

Chantal Thétard

How to Cope With Anxiety Prior to Sport

Instructing



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Abstract

Author: Thétard Chantal

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The aim of the thesis was to produce a blog which provides information on how to overcome anxiety prior to sport instructing. The objectives were to understand what techniques may reduce the anxiety level and how they are used. The advice was to be published in a blog to help sport instructors and especially sport instructor students at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences to deal with their perceived anxiety before instructing a sport session.

The thesis was a practice-based thesis with the goal to develop a blog. It employed a qualitative research approach and the method used for the research process was the document analysis. The sources included publications, books, articles and reports. The author read the information and descriptive statistics which were connected to the topic. Qualitative research methods were used as the research question concentrated on how to cope with the anxiety rather than how many are affected. The focus was on describing the phenomenon and the ways of dealing with it. Statistics were utilized to describe how many people are affected by anxiety. It was used to justify the end product of the thesis since anxiety is a problem for many people and ways of coping are needed to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, the author used inductive reasoning to explain sport instructors' anxiety and techniques how to overcome it with specific theories regarding general population's, athletes' and teachers' anxiety and their ways of coping with it. The product development was applied in the end of the process when the blog was created.

The outcome of the thesis was a blog segmented in different topics. Each of the segments provided various blog posts for readers to choose from. In the categories 'Anxiety' and 'Self-Confidence', additional information about anxiety and self-confidence as well as how it may affect the instructing performance could be found. In the category 'Ways of Coping', different techniques how to overcome anxiety could be learnt. The techniques how to reduce anxiety included the development of a routine, use of imagery, preparation and practice, relaxation response, breath control and progressive relaxation. Moreover, advice on how to build self-confidence was introduced such as successful performances, acting and thinking confidently, being in a good physical shape and the use of preparation as well as imagery.

The blog and the thesis may be useful for future sport instructor students at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences but also for other sport instructors to find various advice on how to cope with anxiety. Furthermore, the topic can be developed by researching how many students are affected or how well the anxiety-reducing-techniques work.

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1 Introduction

Every year new students start their studies to become sport instructors. The beginning is exciting and most of the students feel comfortable with the choice they have made. However, some students may not feel as happy about their decision as the rest. They feel anxious and nervous. Every time before instructing exercise sessions, such students experience anxiety and stress. Days before having to instruct a dance aerobic session, anxious students may worry about the event and feel unable to relax. This experienced anxiety can affect the sleep as well as the daily life of the individual. Students may feel the need to go over and over the lesson plan without feeling more confident about their performance. The students are not comfortable with instructing in front of a group which might lead to even doubting the choice of the studies.

The feeling of anxiety prior to instructing is not only restricted to sport students but can also occur among, in general, inexperienced sport instructors as well as instructors who have already worked in the field for some time. When feeling anxious the individual also feels stressed. Stress is the mental reaction to a heavy load that an individual experiences due to a happening. It can have neutral or even positive impacts on life because it supports us through difficult situations, for example during a competition or when speaking in front of a group of people. It is important that the body can recover quickly to a normal state after the situation is over so that the stress is only felt during a short time and there are no continuing effects. However, there is also a negative stress in which the stress is extreme and continual over a long time. It does not improve the performance but makes it worse and the individual feels devastated and cannot deal with it. (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.)

The aim of this bachelor's thesis and its end product is to provide guidelines on how to cope with the anxiety felt prior to instructing in form of a blog. Research about the anxiety sport instructors experience cannot be found but research about athletes being anxious before competitions (Weinberg & Gould, 2003) as well as teachers' anxiety do exist (Obidzinski, 2007). Also, the general population may feel anxious in every-day situation, for example when holding presentations, social anxiety, shyness or dating anxiety (Schlenker & Leary, 1982).

The thesis provides a theoretical foundation of self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety and how to produce a blog. The self-esteem chapter is included in the theoretical background because the existence or non-existence of a good self-esteem can influence the appearance of anxiety prior to instruction. Self-esteem plays a major role regarding to how secure somebody might feel

standing in front of a group. The chapter about anxiety includes information about the anxiety of the general population, athletes' and teachers' anxiety. Each chapter introduces the frequency and level of anxiety experienced by the specific groups among the general population, among teachers and athletes, how it is experienced and ways how to overcome it. Information collected from these chapters are used to describe the sport instructor students' and sport instructors' anxiety as well as techniques of how to cope better with it are presented.

The end product of the thesis is a blog. Therefore, the thesis provides information about how to create and maintain a blog. Moreover, it explains how a blog post should be written to keep readers interested in the topic. Since the blog also includes videos the thesis provides a sub-chapter of how to create a good video.

2 Theoretical framework of self-esteem and self-confidence

2.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem may be defined as the assessment of the dissonance between the self-image and the ideal self. Self-image is the awareness of the one's psychological and bodily characteristics while the ideal self refers to the optimal standards of actions and performance. Self-esteem describes the level of difference between the self-image and the ideal self and how much it matters to an individual person. (Lawrence, 1996, pp. 3-5) Stewart describes self-esteem as the worth we attribute to ourselves. By that, high self-esteem has affirmative worth, while low self-esteem comes from negative worth. (Stewart, 1998, p. 13) Both definitions identify self-esteem as a way humans evaluate themselves according to certain values. It shows a subjective impression but not necessarily the objective reality.

Lawrence explains research has shown that without differences between the self-image and the ideal self, people might become apathetic or low adjusted. On the other hand, a person should not become distressed about the level of difference. (Lawrence, 1996, p. 5) People who have high self-esteem respect themselves and see themselves as valuable. However, they do recognize their own faults but believe in being able to cope with them. Having high self-esteem does not mean that they see themselves as better than others but on the other hand, they do not consider themselves as worse. Individuals who have low self-esteem do not respect themselves may think that they are less worthy, imperfect and faulty. (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 54)

Self-esteem is not an unchangeable characteristic but can be influenced by components such as stress, health, loss of beloved ones, loss of job and retirement (Stewart, 1998, p. 16). Furthermore, self-esteem evolves by the outcome of interpersonal relationships. In childhood, the outcome is mainly characterized by the relationships with the family, especially with the parents, but later on, it is affected by school and the overall community with which the person interacts. (Lawrence, 1996, p. 11) Both theories explain that self-esteem is only partly an inherent personality trait and can also be shaped by changing life situation and surrounding persons.

People can have good 'global self-esteem', in other words people can generally have a good self-esteem in their day-to-day lives, but under certain circumstances have low self-worth. Global self-esteem, which is the general awareness of value, can be said to be constant and steady in a period of time while this individual can experience less worth in a specific situation. Since that feeling

only occurs on certain occasions, a person might avoid them and by that, the feeling of being less worthy does not affect general global self-esteem. (Lawrence, 1996, pp. 9-10)

Nathaniel Branden concentrated his work on self-esteem and developed the concept of 'The 6 pillars of self-esteem'. Those six points are: The practice of living consciously, the practice of self-acceptance, the practice of self-responsibility, the practice of self-assertiveness, the practice of living purposefully and the practice of personal integrity. (as cited in Rick, 2017, p. 18) In order to have a good self-esteem, an individual needs to *live consciously* in the present and should not concentrate on the past nor the future. The pillar suggests that there is a time and place for anything but it is important to change the focus. An example is if an individual is working, the focus is on the work but if the individual is relaxing, the focus is not on the work, anymore. *The pillar of self-acceptance* explains that an individual needs to accept oneself such as the good and the bad personality traits. An individual should learn to work on criticism constructively without insulting oneself. The third pillar suggests that every individual should *take responsibility for one's own actions* and that every individual is responsible for one's life. Who lives that way, can make oneself happy. *The practice of self-assertiveness* is not only about to be liked by others but to be faithful to the own beliefs and values. Individuals should plan how they would like to react in a certain situation because only then, they can react to their own set values and be true to themselves. *The pillar of the practice of living purposefully* suggests that every individual should have goals in one's life to attain a positive feeling when having reached the goal. *The last pillar of the practice of personal integrity* is related to the self-assertiveness. It explains that the actions should be in accordance with the own values. Otherwise, an individual betrays oneself and negative feelings are the consequence. When following all these pillars, self-esteem can be built and maintained better as well as easier. (Rick, 2017, pp. 18 – 21)

2.2 Self-confidence

Self-esteem is linked to self-confidence. Many people use these concepts as synonyms but there is a difference between them although they are connected. (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 31). Self-confidence is (as self-esteem) hard to define but psychologists have tried to classify it. It may be defined as the faith of one's abilities to make a strong performance. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 309) It refers to believing in being capable of succeeding. Self-esteem itself is the assessment of an individual which may be positive or negative while self-confidence can be partly responsible for self-esteem but may not be referred to as the same as self-esteem. (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 31)

On the other hand, a general negative image of oneself and low self-esteem may be responsible for low self-confidence (Stewart, 1998, p. 99).

Vealey (2001) describes self-confidence as a social cognitive construct which is either to a greater extent state-like or trait-like. The state-confidence is something that is felt in a moment and by that considered unsteady, while trait-like is a component of personality and by that considered more stable. Self-confidence is linked to the expectation of succeeding and supports the stimulation of good feelings, better concentration and enhances effort. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 309-310)

In order to improve self-confidence it is important to understand it. For that, an individual can ask oneself specific questions and by that, assess one's confidence level, for example by the following: What is discouraging oneself from having self-confidence and are there ways to improve it? How much life is controlled by thoughts such as 'must' and 'have to'? Evaluate how much in charge the individual is over its own life and, if the control is low, by whom it is controlled and in what way. Count how often it happens that the person begins something but does not finish it. How quickly does the individual get disheartened? Do other persons ask for the individual's point of view or recommendation? (Stewart, 1998, pp. 101 – 102)

After thinking about such questions, an individual may consider how adjusting the own behavior could develop the whole self-confidence of the person. In order to feel more self-confident, there are few advice such as to behave as already being confident, which may include to walk tall and to not think about past failures. Moreover, joining social events and being around optimistic persons can help, but also to be aware of one's strengths and weaknesses. (Stewart, 1998, p. 102)

3 Theoretical framework of anxiety

Anxieties are various mental developments in the senses such as being concerned about an undesired happening to come or the fear of an event. Anxiety and fear are highly connected but scientists have tried to differentiate them: Fear is not only felt by humans but also by other living beings while anxiety is only known to the human species. Furthermore, it is said that fear is a reaction to a rational danger but anxiety is a feeling, which might be an extreme and/or irrational response to a perceived danger. (Evans et al., 2005) Also Freud (1924) referred to fear and anxiety as two different concepts. In his definition, fear is referred to as objective anxiety while neurotic anxiety explains the actual anxiety. Objective anxiety comes from a realistic threat from the outside environment. The more dangerous the threat, the higher the perception of it and the more extreme the response will be. The response is usually to escape from the threat or to guard oneself from it. Neurotic anxiety, on the other hand, involves a response to an internal danger but it is not always felt since it has been restrained. (Spielberger, 1966, pp. 9-10)

Freud (1924) pointed out that anxiety-neurosis is anything related to nervousness (as cited in Spielberger, 1966, p. 9). Furthermore, Freud said that any individual can feel light anxiety at some point but to an abnormal extent it is diagnosed as anxiety-neurosis (as cited in Spielberger, 1966, p. 11). The determination of what is only an intense but normal reaction and what is a pathological response is difficult. When diagnosing anxiety attention should be paid to the recovery process of an individual after the event is over, which stimulated anxiety. The person should not feel anxious but more relaxed when the situation has passed. Psychologists look for three different character traits to diagnose abnormal anxiety: Distress, dysfunction and inflexibility in regard to symptoms. While the first two character traits may be more or less relevant depending on the age, the last one is always a crucial part of the diagnosis. (Evans et al. 2005).

Cattell and Scheier (1958; 1961) have discovered two different types of anxiety: Trait anxiety and state anxiety. State anxiety is when an individual feels anxious right now in a certain situation while trait anxiety describes a person who feels anxious all the time. (as cited in Spielberger, 1966, pp. 12-13) Scanlan (1986) said that high trait anxiety and low self-esteem have an influence on the level of state anxiety (as cited in Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 84).

State anxiety can be divided into cognitive and somatic anxiety. Cognitive state anxiety represents the extent to which an individual feels troubled and thinks negatively. Somatic state anxiety shows the physiological changes in the body which are perceived by a person (see Figure 1). (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 79)

	Cognitive state anxiety	Somatic state anxiety
Symptoms	Negatively thinking/talking, negative expectations, feeling scared, suffering from a situation, inability to concentrate, etc.	Tensed muscles, cold hands, sweating, feeling sick, dry mouth, headache, sleeping problems, etc.

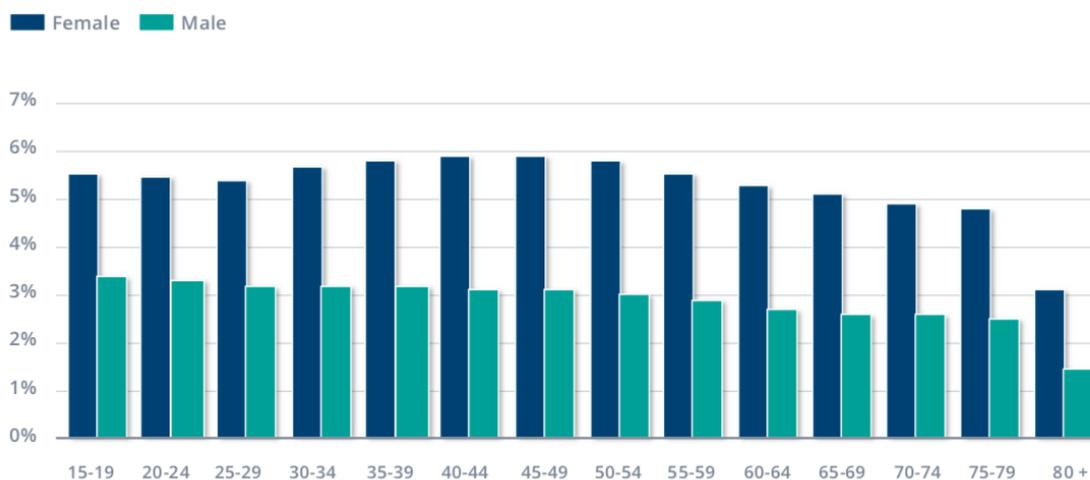
Figure 1: Symptoms of cognitive and somatic state anxiety (adapted from Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 79)

When diagnosing anxiety, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. (1994) outlines seven different disorders: *Panic disorders*, which include sudden panic attacks, come from the feeling of being anxious and are often accompanied by shortness of breath. *Social anxiety disorder* involves the feeling of intense anxiety in social happenings in which the person is confronted with unknown persons. *Separation anxiety disorder* is when an individual is afraid of being apart from home or persons. *Obsessive compulsive disorder* includes repeating, insisting, fear-evoking thinking or repeating actions that a person believes the need to be done. *Post-traumatic stress disorders* usually appear after a trauma when the person relives a situation and tries to avoid those situations that provoke reliving it. *Generalized anxiety disorder* is when an individual is troubled extremely on most days for six months and cannot hold it back. *A specific phobia anxiety* involves an extreme fear of a certain thing (animal, event, action, object). (as cited in Evans et al. 2005) However, there are also many types of anxieties which are not diagnosed and are experienced by the general population such as shyness, dating anxiety, stagefright, anxiety prior to holding presentations and the feeling of being embarrassed (Schlenker & Leary, 1982).

The world health organization, WHO, explained in a global health estimate report that 3.6% of all people suffered from an anxiety disorder in the year 2015. Those disorders tend to affect more women than men (4.6% women and 2.6% men). In America, even 7.7% of all women are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder while in Europe it is 5%. There is no difference between age groups but there is a trend which shows less anxiety disorders with higher age (see Figure 2).

From 2005 to 2015 there has been an almost 15% increase in anxiety disorders. (World Health Organization, 2017)

Global prevalence of anxiety disorders, by age and sex (%)



Source: Global Burden of Disease Study 2015 (<http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool>)
Regional data shown are age-standardized estimates.

Figure 2: Global prevalence of anxiety disorders, by age and sex (%) (World Health Organization, 2017)

3.1 Athletes' anxiety

Anxiety athletes face is often related to performance problems such as being troubled about achieving their competences and doubting their skills as Noblet and Gifford explained (as cited in Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 82). Martens (1987) pointed out that two different situational sources cause stress and anxiety. One source relates to the importance of the event itself. The level of stress and anxiety experienced by the athlete is influenced whether the event is only a friendly game or a championship. In general, it is said that the more meaningful a happening, for example a game, is, the more stress and anxiety the athlete experiences. The other source is uncertainty: The more uncertainty is experienced, the more the athlete will feel stressed and anxious. (as cited in Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 82-84)

Different theories attempt to understand at what point anxiety has a positive and at what point a negative effect. One of the common theories is the inverted-U hypothesis (see Figure 3). It suggests that if there is a low physiological excitement, also the performance level is low. However, when the physiological arousal raises, the level of performance increases as well, up to

a certain point. This point is called the optimum point and the performance is at its best. After that, although the physiological arousal increases, the level of performance drops.

