

# SOUL PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

## Thought Control Sequence

Use the following sequence to stop negative or self-destructive thoughts:

<b>RECOGNIZE</b> the negative thought	Say “ <b>STOP</b> ” or “ <b>MAYBE</b> ” or “ <b>WHATEVER</b> ”	<b>REPLACE</b> with a positive word	Think <b>STRATEGY</b>
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The following 3 tables list common thoughts athletes have during competition. Use the first list to help you recognize the negative thoughts you have, and then the next two lists as ideas to replace the negative thoughts.

**Negatives After a Mistake:** The following is a list of negatives said after mistakes. This list is provided because most athletes don’t realize they have negative self-talk. Before anything can be done to improve self-talk, you must first **RECOGNIZE** the negative. Feel free to add thoughts you have!

I Suck	Ahhhhhhhh!	No Way!	Choker!
Any 4 letter	Loser!	That was weak	Come oooooon!
I quit	I’m so bad	I’m the worst	You idiot!
I stink!	You’re no athlete	I’m pitiful	How could I miss?
Why me?	Any sarcasm	What was that?	Just don’t
That was so easy!	I hate this sport!	Merry Christmas!	Oh, that’s just great!

**Positives After a Mistake:** This list of positives after mistakes is the most important list. Athletes can’t always pre-vent errors from happening. All they can do is manage the mistake well, put it behind them, and move on with an optimistic outlook.

Next Point	Take your time	Keep fighting
Forget it	Calm down	High percentage
One at a time	Stay tough	Good effort

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**Other Helpful Words:** This list is just a series of shorter ‘cue-words’ you might use to replace the negative thought.

Relax	React	Present
Focus	Quick	Fight
Control	Positive	Breathe

## Thought Control Exercises

1. “Gap” Thinking: This is a simple exercise to begin, but not easy to maintain. Close your eyes and become aware of your thoughts. Now become aware of the gaps between your thoughts. Try to stay in the gap between thoughts. When a thought comes in, simply recognize its existence and then get back into the gap. The length of time you stay in the gap is not as important as staying ‘present’ to the thoughts that come into your mind and ‘refocusing’ back into the gap.
2. Past-Present-Future Labeling: Write down thoughts you remember having before, during or after a competition. Now label them as past, present or future (Example of a past thought: “I can’t believe I just made that mistake!”). Notice how negative emotions (anger, nervousness) are tied to thoughts that exist in the past or future. Positive emotions (love, happiness, confidence...) are often present thoughts. Choose present thoughts during competition.
3. Rational-Irrational Labeling: Write down thoughts you remember having before, during or after a competition. Label them as rational (make sense) or irrational (make no sense). For example: “I always make that mistake!” That would be irrational because you don’t ALWAYS make that mistake. Work at rewording your thoughts so they are rational and accurate (“I make that mistake when I get rushed. Be patient.”).
4. Perception-Reality Labeling: This exercise involves you observing events in your world and describing them. Your goal is to describe only “What Happened” and not “Your Perception” of the event. For example: When describing a touchdown, it would be your perception if you said,

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“The QB threw the pass too hard and I was lucky to hang on to it.” What happened was, “The QB threw a pass and I caught it for a touchdown.” Notice how stating just the facts can reduce emotion surrounding an event.

5. Other Labeling: Helpful-Harmful (just recognizing how helpful or harmful a thought is can help); Permanent-Temporary (great athletes describe problems as temporary and successes as permanent); Lucky-Skillful (attributing success to luck is usually only done so one appears humble - great athletes consistently relate success to skill since it is more of a permanent factor); Controllable-Uncontrollable (successful athletes focus on factors they control - to do otherwise leads to feelings of helplessness and stress).

## Descriptions of Ideal Thoughts

1. Before Competition: Thoughts should be in the Pre-sent or slight future focusing on the ideal strategy. You should be sure to remain Rational, keeping thoughts simple and unemotional. Stay in Reality, on things you know to be true. All thoughts should be Helpful and supportive. If you can't Control it, don't worry about it.
2. During Competition: Work at staying in the Gap as much as possible. It is safe there since there are no thoughts to distract you or cause unwanted emotion. Perform on automatic as much as possible. If you have thoughts, keep them in the Present, Helpful and related to effort and strategy, which are both Controllable by you.
3. After Competition: To learn from what went on, you obviously need to get into the Past and evaluate your performance. Be constructive when criticizing and make sure a list of Controllable suggestions is made so you can take action on them immediately.

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## Do This Exercise

Write down thoughts you remember having before, during or after a recent competition. Write as many as you can re-member and write each thought on a separate line. Now la-bel each thought as,

- 1) Past, Present or Future
- 2) Rational or Irrational
- 3) Perception or Reality
- 4) Helpful or Harmful
- 5) Temporary or Permanent

Here's an example: "If I get a lead, I'll choke it away." Future; Irrational; Perception; Harmful, Permanent

## Recent Thoughts During Competition

Recent Thoughts During Competition					
Thought	Past	Rational	Percep- tion	Helpful	Tempo- rary
	Present	Irrational	Reality	Harmful	Perma- nent
	Future				