

Player thoughts, emotions & feelings

Thoughts...emotions...feelings

These three human experiences damage more sporting performances than any opposition ever could. They prevent learning from happening more times than bad teaching ever could (possibly...probably!)

At the developing elite level they (possibly) kill careers more so than a lack of ability. And at the very elite level they (probably) lose more games and championships than any ineffective tactical template laid down by a coach can.

Thoughts...emotions...feelings are lifelong influencers and mediators of human ability...and yet...they can't be fully controlled.

You cannot control thoughts. You cannot control emotions. You cannot control feelings. They happen to you. They emerge. They arise. They summon themselves from the combined noise of the body and brain. Thoughts happen to you. So do emotions. As do feelings.

And that's why, first and foremost in sport, it's useful to normalise the negative. To normalise the unhelpful. Perhaps even to normalise the destructive.

Normalising negative thoughts, emotions, and feelings in sports participation is to embrace what it is to be human.

"Welcome to my team. Here we accept and we talk about negative thoughts. Here we accept and talk about unhelpful emotions and feelings. Here we don't bury our head in a sandpit of ignorance. We accept that you'll experience thoughts, emotions and feelings that hinder you...

...and then we set about helping you"

The denial of negative inner experiences helps no one – it merely inflames the problems that arise from such experiences.

“We accept that which hinders you...in order to help you!”

So your players experience thoughts, emotions, and feelings – let’s talk about what you can do as a coach to help them manage these...

What you can do is help them learn skills that enable them to direct their attention away from unhelpful inner experiences

What you can do is help them learn skills that help them to ignore unhelpful inner experiences and engage with the kind of appropriate behaviours the situation they themselves in demands

What you can do is create the kind of environmental triggers that limit unhelpful inner experiences and promote helpful inner experiences the skill of flexing attention