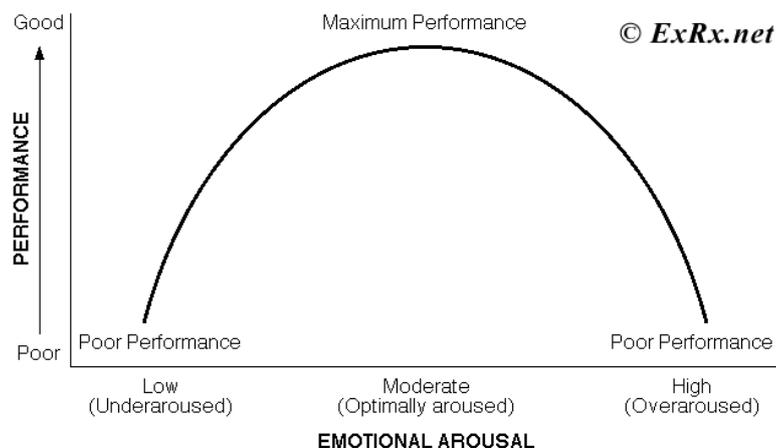


Figure 3: Inverted-U hypothesis - Relation between arousal and performance (Exercise Prescription on Internet, n.d.)

Interestingly, scientists doubt that the optimum point of the arousal level for performance is always in the middle of the physiological excitement level. Therefore, there are other theories such as the individual zones of optimal functioning (IZOF) model by Hanin (see Figure 4). It suggests that the optimum arousal level is not a certain point but a zone. A zone is wider and gives more opportunities for a good performance. Furthermore, the optimum zone does not necessarily lay in the middle but can also be in the lower or higher level of state anxiety, depending on the individual. Some athletes may perform better with a low anxiety level while others perform better with a high anxiety level. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 86-87)

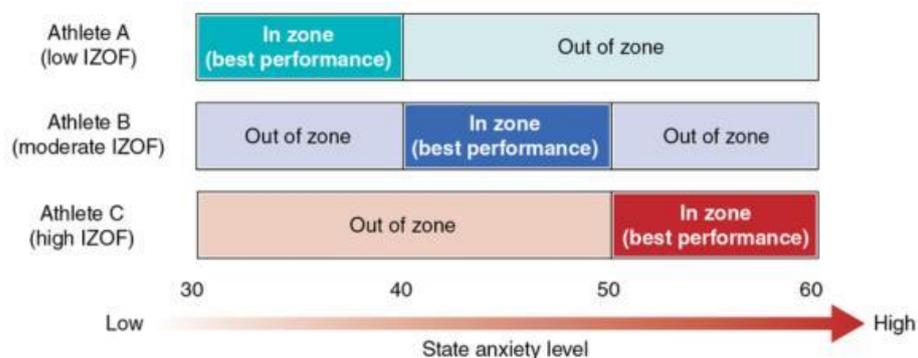


Figure 4: Individual zones of optimal functioning (IZOF) (Human Kinetics, n.d., as shown in the book Weinberg & Gould, 2003)

Another component that has an impact on the performance of an athlete is the level of confidence. It is a crucial part of the performance. However, it cannot defeat non-existing skills. It means that if an individual does not have the ability to perform a certain task, high self-confidence will not change it. High self-confidence can only support if the athlete does have the skills to do the certain task. Also, this relation can be shown in an inverted-U figure (see Figure 5). When the level of confidence is low, the level of performance is low as well. However, when the level of confidence increases so does the performance until it reaches the optimum point. After that, although the confidence level increases the performance drops rapidly. An optimum level of self-confidence helps to cope with mistakes and to achieve possible capability. Issues appear when there is not enough confidence or too much. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 311-312)

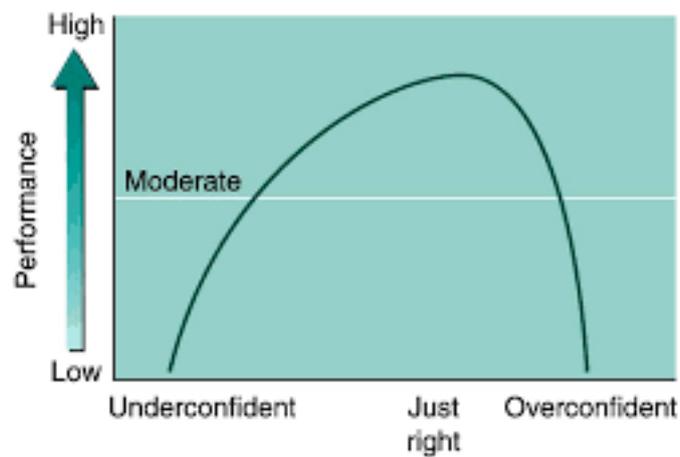


Figure 5: The inverted-U showing the relation of confidence and performance (University of Minnesota Duluth, n.d.)

Research has shown that self-confidence may have an influence on anxiety, their signs and symptoms. The research results pointed out that an individual who did not feel confident, experienced a higher anxiety level since the athlete did not feel in control of one's own actions. However, if the confidence level was high, the athletes felt in control and less symptoms of anxiety were present. The research shows that there is a connection between self-confidence and anxiety but the authors emphasized in their paper that more research needs to be done to define the relationship between self-confidence and anxiety. (Hanton, Mellalieu, Hall, 2003)

3.1.1 Techniques to control arousal level

There are different techniques to control anxiety and arousal level as well as self-confidence. Before working on anxiety, an individual needs to be aware of his/her arousal level. For this, it is recommended that a checklist of the performance is completed. It includes the feelings of anxiety and nervousness during the event for the imagined best and the worst performance as well as after the next practices for a few weeks. Using this method, an individual may find out when the performance was best and how high the arousal level was. If the arousal level should be high for a good performance, the athlete can plan how to reach that level. However, if the level of arousal is usually too high for performing well, there are tips for how to reduce the arousal and anxiety level. The following advice for decreasing anxiety is divided into somatic and cognitive anxiety. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 264-276)

For reducing somatic anxiety, progressive relaxation, breath control and biofeedback are suggested (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 276-269). Progressive relaxation was developed by Edmund Jacobsen (1938) and includes the tension and relaxation of certain muscle groups. In every cycle a muscle group is tensed to its maximum and subsequently completely relaxed. It is said to be helpful since the athlete realizes and learns the contrast of tension and relaxation and it is not possible to do both at the same time. Also, the mind will relax if the body is more relaxed by not being tense. Progressive relaxation helps with reducing anxiety and tension but also with decreasing other pain such as headaches and stomachaches as well as it may help to sleep better. (Anxiety Canada, n.d.) Practicing breath control involves deep inhalation, holding the breath and slow exhalation. It lays on the assumption that inhalation builds muscle tension while exhalation reduces it. When concentrating on a deep breath the mind automatically relaxes by being focused on it. Biofeedback helps also to realize the tension of a muscle group but by the help of an electronic monitoring device. Thereupon, the athlete will learn to control those tensions. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 276-269)

There are techniques for reducing cognitive anxiety, meaning to relax the mind. A low cognitive anxiety may also lead into a low somatic anxiety. One technique is the relaxation response by Herbert Benson which is meditation but without any religious or spiritual importance. It is for calming the mind, thinking closely and decreasing the tension of the muscles. Another technique is the autogenic training in which an individual tries to create sensations. It is a self-hypnosis and takes months of training. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 269-270)

Besides that, there are two different ways of coping: The problem-focused and the emotion-focused coping. The problem-focused coping concentrate on the issue that is responsible for anxiety such as collecting information, having a goal, time management, etc. Whereas emotion-focused coping deals with the response of the mind towards the problem and involves meditation and relaxation. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 276)

Forty percent of athletes use techniques as controlling the own thoughts (such as “I am capable of doing it!”), concentrating on the exercise, being rational and having a positive mind, having social support, preparing their mind by relaxation, routines, focus, etc., having time for goals and own development and practicing hard. Hardy et al. (1996) found out that athletes use the above coping techniques and combinations of these coping techniques as well as they use problem- and emotion-focused coping techniques. Moreover, research has shown that athletes that were ready for an unforeseen situation had more success than those who were not prepared. The right level of practice is important for succeeding and overtraining is not wished. Mental preparation can affect performance in a positive way. Furthermore, there are negative influences of e.g. leaving the routine, media, problems with the coach, hurting and overtraining, which should be avoided. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 276)

For building confidence, athletes can use different techniques such as performance accomplishments, acting and thinking confidently, imagery, goal mapping, being in a good physical shape and preparation (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 321). Imagery is a replication of a positive experience in the mind. It involves remembering moments and information, which were lived before, and creating out of those images. It is comparable to a sensorial feeling; however, it only happens in the mind of the person. It helps the athlete to prepare himself for the event. If possible, it may include all the senses since it helps to have more real experiences: Visual, kinesthetic, auditory, tactile and olfactory senses. However, most athletes primarily use the visual and kinesthetic senses during imagery. Involving and recreating feelings such as anxiety or joy and thinking confidently can also improve the imagery. Hall (2001) discovered that athletes use imagery not only prior, during and after competitions but also prior, during and after trainings as well as in their free time. It was noticed that it was more often used before a competition than during or after a competition, but at practices, they preferred using it during rather than before or after the training. For explaining the reasons why athletes use imagery, Paivio (1985) separated them into motivational and cognitive functions (*see Figure 6*). Both of them can be directed to specific or more general goals. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 284 – 288)

	Motivational	Cognitive
Specific	Goal-orientated responses (e.g. imaging oneself winning an event and receiving a medal)	Skills (e.g. imaging performing on the balance beam successfully)
General	Arousal (e.g. including relaxation by imaging a quiet place)	Strategy (e.g. imaging carrying out a strategy to win a competition)

Figure 6: Cognitive and motivational functions of imagery (Adapted from Paivio, 1985, as shown in the book Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 287)

Research done by Woolfolk, Parrish & Murphy (1985) has pointed out that athletes having a positive imagery (in which they succeed) perform better than those who have a negative imagery. However, in order to deal with an often-made mistake the athlete may imagine it, followed by imagining the right reaction without the mistake. This process should be repeated a few times and ideally, the athlete may practice the specific skill after the imagery. But besides practicing how to avoid mistakes, athlete should also be ready for how to react when mistakes happen to avoid the loss of confidence in the situation. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 288, pp. 300 - 301). Furthermore, athletes imagine the surrounding of the competition or event in order to get ready for it. There are two different perspectives for imagery: Internal and external. The internal perspective is when the athlete sees the image of the skill through his own eyes as he would see it if he actually performed the move while the external perspective is when the athlete imagines observing the skill from another person's point of view who watches him. Which perspective to use depends on the individual and the task but many athletes report that they switch between both perspectives. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 288 – 289)

Imagery can help the athlete to concentrate better during a specific event. For that, the individual may think about a happening in which he/she might lose focus but at that time, imagines that the concentration does not get lost and that he/she aims the attention at the event. Moreover, imagery can help increasing confidence. The athlete may imagine performing well which may lead to the individual feeling more confident about the performance and by that, performing better. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 293 – 294)

In order to have a successful imagery training, athletes need to evaluate their existing imagery skills before including it in their program. For that, there is the Sport Imagery Questionnaire by Martens (1982) (as cited in Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 297 – 299). When knowing in what they are already skilled and in what areas they need to improve, the athletes can work on it. For individuals just starting with imagery it is helpful to train it at a place where there are no disturbances such as in their home or in the changing room. Furthermore, it makes sense to combine the imagery training with relaxation practices in order to achieve the best possible level of imagery. The imagery training should last as long as the actual performance would last, for example if the performance takes one minute, the imagery should also last one minute. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 297 – 303)

If the athlete has issues with imagery, the performance could be recorded and shown to the athlete. By seeing oneself the imagery occurs easier afterwards. Moreover, a tape including the good performances (and music the athlete likes as well as quotes which motivate the individual) can help the athlete to prepare for the next performance. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 301)

3.2 Teachers' anxiety

The DGB-index Gute Arbeit (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund-Index Gute Arbeit, in English: German Trade Union Confederation-Index Good Work) is a tool for measuring the quality of work from the perspective of employees (DGB-Index Gute Arbeit, n.d.). It shows that 33% of teachers work under stressful conditions (women 40% and men 24%). Furthermore, 34% of the teachers experience pressure due to the emotional demand of their job. Also, the mental complaints such as the level of feeling tired, exhausted, nervous, having headaches and sleeping problems are 10% higher among teachers than on average among the dependent labor force. (Fuchs & Trischler, 2017)

Anxiety can result in different assignments not being accomplished (Bilali, 2014). The blogger, Kim Constable, is a teacher who reported her anxiety issues in the internet. Doctors diagnosed her with social and general anxiety disorder and she explains that she had sleeping troubles since she was scared of facing people the next day, inconsequential mistakes were bringing her down and she felt that every person was evaluating her negatively. Furthermore, she continues that she stayed awake at night in order to prepare for the next day; from the lesson plan to her outfit so that everything would be "perfect". (Constable, 2017)

Weidenmann (1978) mentioned specific teachers' anxieties which include the fear of not being qualified. The teacher may be afraid of the student knowing more than the teacher. Another anxiety type is the integration fear, when the teacher doubts that the students accept him/her as the teacher. But also, there is anxiety of selection such as when the teacher must justify the grades. The last type is anxiety of contact. The teacher may suspect that the students have a negative image of the teacher. (as cited in Obidzinski, 2007, p. 35)

It is important for a teacher to have good self-esteem in order to enhance self-esteem in the students. Teachers with low self-esteem and confidence are often not capable of building self-esteem in their students. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers improve their own self-esteem first by thinking positively as well as accepting themselves. After feeling more confident the teacher can enhance self-esteem in his/her students. However, a single mistake should not affect what one thinks of oneself and self-esteem. It is important to differentiate between one's action from the general inner self. (Lawrence, 1996, pp. 91-92)

Different kinds of blogs in the internet deal with the issue of teacher's anxiety. They suggest ideas to other teachers on how to cope better with the feeling and how to overcome it. Eulberg, who holds a Master of Science in special education, provides various pieces of advice to her readers. She speaks from own experience and explains that training awareness or concentration may help to overcome perceived anxiety. For that, the individual can practice immersing his/herself in all the senses as well as breathing in deeply. Another tip is to start talking about the issue. As shown in the above-mentioned statistics, many teachers feel stressed and anxious about being in the classroom and it may help to talk about the issue with like-minded people. Moreover, Eulberg explains that taking time for oneself can help to achieve relaxation. Spending time doing things that one enjoys may reduce the anxiety levels. Another important piece of advice is to prepare in advance. She argues that when feeling prepared, anxiety is lower and individuals can concentrate on their free time activities rather than on the stress. Her last tip is to adjust the way of thinking. By that, she means that the teacher should not feel stressed about something that cannot be controlled by the individual. (Eulberg, n.d.)

3.3 Sport instructors' anxiety

There is not much research on sport instructors' anxiety. Therefore, the information will be deduced from the anxiety among the general population, athletes and teachers.

As stated in beginning of the chapter 3, anxiety is a problem of the general population. It is not only experienced by few people. WHO's statistic showed that 5% of all women in Europe suffer from a diagnosed anxiety disorder. In the whole world, 5.5% to 6% of women between 15 – 34 years old suffer from an anxiety disorder. (World Health Organization, 2017) This is the age most students are when they start their studies to become a sport instructor. The estimated number of unknown cases might still be higher. From these numbers, it can be deduced that anxiety is a problem among sport instructors, especially among female instructors. If assumed that the numbers of general anxiety disorders and anxiety prior to sport instructing are similar, in every sport instructing class are about 1 – 2 persons with an abnormal extent of anxiety prior to instructing, depending on the number of women and men in one class (each class consists of 20 – 30 students). Additionally, each class still has students who suffer from anxiety in an intense but 'normal' extent. This was already described in chapter 3, when mentioned that every person may feel anxious at some point (Spielberger, 1966, p. 11) and that the determination of what is normal but intense and what is abnormal is difficult (Evans et al., 2005). As stated in chapter 3.2, 33% of teachers rate their work as stressful and mental complaints are significantly higher than in other jobs (Fuchs & Trischler, 2017). As the job of a teacher and a sport instructor have similarities, such as standing in front of a group, teaching, planning ahead, it can be assumed that in a sport instructor class are between 6 – 10 students who suffer from stress and mental complaints. All these numbers show that anxiety is a common problem for sport instructors and that advice should be given on how to cope with the anxiety.

In order to be aware of their arousal level an individual needs to be able to recognize the symptoms, which are among others: Cold hands, sweating, self-talking negatively, muscle tension, butterflies in the stomach, feeling sick, headache, dry mouth, sleeping problems, not being able to concentrate and that the performance is usually better in practice. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 94-95) Other symptoms can be when an individual suffers from inconsequential mistakes or is scared of facing people the next day (Constable, 2017).

