?
- **Every goal that is set needs to have some sort of time frame** – if not you will never be able to measure if you are successful or not and how to improve.

### **Simple Goal Setting Rules:**

- Specific
- Realistic
- Sequence – the goal should make sense and be in order
- Across many areas – judo, school, social, family
- It is okay to change your goals > let people know – it is important for a coach and team mates to know so there is not frustration between athletes and coach.

### **Commitment:**

Commitment is everything when it comes to training and great performance in competition. You can have the best training planning in the world but without commitment to that plan then you will never have a chance at achieving anything or be ready when the opportunity presents itself. Commitment is personal, each person has to figure out for themselves considering the importance of their goals and were they fit in their life.

- **Commitment to me is simple: *do the things that have to be done, when they have to be done and no matter if you like it or not.***

- My personal example is when I use to fight 60kg I went running in on Christmas Day in Winnipeg for 10 years (it was very cold!)– it was not fun but it had to be done in order for me to maintain my weight. **You will do it if your goals are important!**

### **COMMITMENT is a very simple idea but very hard to do!**

#### **My Experience as a coach working with athletes and Sport Psychology**

As a coach it is import to remember that when you do have the opportunity to work with an athlete that is the **right age**, has the **proper experience**, is **good enough** & **cares**, than great things can and will happen ..

#### **My Number one rule for a coach when working with an athlete:**

Treat the **personal as an individual person** – meaning that what ever the sport that the athlete is doing the person is more important that the sport: Person first - Sport second. An Olympic Gold medal will mean less if the person is not happy with themselves and has no way to earn an living following their athletic career. A happy balanced athlete has a better chance of performing than a depressed unhappy athlete – it is very simple. It is important that the athlete has a balance in their life, goals need to be set in every aspect of life to ensure there is a balance. It is very easy to have a unbalanced life because everyone wants to be an Olympic Champion and you dedicate so much time to this goal. Remember that a happy balanced athlete is a confident athlete!

**REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN, BE POSITIVE AND NEVER STOP BELIEVING IN YOURSELF!**