

SPP Coaching and Philosophy Statement

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Theoretical Orientation

I am building my professional career upon the foundation of Relational Frame Theory (RFT). “According to RFT, the core of human language and cognition is the learned and contextually controlled ability to arbitrarily relate events mutually and in combination, and to change the functions of specific events based on their relations to others” (Hayes et al., 2006). Using this theory and its related frameworks such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) provides practical tools for athletes to build confidence, resilience, and autonomy. Specifically, ACT helps athletes reframe negative self-talk, regain focus, and stay fully present in competition.

In addition to RFT and its applied frameworks, my career will be further supported by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Biopsychosocial Model (BPS). SDT suggests that an individual maintains motivation when their three basic psychological needs are met: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. SDT is an “approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic metatheory that highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (Ryan & Deci, 2000). RFT and SDT work well together because they encourage and build an athlete’s intrinsic motivation through giving them more autonomy and control. The BPS model further develops this theoretical orientation because it incorporates a whole-person approach. Effective practitioners cannot ignore the physical and social needs of a client, while creating interventions for their psychological concerns. “Many interacting factors, from the cellular to the social, contribute to health and illness. A disturbance in any sphere of human functioning affects all of them” (Novak et al., 2007).

Ethical Foundation

Ethical practice habits protect clients, consultants, and stakeholders because they provide “a common set of values and standards upon which AASP members build their professional and scientific work” (Association for Applied Sport Psychology, 2024). Ethical principles include confidentiality, practicing within one’s competence, appropriate personal relationships, and diversity considerations. Showing concern and attention to ethical guidelines builds trust in the consultant and profession.

Approach to Intervention

My approach to intervention is similar to my coaching philosophy. After an accurate performance concern has been identified, I strive to match each client with techniques, strategies, and interventions that fit the unique person. Solving this puzzle happens when I approach the client with curiosity and ask questions like, “How long has this been happening?” “How intense is this concern?” “What may have happened to trigger this concern?” If an athlete comes to me with pre-performance overarousal, I could easily teach them relaxation techniques. Additionally, it would be appropriate for me to ask meaningful, open-ended questions that provide more insight into why this athlete is having this experience. From there, I can choose appropriate assessments to measure progress and strategies. I may find that the athlete is struggling with confidence due to a previous performance blunder. This athlete may think, “I failed before. I’m no good. I don’t want to fail again.” Using Relational Frame Theory, I can help them reframe these thoughts into “I failed before. I have worked hard to do better today.” Using RFT and ACT to move athletes towards values-driven actions helps them when they feel mentally stuck during performance.

Developmental Considerations

Working with clients through different life stages can present considerations for a professional. I work with many young athletes. Being mindful of their developmental age includes using appropriate assessments, interviewing tactics, and activities. A consultant should also consider the emotional maturity of each client. 12-year-olds may not have the same emotional self-awareness as a 35-year-old. Catering to a client's developmental stage changes the length, number, and content of each session.

Diversity and Inclusion Considerations

Diversity, inclusion, and cultural humility are crucial to my coaching philosophy. I recognize that each client's cultural identity, lived experiences, and worldview shape how they understand performance, growth, and well-being. Therefore, intervention goals and methods must align with the client's cultural values and perspectives rather than my own assumptions. I acknowledge that cultural orientation may influence the consultant's role and the nature of the working relationship. My position also provides opportunities to advocate for clients when systemic or environmental barriers affect their development. I believe that a lack of cultural competence and humility can damage trust and undermine effective consultation.

References

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