The inverted U-hypothesis which shows the relation between arousal and performance can be adapted to the sport instructors' anxiety. As among athletes, there is an optimum area of arousal in which the instructor will perform best. However, when the anxiety level is too high, the performance will drop. As mentioned in the athletes' anxiety chapter, the optimum area of arousal does not need to be in the middle of the inverted U. Depending on the individual, a person might instruct better at a low arousal level while other people's optimum might be a high anxiety level (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 92). It is important to identify the individual optimum level of

arousal for instructing. That can be done by increasing the awareness of the anxiety levels, as mentioned in the athletes' anxiety chapter. It is useful to consider arousal level as the temperature of feelings. First, the perfect temperature must be determined and then the individual needs to learn how to increase or decrease this temperature. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 94)

When able to recognize the level of arousal needed to perform well, techniques can be developed to attain the perfect anxiety level. The advice given to athletes can be adapted to a sport instructor, such as creating a routine which is done prior to a performance, or by using imagery. To control the arousal level and to reduce somatic anxiety, techniques such as progressive relaxation and breath control can be used. To reduce cognitive anxiety, the relaxation response has proven itself as helpful. (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, pp. 94-95) Also, in the teachers' anxiety chapter breathing has been mentioned as a way to cope with anxiety. Another advice is to prepare well and to practice before the event. (Eulberg, n.d.).

To improve performance, it is important to build self-confidence. As read in the chapter 3.1 athletes' anxiety, performance and self-confidence are heavily linked. Being underconfident as well as being overconfident can have a negative impact on the performance. Therefore, it is useful to determine the confidence level first. Athletes' confidence can be measured by using the sport confidence inventory (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 320). For measuring a sport instructors' confidence the questions can be adapted. Moreover, the questions mentioned in the self-confidence chapter 2.2 can be used to assess the self-confidence level such as 'What is discouraging oneself from having self-confidence and are there ways to improve it?' (Stewart, 1998, pp. 101 – 102). Subsequently, self-confidence can be built by acting and thinking confidently as well as positively (Stewart, 1998, pp. 101 – 102), imagery, performance accomplishments and preparation (Weinberg & Gould, 2003, p. 321). Moreover, it is important that no single mistake affects global self-esteem and that the instructor accepts oneself (Lawrence, 1996, pp. 91 -92). As mentioned in the teachers' anxiety chapter, good self-esteem is important to enhance self-esteem in the students (Lawrence, 1996, p. 91). It can be adapted to sport instructors, too. Instructors need to have self-esteem to create a good atmosphere in the session. The clients will notice when the instructors are insecure and do not do the movements and steps as energetic and motivated as they should. The consequence is that the clients will do the movements even smaller and with less energy. The session is not as productive and most likely, less enjoyable for the clients. Therefore, it is important that the instructors can enhance self-esteem in the clients, for which they need to have self-esteem themselves.

4 Theoretical framework of a blog

A blog can be defined as an online journal which is updated on a regular basis. It is usually written in an informal way by one individual or a small group of people. ("Definition blog", n.d.) Blogs follow a specific topic that the author, or also called blogger in this context, decides on when creating it. Furthermore, a blog includes different blog posts (=chapters) which are the regular updates that the author makes. They can post written texts but also picture and/or videos. The blogger can make the decision if the blog is private or public and can share it on social webpages such as Facebook, Instagram or twitter. Furthermore, the readers can comment on the subjects to start a discussion. (Evans, 2017)

4.1 How to create and maintain a blog

There are different webpages for starting a blog and one of the first decisions to be made is whether the platform where the blog is published is free and hosted by a different party or if the author is willing to pay for it and self-hosts it. Experienced bloggers recommend the paying versions since the domain name does not include the webpage name and the blog actually belongs to the author. However, they also say that beginners can start with a free version since it is often easier and the blogger can gain more experience before he might switch to another paying blogging platform, which is self-hosting. (Agrawal, 2019) The argument for the hosted version is that the blogger only needs to register to the service and can start blogging. There is no need for downloading a software and configuring it. (Stauffer, 2008, p. 46) The author of the thesis will concentrate on the free blogging platforms.

First, there needs to be found a free blogging platform. Agrawal, a blogger, recommends Wordpress.com or Blogger.com (they changed their name from Blogspot.com to Blogger.com) (Agrawal, 2009). Other popular options are Wix and Tumblr. All of those platform have free version but offer the possibility of purchasing more customized design or features if necessary. The most popular options are blogger and wordpress.com. (Staff, 2019) Blogger.com's advantages are that it is well combined with other 3rd party tools (for example for updates) and many authors can edit the blog easily. Besides that, it features a quick edit button which makes the editing easier. The disadvantages are that blogger.com does not offer many different customized designs and tools as well as that the whole blog entry will be shown on the main page.

The arguments for WordPress are that it is simple to install, to register and to run. Furthermore, the editor of the page (also called page tool) is an advantage. It is easy to edit the 'about' page as well as other pages but also there is the possibility to add comments and further features. Besides that, it is easy with WordPress to include 3rd party plug-ins to the blog. The main disadvantage is that it is not possible to post couple of blogs at once. (Stauffer, 2008, pp. 53 – 108) Due to the advantages of WordPress, especially the easy-to-edit as well as to register argument and its not relevant disadvantage for the author of this thesis, this report will concentrate on WordPress.

After deciding for the platform, the blogger signs up by creating an account. A name and a domain have to be chosen. (Agrawal, 2019) WordPress provides a hosted as well as self-hosted version. For the hosted platform the author only needs to register and follow the steps provided by WordPress. (Stauffer, 2008, p. 107) Before publishing it, the blogger can decide for a design or theme of the blog. It is recommended to choose a design which reflects the topic of the blog or the personality of the blogger. Furthermore, it should be easy to navigate, especially for beginners, to avoid technical issues. (Knapp, 2019) For changing the theme of the blog the author pushes the button 'presentation' in the admin interface. Now, there is in the theme area and it can be decided what theme to use. (Stauffer, 2008, p. 125)

Posting blog entries

For posting the first blog entry the blogger only clicks on the 'Write' button in the interface area. Then, the writing interface will open and there can be put a title and the author can start writing the blog entry in the text area. The text itself can be edited to bold, italic or strikethrough text, left- or right-aligned or centered and there can be bullet points etc. added. If wanted, the blogger can add a hyperlink by first copying the link and subsequently, click the 'insert link' button. The author may decide, when the link is clicked, if it will open in the same tab or a in new one.

Moreover, the blogger can add images. First, the author has to go to the upload section and click on the image. After that, he/she can write a title and a description if wanted and upload it. It will be visible in the browse mode, where it can be decided if the picture is shown completely, a reduced-size of it or only the title of the image. Then, the 'send' button can be clicked and it will be shown in the main area of the text. Besides that, WordPress provides a feature called 'more' link button. As mentioned before, in blogger.com the main page shows the whole blog entry. In WordPress, the blogger can choose if the whole blog entry is shown, especially recommended if it is a short text, or only the beginning of the entry is shown by developing a 'more' link. The

author can decide by dividing the post into two parts and drawing a line where the more area will start. The reader can simply read the beginning of the blog entry and if interested click the 'more' button to continue reading the rest of the entry.

Before publishing, the blogger can do a spelling check by pressing on the button. Another feature by WordPress is the category. On the right side of the text is the interface of categories. The blogger can add the current post to one of the already existing ones or create a new one. Then, the blog entry may be published by pressing the 'publish' button. The blogger may decide if the entry is posted right away or at a different date and time. For that, the author can activate the editing of the timestamp function and change the date and time before pressing the publish button. Furthermore, the date and time can also be put to a time which has already gone by to be able to put an entry before another one. (Stauffer, 2008, pp. 112 - 117)

After having couple of blog entries posted the author can edit and manage them if wanted. For that, the 'manage' button in the admin interface has to be pushed and a list of the latest blog entries is visible. Here, the blogger can edit individual posts, delete them or remove them from the public but keeping them in the own set-up. Furthermore, it is possible to change other configurations of the blog in the option interface. In the general options area the author can put the title and a tagline for the blog. Those will appear in the header section of the entries. Also other issues such as if the readers need to be signed in in order to leave a comment can be adjusted in this section.

Moreover, WordPress provides the feature of the creation of pages. Those pages do usually not fit into the chronological order of the entries e.g. an 'about' page, which provides details about the author, or pages that provide links or further information on the blogger's work or discussion pages. WordPress connects those pages to the main interface (usually as a link) so that the reader is able to find them. In order to build a new page, the author pushes the 'write' button in the admin interface, followed by clicking the 'write page'. In WordPress, the blogger does not need to create an about page by himself because it is already developed by the platform itself. It can be edited by pushing the button 'manage' followed by the link of the 'about' page. At the bottom of the interface page there are more choices how to edit the pages. (Stauffer, 2008, pp. 117 - 125)

Including videos

Blogs often include videos. There are two options of posting a video: It can be a video made by a third person or it can be a video created by the blogger itself. In this thesis, the author concentrates on the own video implementation since it will be a part of the future product. In order to post a video to the blog the video itself needs to be published on another webpage such as YouTube or Yahoo!. YouTube is the leading platform for videos and therefore, the report will provide further information about this option. First, the blogger must register to YouTube (if not already registered). Subsequently, the video can be uploaded and a title and description can be added. After having the video uploaded to YouTube it can be connected to the blog. For that, the blogger needs to find the XHTML code from the YouTube platform. This code is for sharing the video to a different website. When having found the code, it can be added to the blog entry. To avoid issues, the code should be in HTML and not in a text format. Therefore, the author can simply turn on the HTML editing alternative in the entry. When the code is entered the blog can be posted and the video will be visible in the entry. (Stauffer, 2008, pp. 280 - 286)

4.2 How to write a blog entry

Structure of a blog

Every blog entry will start with the heading. Therefore, the heading is an important part of the whole post. It will catch the reader's attention and he/she will read it or not, depending if the headline sounded interesting to him/her. It is recommended that the headline is realistic and not exaggerated but it still needs to be catchy and promising. To avoid boring headlines, the popular blogger Liz recommends narrowing the topic down to a certain theme. By that, the headline does not sound too vague, for example instead of writing 'how to live a great life' the blogger could say 'how to reach your dreams although you are afraid and lacking self-confidence'. Popular headline formats are 'how-to' headlines. Around 75% of the most popular blog entries on the platform Smart Bloggers have used a how-to headline. Another option are list-post headlines such as '10 tips that will help you to overcome your insecurity'. A generally known mistake is to present too much information in the headline. By already giving the answer to the question there is no need to read the blog entry anymore. Therefore, it should not include the solution to the issue. Besides that, the headline should not contain unnecessary words that do not provide any more value to the headline. The idea is to keep it simple but catchy. Last but not least it is important

that the headlines of the blog match each other. Every blog has its own style and it is convenient to keep the same style throughout the whole blog. (Liz, 2019)

The second part that a person will read is the introduction. After having caught the attention of the reader it is crucial to keep it. Therefore, the introduction plays another important role in a blog entry. A common mistake in blogging is to create a too academic introduction including many facts and researches. It is preferred to keep it emotional and to use empathy to reach the reader. For that, the blogger should imagine how another individual feels in the situation and then describe it. In that way, the blogger gives the image that he understands what the readers are feeling. A tip for including emotions in the introduction is to think about how the reader should feel when reading it (for example angry, sad or happy). Subsequently, the blogger should feel this emotion when writing the introduction. A good way to start is with a short sentence or a question. The following text should have a rhythm, for example: Is it fast or slow, loud or quiet? This rhythm can be accomplished by using short sentences and paragraphs no longer than one to three sentences and transitions. It is recommended to read the text out loud to notice breaks and if it is fluent. Besides that, the introduction should not be too long. Around 100 -200 words is enough to catch a reader's attention. (Liz, 2019)

The next part of the post is the body of the entry. Bloggers mention that many readers often scan through the text before they decide to read it. Therefore, the recommendation is to use subheadings. There should be a subheading every few paragraphs. The reader can follow the text more easily and it is better structured. All the subheadings should fit to the main heading. There needs to be a clear structure in the subheadings. Because of that, it can be helpful to write all the sub-headings down in a list. It is easier visible if the framework is not clearly designed and the headings do not fit to each other, for example because the format was changed. Furthermore, the blogger should follow the same guidelines as with the headline: Keeping it interesting but not giving the solution of the issue. (Liz, 2019)

The blogger should follow a certain formula throughout the whole blog. It is not important what formula it is but that the blogger is consistent with it, such as every section has about the same amount of words, the beginning and ending of the section are similar (for example ending with an example), subheadings follow the same rule (for example starting with a verb). Before writing the main body of the blog entry it is recommended to write down a draft about what there is to cover in the post. It helps to keep it better structured and organized.

The last part of a post is the conclusion. In blogging, the conclusion is for the blogger to tell the reader that he believes that they are able to accomplish the aim of the blog entry. If the tips and advice given in the post are useful the reader can achieve it. The important part is that the blogger also makes them feel that way. Therefore, the conclusion can be seen as a motivational talk to the reader. The author should avoid bringing up new information in the conclusion but only refer to what was said in the main body of the text. Another recommendation is (as in the introduction) that the blogger imagines how he would like the reader to feel in order to express that feeling in the conclusion. (Liz, 2019)

Language of a blog

When writing a blog, the language plays an essential part if people will read the blog. A blog in general is written in an informal or conversational way. Bloggers recommend writing as you would talk to your best friend. It makes the text easier to read for the audience and furthermore, the blogger can build a relationship to the readers. Shorter sentences are preferred over long ones as well as short paragraphs should be used. The reason is that it is easier to read and to reduce the amount of information to keep the reader interested. The recommended length of a paragraph are four lines. Furthermore, the blogger should use 'you' in order to connect with the reader. The readers will feel as if the blog was written for them. Simple language will underline it. For that, it is recommended to not use many adjectives. Besides those, contractions will help to make it sound conversational. (De Kenessey, 2015) Contractions are combinations of two words which makes them shorter. They are usually used in informal and conversational language. ("Contractions", n.d.) Furthermore, a blog should only use exclamation points rarely and no jargons at all (De Kenessey, 2015). Jargons are extraordinary words or expressions which are spoken by a certain group of people, often working related ("Jargon", n.d.).

Before publishing the blog entry the blogger may edit the post. When editing, attention should be paid especially to unnecessary information and words. A blog should not be longer than it needs to be and therefore, it is crucial to keep it as short as possible with only the necessary amount of details. Moreover, the grammar and spelling check is an important part of the editing. Although the language in a blog is informal there should not be any grammar or spelling mistakes. A good advice is to read the text out loud because it is easier to notice sentences that do not make sense and if there is a rhythm. (Liz, 2019)

4.3 How to produce a video

In order to produce a good video, the blogger should use a modern camera but also the laptop camera can be fine if there is no other option available. The camera should be placed on the level of the eyes of the person being filmed. Doing so will make the video appear more real but also the persons watching it will receive the feeling as they are communicating with the blogger. (Evans, n.d.)

A difficulty can be the length of the video. In general, videos which are shorter than two minutes are most likely to be watched to the end. However, the blogger Evans recommends that if the video needs to be longer due to content the maximum length lays between six to twelve minutes. (Evans, n.d.)

The lighting is one of the most important factors when producing a video. One way to have good and cheap light is using natural (sun) light. When filming outside the video should be shot in the morning or in the evening because during those times the sun provides a softer light than throughout the day. If the video needs to be created during the day, clouds can help to create a softer light. If the video is filmed inside, the advantage of natural light can be taken from the windows. It is important to set the camera in front of the window so that the sun does not shine directly into the objective. Besides that, overhead light should not be used since it could produce shadows on the face of the person. In order to produce an open and friendly atmosphere, it is recommended to use soft light, which means as little as possible use of shadows. To create this light, a light source should be placed on each side of the camera, higher than the eye level of the person to be filmed. Furthermore, there can be placed another light source behind the subject to avoid shadows. (Bedrina, n.d.)

Despite the lighting the background can make a bad impression of the video. Therefore, it should be clean and organized. One option is to have a wall or a big bed sheet as a background because it provides stability in color. Another option is to record the video in a room that provides professionalism such as a well decorated home office. (Bedrina, n.d.)

Another important factor is the quality of the audio. It is recommended to use a device which captures the audio well or to buy an external microphone and placing it close to the subject. (Bedrina, n.d.) Bloggers advice to also use captions/subtitles in the video because recently, people tend to watch videos without sound during the day at the office or school rather than at home ("The Top 12 Tips", 2019)

The camera should be placed on a steady surface or a tripod should be used (Bedrina, n.d.). Besides that, the composition should be considered. One option is to use the rule of thirds (see *Figure 7*). In this composition technique, it is imagined that there is a three times three grid on a picture. Objects or subjects should then be placed either where the lines cross (so called power points) or near the vertical or horizontal lines themselves. (Janney, 2017)

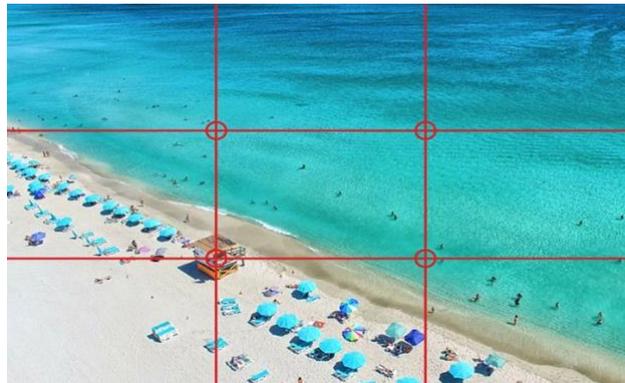


Figure 7: The Rule of Thirds (from Shutterstock as shown in Janney, 2017)

Not only the surrounding is crucial for a good video but also the subject itself. The person in front of the camera should look peaceful as well as show open nonverbal communication, which includes standing tall or sitting upright by holding the shoulders back. Other muscles of the body are not flexed and the breathing is slow. The arms should not be crossed in front of the body as it is seen as a defensive reaction. Another tip is to simply smile. When talking the person should talk more slowly than usual and concentrate on speaking clearly. (Bedrina, n.d.)

Before recording, it is good to practice. However, too much practice is not recommended because it may sound as the person is reading from a pre-written script. It may be useful to prepare a short outline including the bullet points which the individual would like to mention in the video. Moreover, there could be done a few test recordings. The blogger may watch those afterwards and can notice if words are not spoken out clear enough or too fast. It is also important to note if there are items in the background which could be moved to a different place and if the lighting needs adjustments. (Evans, n.d.)

In order to create an interesting video the angle of the camera can be changed throughout the video. The angle should only be changed via cuts but not by moving the camera when filming to avoid shakings in the video. The angle should be moved for at least 45 degrees in order for the viewer to see a difference and not only a small shifting which can be considered as more annoying than interesting. (Bedrina, n.d.)

After recoding everything the video needs to be cut and edited. For creating a professional video the editing should be simple such as clearing up noises of the background, modifying the lighting, cutting mistakes and not fitting silent situations and adding background music if needed. (Bedrina, n.d.)

5 Thesis process

The topic of the thesis was found when sport instructor students were discussing their feelings about instructing. The author discovered that some students feel uncomfortable about instructing due to anxiety. Therefore, the decision was made to base the thesis on this topic. The research problem was that young and inexperienced sport instructors feel anxious and nervous prior to instructing. In the theoretical framework, it became clear that perceived anxiety can have a negative impact on an individual's wellbeing and performance. Low self-esteem and confidence can heavily influence the life of a person. Anxiety could lead to a situation where the instructors no longer enjoy the work or studies and may start to doubt their own choices. Therefore, the thesis searched for an answer to the question 'How to cope with anxiety prior to sport instructing' or also 'How to overcome the anxiety prior to instructing'. The aim was to provide current as well as future sport students, especially at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, with guidelines of how to deal with anxiety.

5.1 Methods

The thesis employed the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research methods are used to interpret the reality with the goal of providing reasons for occurrences (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 3). The experience is not measured in regard to how many, how much or how intense (Norman & Lincoln, 2005, as cited in University of Southern California, 2019). The method used for the research process was the document analysis. The sources include reports, books, articles and publications. The author read the information and descriptive statistics which were connected to the topic. (Research Methodology, n.d.-a) Qualitative research methods were used as the research question concentrated on how to cope with anxiety rather than how many are affected. The focus was on describing the phenomenon and the ways of dealing with it. However, also quantitative data was utilized when describing how many people are affected by anxiety. It was part of the document analysis, which is a component of the qualitative research. Therefore, no quantitative research methods were used. The statistics were needed to justify the end product of the thesis since anxiety is a problem for many people and ways of coping are needed to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, the author used inductive reasoning, which is a form of qualitative research methods. It explains general statements from specific conclusions. (Bradford, 2017) In this thesis, the specific theories were general population's, athletes' and teachers' anxiety and their ways of

coping with it. During the process, sport instructors' anxiety and techniques of how to overcome it were explained by adapting the knowledge from those specific theories. The thesis was a practice-based thesis because the goal was to develop a product. The product was a blog which provided information about how to cope with anxiety felt prior to instructing.

5.2 Information retrieval

Information related to self-esteem, confidence and anxiety from books related to the topic as well as researches on similar topics were used. There was not much research available about sport instructors' anxiety. Therefore, the theory concentrated on general information related to the topic, followed by information about athletes' and teachers' anxiety. Anxiety felt in such work is comparable to that of sport instructors. This method is inductive reasoning. The books were found in the university's library as well as on its webpage Finna. On Finna-webpage, books were ordered from other universities. Moreover, the author used google scholar to find reliable sources. Furthermore, the discussion the author had with study colleagues gave further knowledge about the feelings a sport instructor has prior to instructing. The data collected for the theoretical framework of a blog was found in a book as well as in other blogs. In general, it is not advised to use blogs as a reliable source but since the end product of the thesis process was a blog, those blogs proved themselves as reliable and helpful sources regarding the creation and maintenance of a blog.

5.3 Creation of the blog

After all the necessary information had been collected, the blog was produced. The form of a blog had been chosen because the topic, how to cope better with sport instructor's anxiety, is mainly directed at young people who have just started instructing or studying. Young people are connected via the internet and capable of using the internet as a source for information. Therefore, it is useful to develop guidelines in an online format and not in a book. 88% of people between 18 to 29 years old say they work with every kind of social media (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Furthermore, individuals who feel anxious might not look for advice on how to overcome the issue in research or scientific reports but prefer using easily accessible and especially understandable information in order to overcome anxiety. For the author, the main aim is to help

as many people as possible to cope better with nervousness in an easy and reasonable way. This aim can be reached by providing information in a format on a platform which is easily accessible (online) and understandable (in form of a blog).

The platform chosen for the blog was wordpress.com because of the reason mentioned in the theoretical framework of a blog chapter such as it is simple to install, to register and to run, the offered page tool, possibility to create a homepage, etc. When creating the account a decision about the blog and domain name had to be resolved. The author opted for the following options: 'Anxiety prior to instructing', 'Anxiety prior instructing', 'Anxious prior instructing', 'Anxiety before instructing', 'Anxious before instructing', 'Sport instructor anxiety' and 'Coping with instructors' anxiety'. The possible names were sent to eight different people to gain an opinion about how interesting and catchy they sound but also if they were simple enough for the domain. When discussing the options, it became clear that the word 'prior' is too formal for the name of a blog. Two names remained after the peer feedback was received: 'Sport instructor anxiety' and 'Coping with instructors' anxiety'. After consulting the supervisor of the thesis, the decision was made for 'Coping with instructors' anxiety' because it is more descriptive by telling that methods are provided on how to deal with anxiety: copingwithinstructorsanxiety.home.blog

The title of the blog was supposed to be similar to the domain name but moreover, the sport angle should become clearer as instructor may indicate any type of instructor. Therefore, the title of the blog was chosen to be: How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety. Furthermore, a picture which shows a sport instruction session was added to the homepage.

Subsequently, a homepage was created. The author decided not to have the latest posts on her homepage but to create a separate page. Other successful bloggers recommend to not use the default homepage set by WordPress because it does not arouse interest and it is rather an old way for managing the homepage. Research done by Nielsen Norman Group shows that an individual stays 10 to 20 seconds on a webpage before closing it again. To extend this time and to convince the reader of the webpage it is important to have well structured homepage with a transparent value proposition. (Newcomer, 2019) Furthermore, the author created the 'about' page.

The blog went online on April 25, 2019. On the same day, two blog posts were published to keep first readers interested in the blog. Every second day, another blog entry was posted to have a clear structure and to provide new information to readers. Every blog post was sent to three different peers before publishing it. They provided comments about the language, the easiness

to understand the matter and the general outlook. The feedback was received via WhatsApp or in person. Peer feedback is a good technique to gain assessment because it allows students to manage their learning themselves. It helps them to become active learners. Moreover, it is helpful for the peers assessing the work since they deepen their objective assessment skills, which may help them in their own works. Falchikov (2001) explains research has shown that peer feedback improves the learning. Furthermore, peer feedback is collected in a higher amount and faster than feedback by teachers. (Liu & Carless, 2006) After all the blog posts have been published, the author finalized the thesis.

5.4 Commissioning party

When the thesis was started the commissioning party was Myötätuuuli which used to be the learning clinic of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences that provided a place where students could practice their new learnt knowledge. The blog was especially meant for students working at Myötätuuuli since many of them were young and inexperienced sport instructors who just started their studies. However, Myötätuuuli had to be closed down and the author lost the commissioning party. In consultation with the supervisor of the thesis it was decided that the thesis will continue with Kajaani University of Applied Sciences as a commissioning party. Therefore, the peer feedback and the supervisor's comments became more important. Furthermore, a cooperation with Kajaanin liikunnanohjaajaopiskelijat ry (also known under the name Loikka) was made. Loikka is a sport student association that promotes legal, professional and social interests of its members in order to develop teaching and learning. The association agreed to publish two entries in their social media (Facebook and Instagram) about the blog (see Appendix 1) and to send an electronic mail to the sport students of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences to promote the blog (see Appendix 2). Their interest was to help their members to overcome their anxiety.

6 Reliability and ethics

6.1 Theory

Reliability explains in what level the same results can be achieved if another researcher would use the same methods under similar circumstances (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Since there was no research available about anxiety of a sport instructor nor how to deal with it, the thesis and the product relied on the researches done about other population groups. Therefore, the information was collected from three different groups: Anxiety among the general population, athletes and teachers. Since the research is relying on three different aspects the reliability is improved. This category is called inter-rater reliability. Moreover, the reliability was improved by collecting the theoretical background information before the product was produced. The author proceeded step-by-step in the thesis process. Before the blog was created, all the information was gathered on the topic itself but also on how to produce a blog. After the gathering was completed, the author continued to the next step.

Validity explains in what level the instruments, which were used in the research, measure what they were supposed to measure (Research Methodology, n.d.-b). The validity in the thesis was improved by planning enough time for collecting materials and information related to the topic. The method, document analysis, was an appropriate method to find reliable techniques of how to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, the author applied the face validity. The thesis was considered valid by the author because the information found in research articles and books seemed valid since articles may be peer reviewed and publishers often have an obligation to publish reliable information.

Besides those, the reliability and validity were improved by studying material from different years. It included research done in the 20th century, in the beginning of the 21st century as well as in recent years. Moreover, material from different publisher, different author, various sources and countries was used to increase the reliability.

The ethical principles refer to the honest gathering of information and its publication. The results of the thesis were not changed and the information the author found was mentioned in the thesis. No information was left out to influence the outcome. With all the different information collected from various sources, the research is independent. Furthermore, the author followed the ethics by keeping the names of the study colleagues who experience anxiety anonymous.

6.2 Blog

The blog was reliable because it is based on the theory which was gathered for the thesis. The introduced ways of coping are based on three different population groups (general population, athletes and teachers). Furthermore, the reliability is improved by using various sources.

Moreover, the blog was created after the information retrieval was completed. Therefore, the steps were clearly separated and only information, which was valid, was published on the blog. The validity of the blog was improved by giving an appropriate period of time for the creation of the blog and the individual blog entries.

The ethics were improved by keeping the blog and its content honest. The author pointed out that overcoming anxiety is work and can only be done by practice and willingness. However, with the right amount of effort people may cope better with anxiety. Furthermore, the principles of ethics are followed by keeping the visitors of the blog anonymous.

6.3 Peer feedback

Peer feedback was collected for the decision making of the name of the blog and about every single blog posts, their easiness to be understood and their language. The sampling methods for choosing the peers was purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling is when the researcher decides for the participants relying on the own ability to judge (Research Methodology, n.d.-c). Convenience sampling is when the decision for participants is made depending on their availability (Research Methodology, n.d.-d). All participants were chosen with the help of the convenience sampling method. It was important for the process of the blog that the peers had time to read and evaluate the posts on the same or following day. For two peers, also the purposive sampling was used. They were chosen because of their availability but also because they experienced anxiety prior to sport instructing and due to that, were interested in the topic. When it was possible time-wise, the author and the peer met, discussed the blog entry and made necessary changes. When it was not possible to meet in person, the blog post was sent in form of pictures via WhatsApp and the feedback was received in form of a text or voice message via WhatsApp or via a phone call.

The reliability of the peer feedback was improved by using two sampling methods. Furthermore, it was reliable because three different persons gave feedback on the posts. More mistakes can be found, complex paragraphs can be deceptive and written simpler and more opinions gave a different point of view on the design and general outlook.

The validity was improved by giving the peers one to two days to read the blog posts and to provide feedback. The feedback sessions were preferred to be in person because the feedback could be discussed and the method provided more detailed feedback to the author. Furthermore, the feedback was valid because none of the peers were pressured to agree with the author's point of view but were free to give their own opinion.

The principles of ethics were followed by informing the peers that the blog posts were going to be published and were part of a thesis, by keeping their names and information anonymous as well as confidential and by providing them the possibility to not give feedback due to no time or own living circumstances.

7 Outcome

The objective of the thesis was to produce a blog which provided information on how to overcome anxiety. The advice should be easily accessible and understandable in order for students to gain the most benefit out of it.

The blog was published on the webpage WordPress and is available under the domain: copingwithinstructorsanxiety.home.blog. The title of the blog is 'How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety'. When reaching the webpage, the readers land on the homepage (see Appendix 3), which provides the value proposition of the blog 'Overcome your anxiety before sport instructing'. The readers are encouraged to work on their anxiety and they simply need to press a button to start with the process of overcoming anxiety. The message is supported with a picture in which a happy looking instructor holds an aerobic session. Below the image and the value proposition, there is a short welcome text. It provides in form of six sentences more details on the value proposition and the blog. In the menu, next to 'Home', there is 'About'. The about-page (see Appendix 4) clarifies for whom the blog is meant and adds some information about the author as well as her personal motivation to develop the blog.

The next menu box is called 'Anxiety'. It includes three blog posts (see Appendix 5). The lowest blog entry is called 'What Is This Thing Called Anxiety?' (see Appendix 6). It specifies the definition of anxiety and the statistics. Furthermore, the readers can find information about what the first steps for overcoming their anxiety are and they can understand that anxiety also has a positive impact on performance. Moreover, the relationship between anxiety and self-confidence is mentioned. The second blog post is '12 Signs How to Recognize Anxiety & 5 Ways How to Cope With It' (see Appendix 7). As the heading suggests the blog entry provides information on the signs of anxiety and the different techniques of dealing with it. Each technique is mentioned and in addition, a link is provided for accessing more information in a separated blog post. The third blog post is called 'How to Find Your Perfect Level of Anxiety for Sport Instructing' (see Appendix 8). It identifies the connection between performance and anxiety and subsequently, provides the steps of raising awareness of the anxiety level.

The next menu box is 'Self-confidence' and includes four blog posts (see Appendix 9). The bottommost blog entry is called 'How Your Self-Confidence Is Connected to Your Performance' (see Appendix 10), which defines self-confidence as well as differentiates between self-confidence and self-esteem but how they are connected. Moreover, it explains the relationship

between self-confidence and performance. In the last paragraph, the following blog posts are linked for assessing the self-confidence and how to work on it. The second blog entry is called 'How You Can Assess Your Own Self-Confidence' (see Appendix 11) and suggests a quick and easy way as well as a more detailed way to assess self-confidence. The next blog post is '6 Ways How to Build Your Self-Confidence' (see Appendix 12). As the heading suggests, it provides detailed information on six different techniques how to become more confident. The last blog entry 'How to Prepare and Practice for an Instructing' is the same that is linked under the menu 'Ways of coping' because it is another crucial way how to build self-confidence.

The last menu box is 'Ways of coping'. It includes a submenu, which is seen by moving the mouse on the menu box. Those submenus are named 'Calming the body' and 'Calming the mind'. All the blog posts of this section can be found by clicking on the menu box 'Ways of Coping'. Additionally, some of the blog posts are divided into those two submenus, if a reader is more interested in only either one of them. Under 'Ways of coping', there are in total seven blog entries (see Appendix 13). The lowest blog entry is the same as in the last menu box: 'How to Find Your Perfect Level of Anxiety for Sport Instructing'. It is provided in this section again because this is the first step people should begin with when dealing with their anxiety. The next blog post is called 'How to Include a Routine in Your Sport Instructing' (see Appendix 14), which explains why a routine can help with anxiety, how to develop a routine and different examples for one. The next blog entry is named '8 Tips How to Use Imagery' (see Appendix 15). First, it clarifies what imagery is and why it is considered helpful. Subsequently, it provides advice on how to use imagery. The third blog entry is '4 Basic Elements of Meditation to Reduce Anxiety' (see Appendix 16). This post is also linked to the submenu 'Calming the mind'. It explains what this technique is and the reasons for doing it as well as how to do it. The next blog post is called 'How to Prepare and Practice For an Instructing' (see Appendix 17) and identifies the reasons for preparation, what should be prepared as well as how to practice beforehand. The second last blog entry is named 'How You Can Reduce Your Anxiety by Controlling Your Breathing' (see Appendix 18) and is also linked to the submenu 'Calming the body'. It provides information on why breathing can help with anxiety, when it should be used and how to breathe in deeply and controlled. Furthermore, there is a video, which explains the breath control with an example. The last blog post of this menu is called '12 Instructions for Using Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety' (see Appendix 19), which is also linked to the submenu 'Calming the body'. It identifies what progressive relaxation is, how it can help when coping with anxiety and when to use it. Furthermore, it explains how to prepare for it and subsequently, every step of the relaxation process including pictures. Additionally, there is a video which provides all the instructions.

8 Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Use of outcome and further developments

The main objective of the thesis was to find techniques how to cope with anxiety prior to sport instructing. As anxiety is a problem for sport instructors in general but especially for young and inexperienced sport instructor students, the author's goal was to help those people by providing the advice in a blog. The blog was chosen to be the publishing platform because it is easily accessible for any person and the person may decide what topics are interesting to him/her. The outcome was a blog in which all the information the author found is published. It was segmented in different topics: Anxiety, Self-Confidence and Ways of Coping. Each of the segments provided various blog posts for readers to choose from. In the category 'Anxiety' and 'Self-confidence', the readers could find extra information about anxiety and self-confidence as well as how it might affect their instructing performance. In the category 'Ways of Coping', different techniques how to overcome anxiety were presented: Including a routine, using imagery, relaxation response, preparation and practice, breath control and progressive relaxation.

The outcome solved the research question, which was set in the beginning of the thesis. It provided answers to the question of how to cope with anxiety prior to sport instructing. The data was found in related scientific research articles. The author mainly used inductive reasoning because there is no research about sport instructors' anxiety. The blog and its technique can be used by current but also future sport instructor students at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. Since the blog is published and available in the internet, a student who experiences high anxiety prior to instructing, can easily search for advice on the blog's webpage. Furthermore, if teachers realize that a student has issues with anxiety, they may propose to look at the blog. Every other sport instructor with anxiety may consider the blog useful, too, because they can find it in the internet.

Since the outcome, or in this case the techniques of how to cope with sport instructors' anxiety, relied on three different theories (general population, athletes' and teachers' anxiety), the results could be trusted. Anxiety-coping-strategies differ only in details from each other and therefore, they can be used under various circumstances. However, the theory of sport instructors' anxiety and the techniques of how to cope with it relied on specific theories and it is not proven that they are effective to sport instructors. Accordingly, to prove the effectiveness of the coping

techniques, a research about the topic could be done in the future. Moreover, a research regarding how many students and/or sport instructors are affected by anxiety could be executed. By going deeper into the topic, the results could be more valuable and reliable.

8.2 Own learning

The thesis helped the author's own learning because she has been herself in situations prior to sport instructing in which she felt anxious. With the help of the techniques of how to deal with perceived anxiety she was able to cope better with it than before the thesis process. Moreover, it will help her also in the future because the author can provide this information to possible employees or work colleagues who experience anxiety.

Kajaani University of Applied Sciences applies generic working life competences. Every student graduating from the university is supposed to reach those competences. There are two types of competences: Professional competences, also called degree specific competences, and generic competences. The generic competences are the same to every degree program and show that the student is able to work and collaborate professionally. They are the following: Learning, ethical, working community, innovation and internationalization competence. (Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, n.d.-a)

Generic competences

The author developed skills in the learning competence. She was able to search for information online and in books regarding the topic of the thesis. Moreover, she evaluated the information whether it was reliable and could be used for the thesis research. She analyzed statistics to prove that anxiety is a general problem among people, athletes and teachers.

Furthermore, the author gained ethical competences by working to the ethical principles. The principles of ethics were followed in the peer feedback by informing the peers that the blog posts were going to be published, by keeping their names and information anonymous as well as confidential and by providing them the possibility to not give feedback. The results that were gathered for the thesis were not changed and all the information the author found was mentioned in the thesis. No information was left out to influence the outcome. By providing the

information in a blog in the internet, it is available to every person equally. During the thesis process, the author did not judge people with high anxiety.

Working community competences were gained by making decisions in regard to what information was reliable and could be used in the thesis. After the loss of the commissioning party, the author learnt to handle unpredicted situations. She was able to make the decision to continue without working life feedback. To gain feedback, she chose to involve more peer feedback in the thesis process. Moreover, due to personal contacts in working life, a cooperation with Loikka could be established. The author took part during the health day at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences where she introduced her blog and techniques how to cope with anxiety prior to sport instructing. Her organizational management skills were developed by organizing and structuring the thesis reasonable as well as by creating a time frame for it.

The innovation competences of the author improved by applying existing research on anxiety, teachers' and athletes' anxiety to sport instructors' anxiety. Furthermore, as mentioned in the last competence, she was able to find a creative solution for the loss of her commissioning party. The innovation competence was also developed by the creation of a blog and videos. The author proved that she could learn the needed expertise by herself and apply them in real life.

Moreover, the author also developed skills in the internationalization competence by improving her formal English language skills during the thesis process and in contrast to that, developed skills on how the language differed in a blog.

Degree-program specific competences

The degree specific competences are the following: Competence in physical activity, competence in health promoting physical activity and coaching, competence in pedagogy and didactics, competence in areas of physical exercise involving leadership and enterprise and competence in activity tourism. (Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, n.d.-b)

The author's goal was to gain program specific competences, especially in physical exercise areas involving leadership and enterprise by demonstrating in the thesis to be able to work in different expertise. The psychological part of athletes and instructors is not covered thoroughly in the studies and by writing this thesis about this topic, the author could develop such skills and gain competences in a different field. The thesis process did not only support her learning in regard to

sport instructors' anxiety but also in regard to the psychological mind of athletes as well as their anxiety. Those gained competences may help the author in her future job. Through the creation of the blog, the author proved that she was able to start and manage her own "brand".

Moreover, competences in health promoting physical activity and coaching were developed as well. The author could develop her knowledge of anatomy, especially when studying progressive relaxation. During that process, she also improved her instructing skills when creating the video.

Competences in pedagogy and didactics were gained by using different teaching methods in the blog. The author included text, pictures as well as videos to improve the learning of the readers.

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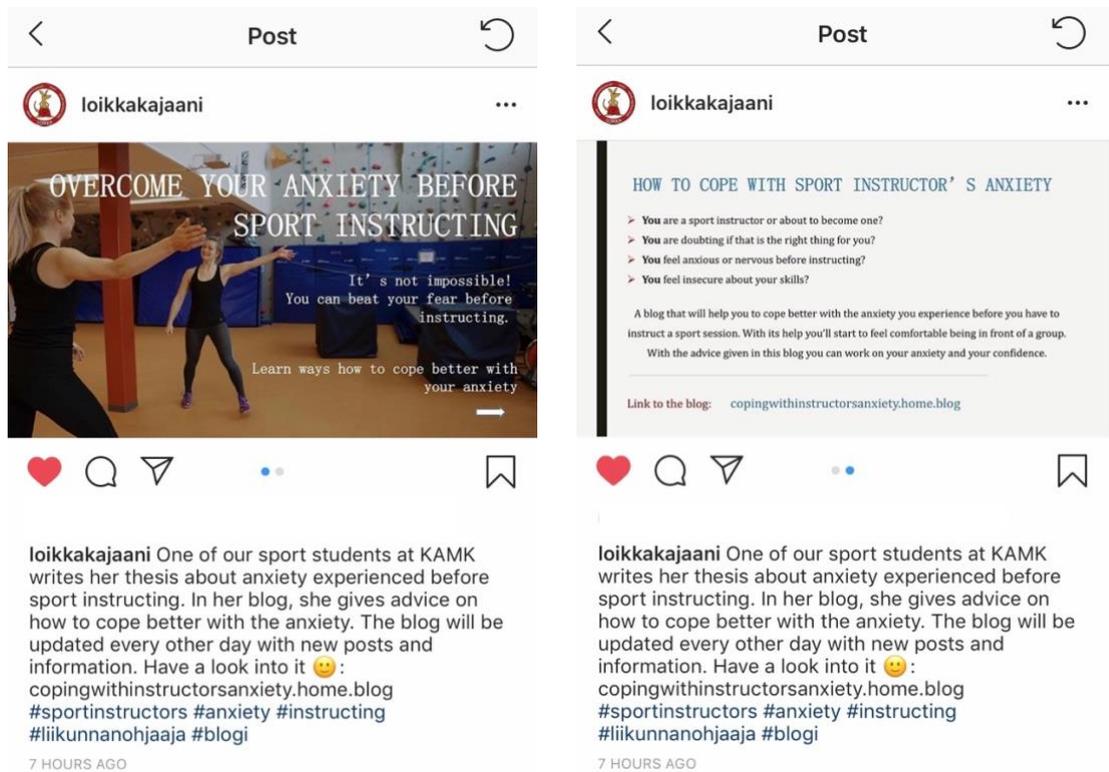
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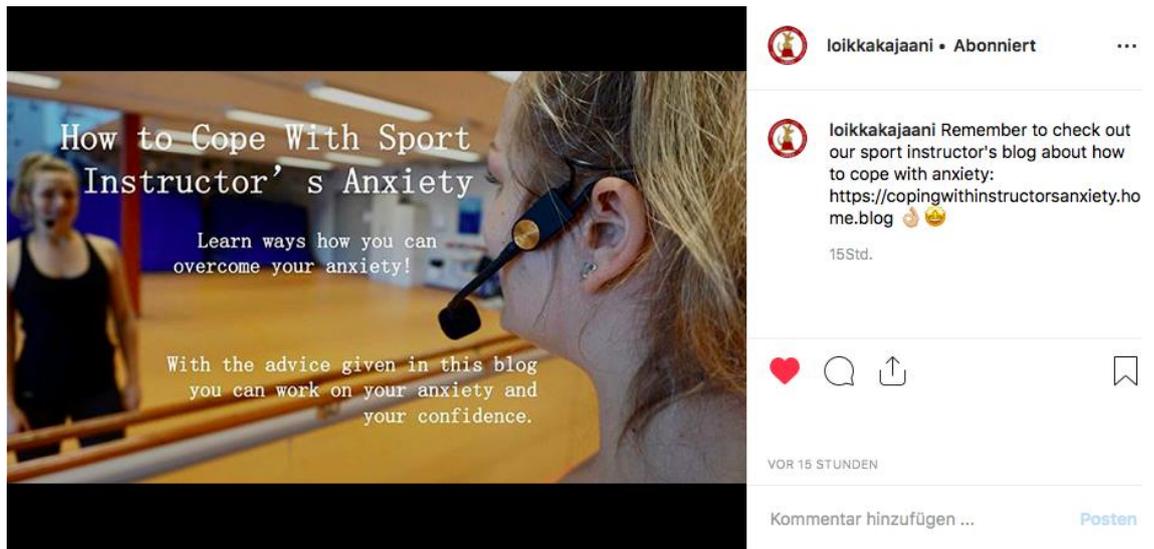
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Posts on Loikka’s Instagram, published April 25, 2019



Post on Loikka’s Facebook page, published April 25, 2019



Post on Loikka's Instagram, published May 27, 2019



Post on Loikka's Facebook page, published May 27, 2019

2. REMINDER: BLOG ABOUT ANXIETY BEFORE SPORT INSTRUCTING



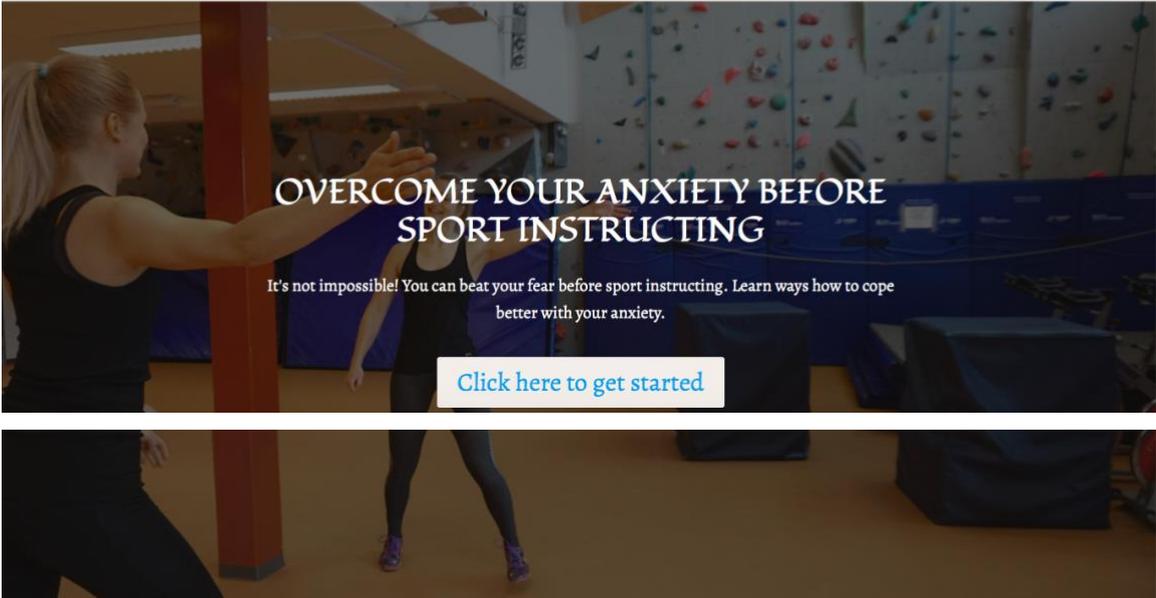
Due to a cooperation with a sports instructor student finalizing her thesis, we remind you about her blog that could be useful to you! It is a blog that will help you to cope better with your anxiety before a you have to instruct a sport session. With the advice given in this blog you can work on your anxiety and your confidence.

Check it out: <https://copingwithinstructorsanxiety.home.blog>

Email was sent May 27, 2019 from Loikka's account to all sport instructor students at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [ANXIETY](#) [SELF-CONFIDENCE](#) [WAYS OF COPING](#) ▾



OVERCOME YOUR ANXIETY BEFORE SPORT INSTRUCTING

It's not impossible! You can beat your fear before sport instructing. Learn ways how to cope better with your anxiety.

[Click here to get started](#)

Welcome!

This blog will help you to cope better with the anxiety you experience before you have to instruct a sport session. I will help you to start to feel comfortable being in front of a group.

With the advice given in this blog, you can work on your anxiety and your confidence.

[Are you ready to get on top of things?](#)

Start your way to an anxious-free life. The blog will be updated every other day with a new post including advice on how to deal with your anxiety and low self-confidence.

Advertisements



Earn money off your WordPress site

WordAds

Teilen mit:

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)

The advertisement is a blue rectangular box. On the left, the text 'Earn money off your WordPress site' is written in white. Below this text is a dark grey button with the word 'WordAds' in white. To the right of the text is an image of a laptop displaying a colorful abstract pattern. Below the advertisement, there is a 'Teilen mit:' (Share with:) section containing two buttons: 'Twitter' and 'Facebook', each with its respective social media icon.

HEY, I'M CHANTAL



I help sport instructors to overcome their anxiety they experience before a lesson.

PROUDLY POWERED BY WORDPRESS

[Follow](#) ...

The main content area has a light beige background. At the top, the text 'HEY, I'M CHANTAL' is centered. Below it is a square photograph of a woman with blonde hair wearing a red baseball cap and a colorful patterned top, looking towards the camera. Underneath the photo, the text 'I help sport instructors to overcome their anxiety they experience before a lesson.' is centered. At the bottom of the page, there is a dark grey footer bar. On the left side of this bar, the text 'PROUDLY POWERED BY WORDPRESS' is centered. On the right side, there is a 'Follow' button with a plus icon and three dots to its right.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

HOME ABOUT ANXIETY SELF-CONFIDENCE WAYS OF COPING ▾

About

You are a sport instructor or about to become one?

You are doubting if that is the right thing for you?

You feel anxious or nervous before instructing?

You feel insecure about your skills?

Whatever the reason is that brought you here, I know what it feels like, how you feel and I'm going to help you!

I'm a sport instructor student myself and used to be scared of instructing aerobics in front of a group. But guess what?! I have overcome it and enjoy doing it nowadays.



↑↑↑ That's me ↑↑↑

During a lunch break study colleagues and I were talking about the anxiety some of us feel before instructing a sport session and I realized that I want to help you guys to overcome it, too! That is why I wrote my thesis about this topic and decided to create a blog in which I can provide you with my advice.

Don't get me wrong.. You won't overcome the anxiety in one day. It's a process and with the right attitude, I'm confident **you** can do it too!

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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HEY, I'M CHANTAL



I help sport instructors to overcome their anxiety they experience before a lesson.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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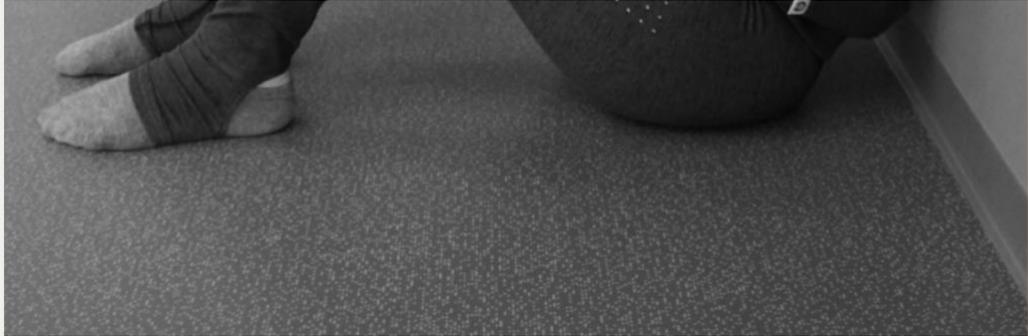
25. APR 2019

What Is This Thing Called Anxiety?

Well, I'm pretty sure that you have used the word before or at least have heard about it. But when it comes to defining what it actually is, we all are most likely clueless.

And that although many of us often experience anxiety – This weird feeling of being nervous and scared – An uncomfortable and oppressive surrounding atmosphere – No visible way out. Trapped! Captive in your own mind.





Define the word 'anxiety'

Anxiety is the concern about an unwanted event to happen. Many people refer to it as fear. And although anxiety and fear are walking hand in hand, it is not the same. Fear is when you're scared about a real danger. But anxiety is more of a perceived danger which is not actually dangerous.

Scientists refer to two different anxieties.

1. You may feel anxious because you're generally an anxious person. It's part of your personality.
2. Or it's used to refer to the state of mood, which changes all the time.

Anxiety can show itself mentally in form of negative thoughts and/or physically (e.g. sweating, feeling sick, ...).

Understand the numbers

Before you start freaking out about your anxiety, I can assure you that you're not alone with the issue. Actually, 3,6% of the human population suffer from an anxiety disorder. As you might already think, women are more often affected by it than men.

Another interesting fact is that the age doesn't play a major role in anxiety disorders. But there seems to be a trend which shows less anxiety in a higher age (starting from + 60 years).

Anxiety is a problem of the general population. Those numbers mentioned above are only **diagnosed** anxiety disorders. However, there are many people feeling anxious in everyday situations who are not diagnosed with it. The line between an intense but normal anxious reaction and an abnormal one is quite thin.

Be aware of your anxiety

The anxiety we, as sport instructors, deal with is often related to our performance. I mean, you might think you can't remember a certain choreography or you're doubting your own skills. But guess what, because you're anxious, it'll influence your performance. A vicious cycle.

Break the cycle!

Yes, you have read correctly. It's no witchcraft and you CAN break the cycle! It'll take some time and definitely, some effort to do so, but believe me, it'll be worth it.

For you, to work on your anxiety, it's important that you are aware of it. You must know if your anxiety level is high or low. And you must know when you perform at your best – at a high or low anxiety level. You can find more information about the topic from [here](#).

Recognize the positive effects

So far, we've referred to anxiety as a negative *'thing'*. But the good news is you don't need to get rid of all of your anxiety because it does have a positive impact on your performance, too.

When you reach your perfect anxiety level your attention can focus ideally on the event. However, if your anxiety level is too low you can't concentrate on the important parts.

See the relation to your self-confidence

Not only your anxiety has an effect on your performance but also how confident you feel. A right amount of self-confidence can improve your performance but non-existing and too much confidence can have a negative impact.

You can find more information about the topic under [Self-confidence](#).

Find ways how to cope with your anxiety

When you know what's your perfect anxiety level and if your anxiety is usually too high or too low, you can start working on the coping. I'll provide tips in different posts here on this blog and you can decide yourself which ones you want to try.

Further reading:

Spielberger, C. D. (1966). Theory and Research on Anxiety. In C.D. Spielberger. *Anxiety and behavior*. New York: Academic Press.

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

World Health Organization. (2017). Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders. Global Health Estimates. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/254610/WHO-MSD-MER-2017.2-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

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27. APR 2019

12 Signs How to Recognize Anxiety & 5 Ways How to Cope With It



Yes, most people know when they're anxious. Also, most people know some advice what to do when they feel anxious. But what about **you**? Do you know the signs of anxiety? Do you consider yourself anxious? Do you know how to cope with it? Or is it more of a mystery to you?

You can recognize anxiety by different symptoms. Recognizing it can help you to realize you **do** have anxiety. But it can also help if you see one of your friends or work colleagues having troubles with anxiety. In any case, knowing the signs and ways how to deal with it can make your life way more comfortable and less stressed.

12 signs how to recognize anxiety

There are different symptoms of a high anxiety level. Anyway, you might not have all of them but only several. There is no certain number or standard that identifies anxiety but those signs can give you an idea:

- Your hands are cold and/or covered in cold sweat.
- You sweat more than usual.
- You feel the need to visit the bathroom more often.
- You have a confused look in your eyes.
- You flex your muscles more often/harder.
- You feel like you're sick
- You have headache.
- Your mouth feels dry.
- You have troubles sleeping.
- You can't really concentrate on anything.
- You talk and think negatively.
- You perform better in practices than in instructing sessions.

5 ways how to cope with anxiety

At first, you need to find your own perfect anxiety level. You can find information about that in another blog post from [here](#).

When you understand what your perfect anxiety level is, you can work on reaching that level. The options are that you are usually too anxious, which means you need to calm down. Or that you are not excited enough and need to get more anxious. These two advice are for either of your scenarios:

- [Routine](#)
- [Imagery](#)

The following advice can be divided into two sub-groups. As you might have noticed before, the signs can be mental (thinking negatively) or can show themselves physically (flexed muscles, etc.).

If you want to relax your body, release the muscle tension and make use of your breathing, you should read the following blog posts:

- [12 Instructions for Using Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety](#)
- [Controlling the breathing](#)

If you want to calm especially your mind, which may lead into calming your body, have a look at [Meditation](#).

1 way how to overcome anxiety

In the end, there is only one way to overcome it. Only one way how you can overcome it.

WORK, WORK, WORK

Nobody else can do it for you. You need to want it and you need to work on it. It'll take time and you might still experience anxiety more often than others but it's doable. Just remember that every process takes time. But afterwards, you'll enjoy instructing instead of freaking out about it!

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29. APR 2019

How to Find Your Perfect Level of Anxiety for Sport Instructing

By now, you do know that you're anxious and nervous before instructing a sport session. But how to deal with it, is still a question for you. So far, you haven't figured out what's the best way to cope with this anxiety.

 Follow ...

But before you can even work on ways of how to deal better with it, you need to figure out with what level of anxiety, **YOU** perform best. Some of you might have the best performance with a lower anxiety level, while others with a higher. But how do you find out that perfect point of anxiety level?

No worries. In this blog post I'll provide you with information about finding that perfect level. That point, where the anxiety has mainly positive effects and no negative ones.



How anxiety is connected to performance

For you, to work on your anxiety, it's helpful to understand some background information. As mentioned before, your anxiety is highly connected to your performance. It may have positive and/or negative effects. Which ones, is up to you.

One of the most popular theories is the inverted U-hypothesis. It suggests that if you're not too excited, your performance will be quite bad. But when your anxiety level is rising, your performance is gonna get better, too. Until you reach your optimum point – the perfect level of anxiety.

After that, when the level of anxiety is getting higher, your performance will drop immediately. Now, your anxiety level would be too high..

BUT, this theory isn't perfect either. Because, as you might have noticed, it means everybody performs best in the middle of the level of anxiety. Which might not be the case for all of you. Also, the perfect level doesn't need to be a 'point' but could also be more of a 'zone'.

How YOUR anxiety is connected to YOUR performance

Another popular theory is the 'individual zones of optimal functioning (IZOF) model'. It suggests that your performance can be best in the lower part of your anxiety level, in the middle or in the higher part. But where it's best, depends on you – as an individual.

There isn't **the** perfect anxiety level because every person might have a different one. Also, the theory says that it's not necessary an optimum **point** but more of an optimum **area** of anxiety.

How you become aware of your anxiety

Well, before you can control your anxiety level you need to know it's there!

First step: Best performance

The easiest way of getting to know the own anxiety level is simply monitoring yourself. That means, you think back to your best performance during sport instructing (e.g. the best aerobic sessions you held). Try to remember it as good as possible for about 5 minutes. Try to remember the session, how you felt, if you were nervous, ...

After recalling all those memories, you'll fill out this table. You mark the first one (about performing) with 1 (which means super well), since you're remembering your best instructing session. The rest you fill out, depending on your own feelings.

Remember, that **there isn't a right or wrong!**

Performed super well	1	2	3	4	5	6	Performed super badly
Felt super relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt super anxious
Felt super confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt super unconfident
Felt in control	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt like I had no control
Muscles were relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Muscles were tense
Felt super powerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt super exhausted
Positive talk to myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	Negative talk to myself
Was really concentrated	1	2	3	4	5	6	Was really unconcentrated
Felt not much effort	1	2	3	4	5	6	Felt big effort
Had high energy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Had low energy

Second step: Worst performance

After you've filled out the table for your best performance, you'll do the same thing for your worst one. Already then, you may be able to see how your emotions are connected to your performance.

Many people see big differences between the emotions during their best and their worst performance. How about you?

Third step: Following practices and sessions

Yes, you could stop after the second step. But for you, to get the best out of this exercise, you should continue. Fill out the table after the next practices and especially, after the next actual instructing sessions.

It's good for you to understand the relation between your feelings, your anxiety and your performance. After completing the table couple of times, you'll see that you'll be more aware of your emotional state.

How to work on your findings

When you've filled out the table several times, you can see a pattern. Is your good performance connected to a high or low state of anxiety? Are you usually too anxious or too relaxed for a good performance? And so on

Now, you're aware of your emotional state, your anxiety level and how those are connected to your performance. Start working on lowering or increasing your anxiety for reaching your best performance.

The best tip, I've heard, was that you should think about the anxiety level as a temperature of feelings. First, you need to find out the right temperature – in our case the right anxiety level. And then, you need to increase or decrease to reach the right temperature.

Great!

After this post, you know your perfect level of anxiety. Or you'll know soon because you've read this post first before completing the checklist. But anyway, you're gonna be aware of your anxiety. This is the first step to get your emotions and anxiety under control.

Now, you can start working on techniques of how to reduce or increase your anxiety. I'm confident that you can do it and become less stressful about the instructing!

Follow my next posts to find ways of how to reach your perfect anxiety level.

Further reading:

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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How Your Self-Confidence Is Connected to Your Performance

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25. APR 2019

How Your Self-Confidence Is Connected to Your Performance



Everybody thinks you're good in what you're doing. You're a great instructor. You remember your steps and you have this amazing atmosphere that you create in your classes.

Well, but then you don't agree with any of that. You think it's not good enough. The clients don't have fun. It's not challenging enough or too challenging and you're doubting that you can recall all those freaking movements.

This phenomenon I just described is low self-confidence. It affects your performance and your sessions because you don't trust in your own skills. But when working on it you **can** improve your classes but also your whole life. Walking through life with high self-confidence is just way more comfortable.

[How to define self-confidence](#)

Self-confidence is the faith, you have in yourself, to make a good performance. Basically, it means that you believe in yourself and your own abilities and skills. You believe that you'll succeed.

As in anxiety, there are two different self-confidence types we refer to:

1. If you're in general a confident person, it's part of your personality. This kind of confidence is considered quite steady.
2. On the other hand, there is self-confidence which is changing from moment to moment, depending on the situation and the mood (state-like confidence). It's more unsteady.

Both are obviously connected. If you have low self-confidence in general you're most likely to have low state-like confidence as well.

How self-confidence and self-esteem are connected

Self-esteem is the general worth you see yourself. If you think you can catch up with the ideal self you have high self-esteem. But if you feel like you don't reach the optimum self, your self-esteem is low. To put it simple: It shows how you evaluate yourself to certain values.

Self-esteem and self-confidence are connected and many people refer to it as one and the same thing, but it's not.

Self-confidence is how well you believe in your skills of succeeding. While self-esteem is more like a judgement of yourself. Obviously, low self-esteem can have an impact on your self-confidence, e.g. if you think negatively about yourself, you most likely also think that you won't succeed in an event.

But enough of all those definitions!

How self-confidence can influence your performance

First of all, YES! It can influence your performance and your instructing sessions. To a positive as well as to a negative extent.

Theories suggest that if your confidence is quite low, your performance is low, too. But when your confidence level is rising, so is your performance level – until we reach the perfect point (there you wanna be!). After that, the confidence level is getting higher but your performance will drop. You're basically too confident.

As you see, those two components are highly connected. With too low or too high self-confidence you can't reach your best performance. But with a good amount of confidence you can climb up to your own best performance level in sport instructing.

One thing I'd still like to add. Self-confidence can't overcome non-existing skills. If you don't have the ability to do something, good self-confidence can't change it.

How to improve your self-confidence

You're lucky. There are many different ways how you can work on your self-confidence. The first step is to recognize what your own level of confidence actually is. You can find information about it from [here](#).

After knowing your level of self-confidence you can start working on improving it. Most of the advice are quite simple but proven to be effective. You can find tips in the blog post [6 Ways How to Build Your Self-Confidence](#).

Further reading:

Lawrence, D. (1996). *Enhancing self-esteem in the classroom* (2. ed.). London: Paul Chapman.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books.

Stewart, W. (1998). *Self-development: Building self-esteem: How to replace self-doubt with confidence and well-being*. Plymouth: How to books.

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

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7. MAY 2019

How You Can Assess Your Own Self-Confidence

Before you can even start on working on your self-confidence, it's quite important that you understand your own level of self-confidence. How can you work on something that you don't even know you have or don't have?

By assessing your self-confidence level, you can see in what kind of situations you're confident and in what situations less confident. And after that, you can start to develop your self-confidence, especially in those situation, when you're quite little confident.

What you already know

By now, you already understand what self-confidence and self-esteem are and how they are both connected to each other. But you also know the relation between your self-confidence and your performance.

You understand that if you're not confident enough, your performance can't be at its best. But you also understand that overconfidence has a negative impact on how you'll perform.

If you're not sure if you followed everything, I just mentioned, just have a (or another) look at the blog post [How Your Self-Confidence Is Connected to Your Performance](#).

How you can identify your self-confidence fast and easily

There are different ways how you can assess your own self-confidence. The following way is a quick and easy way to identify it but doesn't give that specific answers.

You can simply answer the questions (best write your answers down – better to remember) and you get an idea about your confidence level:

- When are you **too** confident?
- How do you deal with mistakes?
- How quickly do you get over those mistakes?
- When are you doubting yourself?
- Is your confidence steady during the whole workout when you're instructing?
- Are you unsettled or doubtful in specific situations?
- Do you look forward to and/or enjoy challenging instructing sessions (e.g. new songs, new steps, new clients, etc.)?

How you can identify your self-confidence more specifically

Instructions

Read the following questions and assess your self-confidence e.g. for the last course or the last 6 months. In each question, you mark how much percentage you had not enough, too much or just the perfect amount of self-confidence.

Example

Example question	Underconfident	Confident	Overconfident
How confident do you feel just before the lesson starts?	20%	70%	10%

The percentage answers for underconfident, confident and overconfident should always be 100% in total. How you divide the 100% is completely up to you. You can put 100% to one of them and 0% to the others or divide it between two or all three options.

Assessment

How confident are you in regard to ...	Underconfident (%)	Confident (%)	Overconfident (%)
Your ability to perform the movements (e.g. steps, rhythm, etc.)?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to make important decisions during a workout?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to focus?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to perform under pressure?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to instruct a workout successfully?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to put 120% to have a good instructing?	_____	_____	_____

Your ability to control your emotions during an instructing?	_____	_____	_____
Your own physical condition?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to connect well with your clients?	_____	_____	_____
Your ability to cope with mistakes?	_____	_____	_____

Scoring

Now, you can simply add up all the percentages of each of the columns (for underconfident, confident and overconfident). After that, you divide each of the three numbers by 10.

The better your number of 'confident', the closer you're at your perfect level of self-confidence. But if you scored high numbers in 'underconfident' or 'overconfident', the level of confidence might influence your performance negatively and you should work on it.

Also, you can check if there certain areas you need to improve in by checking the questions.

How you can work on your self-confidence

Now, you know if you have too little confidence, too high or if you're actually quite at your best level of confidence. The next step for you will be to start working on your self-confidence (except if you already have the perfect amount of self-confidence).

You can find tips on how to improve your self-confidence [here](#). And I'm pretty sure, with the information about what areas you still need to work on, you can become more confident soon! Just be confident about it. 😊

Further information:

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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9. MAY 2019

6 Ways How to Build Your Self-Confidence

Somehow, there's the belief that you're either confident or not. Many people don't think about that their self-confidence can actually be built. It's no magic and it doesn't need any life-changing experience. It's just needs a little bit of work.

Now, you might think 'What kind of work?'. Well, no worries! It doesn't require anything special. Only some work on yourself, on your thinking, a little practice and planning. Doesn't sound too bad, right?

I'm gonna explain you some good tips on how you can develop your self-confidence and believe me, in a short time you'll feel more confident, especially about your own instructing.



What to read first

If you haven't already read the other blog post related to self-confidence, I recommend you doing that first. The first one provides you with information about [what self-confidence is and how it's related to your instructing performance](#).

The other one will explain [how you can assess your own self-confidence](#). It's important for you to know how confident you are and on what areas you should work on **before** you actually start working on your confidence.

Ways to improve your confidence

There are different ways how you can work on your self-confidence. The best is, of course, if you follow all the tips to improve your self-confidence. But if some of them don't feel natural to you, you can also leave them out:

- Successful performances
- Acting with confidence
- Thinking with confidence
- Physical shape
- Preparation
- Imagery

I'll explain each of the advice in more detail for you to get most out of it.

1.Tip: Perform successfully

It's pretty easy to believe: If you're successful in an instructing, you'll feel more confident and your next workouts will be successful, too. But the successful performance doesn't necessarily need to be an actual workout with clients. It can also just be a good practice session, in which you succeeded.

Success is a quite wide concept. What means success?

Well, it doesn't need to mean that everything was perfect. But it can simply mean that you didn't forget one of the steps, that you usually forget. Because then, **you'll** feel like you had success. And that's the main thing. **You** need to feel successful!

But now you might think 'What if I never have a successful performance?'. Practice, practice, practice! Practice is important for you to have success. If you don't feel secure with a series of steps, then practice. The success will come eventually, followed by the confidence, which in turn is followed by more success.

It can be useful to set short-term goals for yourself. If the whole series of steps is too difficult, divide it and concentrate on the first part. After mastering it, you'll already feel successful and the second part will come way more natural to you.

Another advice is to reconstruct a real instructing of a workout. It creates more pressure on you but when you succeed, the confidence is raising way higher. For simulating this kind of situation, you could ask your friends or study colleagues to join in your practices.

2. Tip: Act with confidence

It sounds too simple to be true. But it's true! You'll be more confident, if you simply act confidently – especially in situations when you start to feel less confident.

Let's imagine you make a mistake while instructing. Immediately, you'll lose part of your confidence, your clients will notice and the workout won't be as good as it could have been. For you, to instruct an effective workout, you need to have confidence. A high-confident instructor can produce more energy in a class than somebody with low confidence.

That's why you just need to act like you're confident. But how do you do that? Think about people, who are confident. How do they look? How do they present themselves?

- Keep your head up high!
- Keep your shoulders back!
- Control your expression on your face. Just smile!

It's all about your body language. If you keep your head and shoulders hanging after a mistake and your face shows pain, people'll definitely notice that you're not confident. So, just don't do it! Act like you didn't lose your confidence and people will believe you. And if people believe you, you'll believe yourself, too!

3. Tip: Think with confidence

As simple as the last tip but still successful: Just think confidently and you'll feel confident. It's so simple because confidence is based on the belief of being able to succeed.

Usually, people are confident and because of that, believe in their skills and in their success. But if you aren't confident, go the other way round: Believe that you'll succeed and that you can do it. And confidence will follow.

Thinking with confidence is highly connected to your self-talk. If your self-talk is positive, your self-confidence will increase, you'll focus and by that, perform better. But if your self-talk is negative, it won't support your success but prevent it. It'll increase your anxiety and self-doubts.

Positive self-talk can be **motivational**, e.g. 'I can do it', or **instructional**, e.g. 'Stay focused' or 'Remember the next step'. You can work with two different strategies on your negative self-talk:

By stopping

You stop your negative thoughts before they can even have an impact on your performance. You quickly think about the unwanted situation, but then you have a trigger to stop the thoughts. The trigger could be just the word 'STOP' or you're clapping your hands.

When the negative thought appears in your mind, you simply say 'stop' (or clap in your hands, etc.) and concentrate on your performance.

By changing the negative to positive self-talk

It's difficult to not have any negative thoughts. So, instead of stopping them you can also change them to positive thoughts. For that, think about all the negative thoughts you usually have. Now, you find a positive thought for the negative one:

Example of negative self-talk	change to	Positive self-talk
You're stupid. How could you forget that step again?		Everybody forgets a step once in a while. Now, focus on the next steps.
I will never remember this series of steps.		Just take one step at the time and you can do it! I believe in myself.

As in practicing the stopping, you let the negative thought appear in your mind. Then, breathe in deeply. When you start breathing out, relax and say the positive statement out loud couple of times.

4. Train your physical shape

I know, every advice sounds so simple but believe me, they'll really help you to build your self-confidence.

You should try to be in your best physical condition. That means, you're fit, you can keep up with your clients and you train to keep that condition. When you know that you can perform well, you feel more confident and you'll perform well. That's why your own training is important, too.

But not only the training itself matters. It's also important that you have a healthy nutrition, enough free time and sleep. If you're healthy in general and satisfied with your life, you'll be more confident and your performance will be better.

5. Prepare

When you expect to instruct a good workout, you'll feel confident. But you can't expect to instruct well, if you're not prepared. Preparation's a crucial part for performing well. And if you feel prepared, you'll feel more confident about the workout, anyway.

That's why you should always practice and prepare for the next workout. A good plan includes the workout, what you'll instruct, but also having alternatives ready in case something doesn't work out as planned. You can find more information in the blog post [How to Prepare and Practice for an Instructing](#).

6. Use imagery

Imagery has many positive effects and building confidence is one of them. When using imagery, you imagine yourself performing a skill. It can be a skill that you haven't done before or that you consider hard.

Basically, in imagery, you practice something, but it only happens in your mind. If you succeed in your mind, you'll feel more confident, which will affect your performance positively.

I have another blog post about [imagery](#) where you can find way more information about the topic and how to use imagery. Just have a look!

Become more confident

Confidence is important for your performance. It can have a positive or negative impact on it. That's why you should work on it and try to get the best out of it.

By simply acting and thinking with confidence, you can already change a big part of your confidence. But by including all the other tips about successful performances, your physical shape, preparation and imagery, you'll feel so quickly more confident that you don't even realize it.

The only thing left for you to do is start and in no time, it'll have a great impact on your instructing but also on your everyday-life!

Further reading:

Lawrence, D. (1996). *Enhancing self-esteem in the classroom* (2. ed.). London: Paul Chapman.

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How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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HEY, I'M CHANTAL



I help sport instructors to overcome their anxiety they experience before a lesson.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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1. MAY 2019

How to Include a Routine in Your Sport Instructing

A routine – how can that even help?

Well, my guess is that many of you already have a routine before instructing a sport lesson - maybe even without knowing it. It often happens naturally, but still it's important for the success of your instructing.

Anyway, if you want to know more about routines, why they are helpful and get some examples of how a routine can look like, you definitely should continue reading.

Why routines help

You can perform a routine before or during you're instructing a course, depending on the individual lesson. It doesn't matter if it's before or during but it'll help you – help you to perform better.

But why?

1. You're gonna concentrate better.
2. You're gonna get rid of disturbances.
3. You're gonna be more confident.
4. You're gonna lower your anxiety.

Sounds good, right? Just by completing a simple routine before starting the lesson, you can get those four benefits and have a better performance, a better exercise lesson and by that, most likely more fun.

A routine will help you to organize yourself and the time before the begin of the sport lesson. You'll feel more prepared and concentrated when it's time to start.

How to develop a routine

What kind of routine you'll have, is up to you. It can be short or long. Easy or complex. Or anything in the middle. Basically, whatever suits you and your courses.

The main thing is that **YOU** feel comfortable with the routine. The only important part for you to consider is, that the routine helps you to start focusing. It should help you to focus on the lesson to come and your performance.

Because of that, it's good if the routine is organizing your thinking and emotions. It should lead you to feel concentrated in the here and now.

Of course, you can try at first, what kind of routine will help you. But remember, a routine is something what you'll do every time before an instructing. There should be some kind of pattern which'll prepare you mentally for the lesson to come. That's why you shouldn't change the routine too drastically every single time.

What examples are there

So far, so good.

But you might want to know some examples of how a routine can look like. But again, those are just examples. You can make up your own routine, which doesn't look anything like those here. It's your call.



Example 1: Before instructing a step aerobic lesson

1. Adjust your step board.
2. Adjust the music box.
3. Adjust the microphone.
4. Test if it's working by breathing in the micro (e.g. breathe in it twice).
5. Take a deep breath.
6. Look in the mirror and smile at yourself.
7. Turn around to the clients.
8. Clap in your hands and say 'Let's start'.

This is an example for a rather simple and medium long routine. You can add or leave out the steps, that don't help you, and adjust them if needed.

Example 2: Before instructing a circuit training

1. Read through your lesson plan.
2. Perform every movement once.
3. While performing it, remember how you'll instruct it and the common mistakes.
4. Make sure everything is ready.
5. Feel the anxiety in your body.
6. Let go of part of the anxiety by relaxing the muscles.
7. Take a deep breath.
8. Picture the lesson.
9. Picture, how you want to be and what you'll say.
10. Open the door and welcome the clients.

This routine is rather complex and quite long. It'll take some time to go through the routine every time and because of that, it isn't suitable for everyone.

Other routine components can be e.g. listening to a certain song, wearing a specific piece of clothes, tying your shoes a particular way, etc.

Build your own routine

Now, you can start working on your own routine. Find ways that make you feel focused and prepared for instructing a lesson. Try different things and when you find something that works, stick with that!

I'm confident that there's a routine, which will suit you!

Further information:

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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3. MAY 2019

8 Tips How to Use Imagery

I know what's in your mind right now. What the hell is imagery and how can it help me to overcome my anxiety?

YES, it does have something to do with an image or imagining. But it's not only that. Imagery can prepare you mentally for what is to come!

It's a picture, you have in your mind, in which you practice your own performance. It may have a huge influence on your instructing performance and your confidence. When you're able to use imagery well, it can reduce your anxiety and you'll feel way more comfortable when the instructing starts.

What is imagery

Basically, imagery is a memory. You remember a positive experience and create an image in your mind. But you can also imagine a new event. The main thing of imagery is that you'll feel prepared for your instructing and your performance.

Probably all of us use imagery in our daily life. And most likely, all of you have used imagery before instructing an aerobic training. But the key lays in getting the most out of these images in your head.

Why use imagery

Easy: By simply imagining that you'll succeed you are more likely to succeed!

First of all, you'll concentrate better. By imagining you won't lose your focus. Your focus will actually stay with the performance. Sounds simple, right? The same goes for your confidence – you'll imagine you're gonna perform well and your confidence may increase and by that, your performance, too.

Another reason is that you'll simply feel prepared for the instructing. By imagining everything, you'll feel like you're in control and ready for it.

And all those points, I just mentioned, will lead to less anxiety. Why? Because when you feel ready and prepared, focused and confident, your anxiety level is automatically lower. Also, it'll help you to deal better with your other emotions. You can imagine a positive response, when you'd usually react negatively (instead of getting angry, you imagine you'll take a deep breath).

But imagery has another positive effect. It can help you to remember new things, e.g. new choreographies, new steps, etc.



How to use imagery

There are many different ways of using imagery. But even if you already use it, I'd still recommend you to stick with me and continue reading. You might learn something new.

1. Use perspective in your imagery

There are two different perspectives to use imagery: Internal and external.

The internal imagery is when you see all those images through your own eyes as if you'd actually perform the skill yourself. But the external imagery is from the point of view of another person, who might be watching you.

Which perspective you'd prefer, depends on you. There is no right or wrong, but you can use either one of them. You can also use both perspectives. The only important thing is that you can create clear images.

2. Involve your senses

It's good, if you can involve different senses because the images will become more real. Now, you might think "How am I supposed to do that? Imagining is only involving one sense". But the visual sense isn't the only important one.

All the other senses are important, too. When you actually perform a skill, you do involve more than one sense. Just imagine an aerobic workout: First, you see yourself performing. But then, you hear the music, you feel the rhythm, you know where your body is and where it will move (=kinesthetic sense), you might taste some sweat, etc.

When you involve all the senses in the imagery, you'll create a much more alive image.

3. Involve your feelings

Also, creating feelings as joy or anger can make your imagery more valuable. Besides that, you might control them better by imagining them.

An example: If you usually get upset when you forgot a step in an aerobic instructing, you can imagine it. But now, you'll handle it differently in your imagery. So, when you feel the anger, you start controlling it and focusing back on the workout. In the next aerobic lesson you'll remember it and handle it as practiced.

4. Time your imagery

You can use imagery whenever you want. But I can give you some recommendations:

- Before and after training
- Before and after instructing a workout
- If you have breaks in your workout, then in those
- In your free time

If you are just starting with imagery, it's best to practice it in a place with no distractions e.g. at home, in the changing room, etc.

The imagery should last the same amount of time as the actual skill/movement would last, too. That means e.g. if you imagine a series of movements, that lasts in real life 1 minute, the imagery should also last 1 minute.

5. Use positive imagery

In general, it's best to imagine positive things (=you succeed in the instructing). If you imagine you'd be successful, it's more likely that the outcome will be good. Besides that, it'll enhance your self-confidence.

Anyway, it's also useful to imagine common mistakes, you're doing. When you imagine those, you should imagine right afterwards how it should be done correctly. Repeat that process several time.

6. Relax and imagine

To enhance the benefits of imagery, it's useful to combine it with relaxation techniques. It'll help you to be more focused on the skill and by that, the imagery is more successful.

Blog entries about different relaxation techniques:

- [Muscle relaxation](#)
- [Breathing exercise](#)
- [Meditation](#)

7. Try videotaping

It might be hard for you to imagine yourself if you haven't seen yourself performing. Sometimes, a mirror isn't enough. That's why videotaping can be an option for you. After watching the tape couple of times, you can start imagining yourself performing.

AND... You could also edit the video, put some background music and even motivational quotes in it and include it in your routine before performing. But remember, that the performance in the video should be a good one then.

(Just as a reminder: When videotaping your instructing, remember to ask your clients for permission.)

8. Evaluate your own imagery skills

You can check how good you're in imagery. It can help you to see on which parts you still need to work on. The test is adapted from the 'Sport Imagery Questionnaire' (Martens, 1982):

Imagine each situation as detailed as possible. It's best if you close your eyes for 1 minute and start relaxing. After you imagined it, you can rate it by the following numbers:

1. No image present
2. No clear image but anyway, you can recognize it
3. Medium clear/vivid image
4. Clear and vivid image
5. Really clear and vivid image

First step: Practice alone

Decide for a certain movement e.g. a short series of aerobic dance steps. Imagine yourself doing those **alone** for 1 minute. Now, you can fill out the table.

A) How clearly did you see yourself doing the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
B) How clearly did you hear the sounds/noises of the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
C) How clearly did you feel yourself making the movements?	1	2	3	4	5
D) How clearly were you aware of your emotions?	1	2	3	4	5

Second step: Practice with others

You'll practice the same move as before. But this time, you imagine in at a place where other people are present, e.g. your friends, teachers, study colleagues. Imagine you'll do a mistake (e.g. you're out of the rhythm) and everybody sees it.

Fill out the same table as before:

A) How clearly did you see yourself doing the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
B) How clearly did you hear the sounds/noises of the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
C) How clearly did you feel yourself making the movements?	1	2	3	4	5
D) How clearly were you aware of your emotions?	1	2	3	4	5

Third step: Watching another instructor/study colleague

Now, imagine another instructor or study colleague performing a skill and making a mistake (e.g. wrong steps):

A) How clearly did you see yourself doing the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
B) How clearly did you hear the sounds/noises of the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
C) How clearly did you feel yourself making the movements?	1	2	3	4	5
D) How clearly were you aware of your emotions?	1	2	3	4	5

Fourth step: Instructing a real workout

In the last step, you imagine yourself instructing actual clients. Now, you're not doing any mistakes and the clients look very satisfied and happy:

A) How clearly did you see yourself doing the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
B) How clearly did you hear the sounds/noises of the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
C) How clearly did you feel yourself making the movements?	1	2	3	4	5
D) How clearly were you aware of your emotions?	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

Add the numbers of every step together for A – D:

A) Visual (see)	___	+	___	+	___	+	___	=	___
B) Auditory (hear)	___	+	___	+	___	+	___	=	___
C) Kinesthetic (feel)	___	+	___	+	___	+	___	=	___
D) Mood (emotions)	___	+	___	+	___	+	___	=	___

The best score for each letter is 20 and the lowest is 4. The higher the score is, the better you are in the area. If the scores are quite low, you just need to work more on those areas.

Work on your imagery

Now, you know your imagery skills. You know how to use it and you know why you should use it. The only thing left for you to do is **START!**

Imagery can help you to cope better with your anxiety because you'll feel more confident, less stressed and more prepared. Give it a try and you'll see how helpful a little imagining can be.

I'm imagining you can do it and you feel pretty soon better when instructing in front of a group!

Further information:

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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5. MAY 2019

4 Basic Elements of Meditation to Reduce Anxiety



If you're anxious before sport instructing, I'm pretty sure that you have thought or even tried meditation. It's certainly a way to cope better with the anxiety. But for it to work, you should know how to do it the right way.

It's an easy way to start dealing with your anxiety and you can't do much wrong with it. Just continue reading and you'll be ready to try meditation today in the evening.

Where it comes from

Well, meditation is nothing new. But usually, meditation involves some spiritual or religious beliefs. BUT in our case, it doesn't!

There is no spiritual or religious importance!

The actual technique is called **relaxation response** or **mental relaxation**. It was discovered by Benson (1975). We call it meditation because it includes all the basics of meditation.

Why it helps

Meditation will help you to cope better with your anxiety. Why? Because you'll relax and concentrate better and have more energy.

It can have a great influence on your mind. You'll be more aware and free, feel effortless and focused. The relaxation response will show you how to calm your mind. And that is what will make you concentrate better on your performance. Another positive effect is that it'll decrease the tension in your muscles.

How to use the relaxation response

First of all, you shouldn't use the relaxation response just before an instructing. It's better to practice it at home by yourself. Maybe in the evening or whenever you have time.

You can practice every day for about 20 minutes. It doesn't take a lot of time for you but the effect can be huge! That's why it's absolutely worth trying.

But don't be too excited about the results. Because it'll take time until you've learned the technique of relaxation response. It can be quite hard to completely control your thinking and keep it focused on one thing.

The 4 relaxation response elements

First element: A silent place

You should choose a quiet place for practicing. Any disturbances can have an influence on the success of your meditation. A good place for meditating can be your home or your room. You could do the relaxation response just before going to sleep and by that, have a rhythm.

Second element: A comfortable position

Definitely, you need to be comfortable for meditating. It's your choice how your position will be but it needs to be good for you. You could e.g. sit down in a comfortable chair. You should sit in a way that you can stay in the same position for a bit. The only important thing is that you shouldn't lay down.

Why?

Simply to not fall asleep! It's quite easy to fall asleep when you lay down and are new to meditating.

Third element: A mental tool

This is probably the most difficult element of the relaxation response. You should choose one individual thought or word and concentrate only on that. You do so by always repeating it when you breathe out.

The word shouldn't excite or provoke you or your thinking. Words like *relax*, *calm* or *easy* are good choices to start with.

Forth element: A passive attitude

The other difficult element is the passive attitude element. It means that you don't control your thoughts. It'll happen that you'll think about something else. But you just let it be. There are many other thoughts that will cross your mind and you shouldn't stop them.

Just start letting them go and then re-concentrate on the word, you were originally concentrating on.

Go ahead and give it a try

Yes, the relaxation response and meditation needs practice but luckily, you can start right away. Today evening – when you're alone and you have a quiet moment – just sit down and try it.

If you continue doing it for a while, you'll see the positive impact of it and it'll become more natural to you.

Further reading:

Eulberg, J. (n.d.). 6 Strategies to Relieve Teacher Anxiety. Retrieved from: <https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/6-strategies-relieve-teacher-anxiety7809.html>

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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11. MAY 2019

How to Prepare and Practice for an Instructing

If you have anxiety, you know how hard it's to deal with it. The same goes with low self-confidence. But luckily, there are different ways how to cope better with the issue of a high anxiety level and low self-confidence.

If you simply prepare yourself for the instructing and practice well beforehand, you'll experience less anxiety. By feeling prepared for what's to come e.g. knowing the music and the steps, you'll feel like there's nothing that can throw you off the track.

Your anxiety level will be lower and you'll feel more confident because you know, there isn't anything that you haven't prepared for. So, a good practice and preparation is important for the success of your workout. I'll provide you with more information about how to get the best out of it, so that you'll be prepared for anything.



Why prepare?

As mentioned before, a good preparation is crucial for a successful instructing. If you want to be more successful, you should plan more and in more detail. That means also to have alternative plans if something doesn't work out the way as it was planned.

When you're prepared for the workout, you know what you'll instruct at what time, to what music. You know what equipment you need and you know what kind of clients to expect.

When knowing all of this, there isn't the need to feel anxious. Your anxiety level will decrease because you'll feel in control of everything. You'll feel confident because you're good in what you've prepared yourself. It only has positive effects.

What to prepare?

It's good to prepare in detail. If you instruct an aerobic session, you should know the songs to which you'll instruct, the series of movements for those songs, a warm-up and a cool-down. It's always good to know what your client group will most likely look like. Then, you can prepare something that fits their condition and age.

You should also always know why you instruct a specific skill. It's great when you can tell your clients the 'why', but especially when they ask, it's good to have an answer.

But besides that, it can help you to prepare alternative plans. For example, it can happen that you have different skill levels in your group. That's why it is good to have different alternative movements so that everybody can join.

When you know exactly what you'll do and when, you'll feel more relaxed and confident.

At my university, they taught us to write a lesson plan for every session. It might be quite annoying for some of you, **BUT** when dealing with anxiety issues, it's actually quite helpful. With a written plan, you won't feel as anxious as without it because you'll feel more prepared.

This is the layout of the plan:

Time: ...	Location: ...	Clients: ...	Instructors: ...
Subject and objective of the lesson: ...			
Objectives:	Content and activities:	Teaching strategies, grouping, equipment:	Time: Evaluation and feedback
...

Not only the workout itself is part of the preparation, but also your own routine!

You might include your [pre-workout routine](#), which will help you to feel mentally prepared for the instructing. But also preparing a plan for the day in general can help you to calm down, e.g. when you'll eat and go through your plans before the instructing.

Also, the practices are part of the preparation. When you have enough time to practice the workout, you'll feel more prepared for it. That's why you should always plan well ahead so that you can still practice the workout before the actual event.

How to practice

Combine your practices with the preparation of the workout. That way, you can immediately try if something works or if you should change it. After having set the plan for your workout, go through it couple of times.

First, you can practice by yourself. When you feel ready, you can ask friends or study colleagues to join to your practice. By that, you create a real atmosphere of having other people around. You might experience some more pressure which is more realistic to the real instructing.

Another tip is that you'll go through your plan at home. Just try to remember the songs, their orders and their steps. By reading the plan several times the day, you'll remember it better and feel more in control of it.

Prepare and practice

Everything left for you to do is to follow the tips. I guess that most of you already include a good preparation and practice before their instructing. But if you didn't do it so far, it's a good way to start getting your anxiety under control.

It does take some time to prepare well and practice everything but, believe me, it'll be worth it because you'll feel less anxious and way more confident!

Further reading:

Eulberg, J. (n.d.). 6 Strategies to Relieve Teacher Anxiety. Retrieved from: <https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/6-strategies-relieve-teacher-anxiety1809.html>

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

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13. MAY 2019

How You Can Reduce Your Anxiety by Controlling Your Breathing

You might think right now how breathing can reduce your anxiety? There's nothing special about breathing and the anxiety won't go away by just controlling the breathing. But wait, you might think too complicated. Because breathing can actually help your anxiety.

Sometimes, it's too easy to be true.

But breathing is essential for being able to rest. Breathing is kind of THE way to relaxation. It's so simple to do and still so powerful.

A good breathing **WILL** reduce your anxiety. But it's not only your mind, that'll start relaxing, but also your body. Because when you breathe correctly, it'll reduce the tension in your muscles.

So many good things by doing something as simple as breathing?! You definitely should continue reading if you want to find out more about it.

[Why it helps](#)



As already mentioned in the first part of the post, breathing helps you to control your anxiety. But it can also be partly responsible for your anxiety. That's why it's good if you can control it because then, you can start controlling your anxiety.

It's a simple principle: If you're anxious and feel pressure, you'll breathe faster and the breaths are quite short and shallow. But if you're relaxed, you'll breathe smoothly and inhale more deeply.

So, if you control your breathing, you can also control your emotions. If you breathe in deeply and with a rhythm, you'll start relaxing and your anxiety will decrease. No magic needed.

Actually, research has shown that inhaling enhances the tension of your muscles and exhaling reduces it. Make use of it!

When to use it

Breath control is something you can use right before an instructing or during a break. It's good to control your breathing in moments when you really feel anxiety. Because it'll help you to control it better.

Instead of freaking out more and more, you'll concentrate on your breathing. So, your focus won't be on your anxiety nor the instructing itself. It'll relax your muscles and release the tension.

But it'll also give you a new spirit for the instructing because your mind has a small break of all the surrounding.

Another time for using the breath control is e.g. in combination with other relaxation techniques. You could use it with [mediation](#) or with the [relaxation response](#). Or in general, when you feel anxious.

How to do it

There are different breathing techniques and of course, you can choose the one that fits you best. I'll explain to you a breathing technique that concentrates on the diaphragm. The good thing about this one is that you'll feel more stable and centered as well as relaxed after using it.

I've published a video of the breath control and how to do it. Have a look:



Or just continue reading the blog:

How to breathe in

1. You breathe in through your nose (deeply and without any rush).
2. You feel how the air fills your lungs and pushes the diaphragm downwards.
3. You breathe in your stomach (still deeply and without any rush).
4. You breathe in in your central and upper chest.
5. You push your stomach outwards (really really outwards).

The process of inhaling takes about 5 seconds. It's important that you do it in a relaxed and easy way without rushing it.

How to breathe out

1. You exhale through your mouth.
2. You feel how your arm and shoulder muscles are starting to relax.
3. You start to experience feeling centered.
4. You feel how your legs start relaxing (but still feel strong).
5. You breathe out very slowly.

The exhalation process takes about 7 seconds – so a little longer than the inhalation. Here, it's also important to do it slowly and controlled.

Try it out

I'd recommend you to try it out right away e.g. today in the evening when you have a minute of spare time. It's good to practice it before you feel anxious. Then you know better what to do to control it.

Give it a try and I'm pretty sure that the breath control will help you to control your anxiety level and that you'll feel more comfortable when the instructing starts.

Further reading:

Eulberg, J. (n.d.). 6 Strategies to Relieve Teacher Anxiety. Retrieved from: <https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/6-strategies-relieve-teacher-anxiety1809.html>

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

How to Cope with Sport Instructor's Anxiety

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16. MAY 2019

12 Instructions for Using Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

When you're anxious, are your muscles relaxed or tense?

My first guess is, that you're probably quite tense. An increased muscle tension is actually also a symptom of a high level of anxiety in that moment. But when your muscles are so tense, you can't perform as well as when they're more relaxed.

The muscle tension can affect your performance, your instructing and eventually how much fun your clients have during the workout. That's why you should work on this muscle tension.

And luckily, there's a way how you can reduce the tension. And the great thing is that it's not only affecting your muscles, but also your mind. Because when your muscles are more relaxed, your mind may relax more and your anxiety will drop. Perfect, right?!

What is muscle relaxation

Muscle relaxation involves tensing the muscles and after that, relaxing the same muscles again. In that way, you can learn how the actual tension feels like and after practicing it for a while, you are able to relax your muscles way more quickly.

This technique is also called **progressive relaxation**.

It involves tensing a certain muscle group (e.g. the thighs). When tensing it, it's important that the muscle contraction is maximal. After that, you'll relax the same muscle group completely. During the process, you concentrate on the feeling of tension and relaxation.

When having finished one muscle group, you'll continue to the next one – until your whole body is relaxed.

The muscle relaxation technique works because it's impossible to tense and relax a muscle at the same time. It's only either of them.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

Why muscle relaxation

The first aim of the muscle relaxation is, obviously, to relax your muscles. The tension will go and you'll start feeling more calm. And last but not least, your anxiety level will drop.

But there's another permanent aim. You'll realize the difference between tense and relaxed muscles more easily. By practicing it, you'll learn how different it feels. At some point, you can notice if a specific muscle is tense (e.g. your neck). And because of all the practice, you've had, you are able to relax this muscle within seconds.

When your body is relaxed (no tense muscles), your mind will also relax. They are connected and can affect each other positively or negatively. By using muscle relaxation, you can make use of this and decrease your mental tension and your anxiety.

It may also reduce other pain e.g. headache or stomachaches. Another positive effect can be that you might have a better sleep.

When to use it

Of course, you can use this technique when you already feel anxious and you want to reduce the anxiety. But you can also use it when you're not anxious.

Especially, when you start to practice the muscle relaxation, it makes sense to do it when you're relaxed and not too tense. That way, you'll learn to use the muscle relaxation the proper way and it'll be easier when you're actually anxious.

But when you know, how to do it, you can make use of it e.g. just before an instructing or during breaks. You can decrease the muscle tension and get rid of your anxiety when you really want to get rid of it!

How to prepare for it

The whole process can take a maximum of 30 minutes – especially the first session when you're still learning how to do it. After couple of practices, you should plan up to 15 minutes for the exercise. But also 5 – 10 minutes session are possible if you can reach the tension and relaxation well.

As mentioned before, the aim is to learn how to relax your muscles. It's good if you can do it in a shorter time because then, you can let go faster of the tension and your anxiety.

Other preparations:

- Choose a comfortable and, of course, quiet place to practice the muscle relaxation.
- Put on loose and comfortable clothes, which don't restrict you.
- Don't wear shoes – way too uncomfortable.
- You can dim the lights if it makes you feel more comfortable.
- You can stand, sit or lay down – whatever feels comfortable to you! Just remember, that you shouldn't feel too comfortable because you don't want to fall asleep (that's why some instructions don't recommend laying down).
- You can close your eyes. It's easier to concentrate on the tension and the relaxation afterwards.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

12 instructions for muscle relaxation

First, you tense a muscle group and then, you relax it. Each time, you tense a muscle, takes about 5 seconds. Then, you let go of the tension halfway and hold it for another 5 seconds. After that, you release the tension completely and relax – usually for about 10 – 15 seconds.

There are also other techniques. One technique e.g. doesn't include the letting go of half of the tension. It's up to you, which one you want to use, but I've considered it helpful because I feel the difference of tension and relaxation more extremely.

Before you start, take couple of slow and deep breaths. They will help you to concentrate and relax better. If you need more information about deep breathing, have a look at my blog post [How You Can Reduce Your Anxiety by Controlling Your Breathing](#).

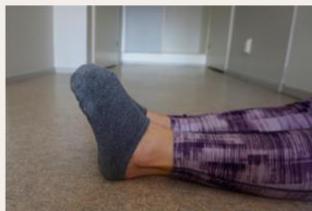
Basically, it doesn't make a difference in what order you do the muscle relaxation. I'll introduce it to you from the toes to the head. Like that, we don't forget any muscles but anyway, it's up to you how *you* wanna practice it.

You should tense and relax each muscle group **twice** to get the most out of this exercise!

1. Tense your toes

Take a deep breath and curl your toes. You should curl them as tight as somehow possible. Be careful that you don't tense your other muscles (e.g. your feet or calf muscles) at the same time. It should only concentrate on one muscle group. You hold this tension for about 5 seconds.

Then, you release the tension halfway and hold it for another 5 seconds. After that, you release the tension completely. The relaxation should last 10 – 15 seconds. You should really concentrate on how your toes start relaxing and how the tension goes away.



Tense your toes for 5 seconds.



Relax your toes for 10-15 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

2. Tense your feet and calves

The next muscle groups are your foot and calf muscles. For those, you point your toes away from your body. Now, take another deep breath and tense your feet and your calves. You hold the tension for 5 seconds, let go halfway (another 5 seconds) and relax for 10-15 seconds.

Remember again to concentrate on the tension and the relaxation. It's good if you notice the difference.



Tense your feet and calves for 5 seconds.

3. Tense your thighs

Now your thigh muscles. You should sit or lay down for this muscle group. If you lay down, it's much easier. So, especially when you just started, I recommend you to lay down. If you decide to sit, you can use some wall support.

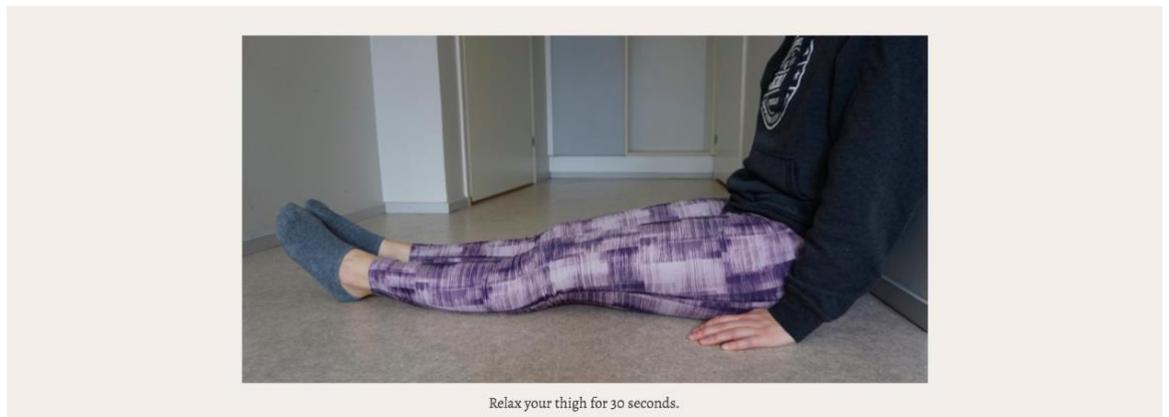
Besides that, you can decide if you want to do both legs at the same or one at the time. Give it a try and then, you'll see what's more comfortable to you.

One leg at the time:

Extend both legs in front of you. Now, you raise one leg around 15cm from the ground and straighten your knee as hard as you can to increase the tension. Hold it there for 5 seconds. Try to really feel the tension in your thigh. Then, you release halfway for another 5 seconds before you release completely.

During the relaxation, focus on your thigh muscle but also on the whole leg muscles. The relaxation can take up to 30 seconds now since it's a big muscle.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety



Both legs at the same time:

Basically, it's the same thing. But instead of raising only one leg, you'll raise both legs about 15cm from the ground. It's more exhausting than the one leg variation but give it a try, anyway.



4. Tense your buttocks

For tensing your buttocks, you simply pull your buttocks together. You can do this standing, sitting or laying. Hold the tension for 5 seconds, let go halfway and hold for another 5 seconds and then, relax the whole muscle group for 10-15 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

5. Tense your stomach muscles

You can also do this muscle group while standing, sitting or laying. I'll show you an example for doing it when you lay on the ground.

For tensing your stomach muscles, lay down on your back. Then, raise your shoulders from the ground. You can extend your arms next to your body and "pull" forward with them. Now, you can feel the tension in your abs.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds, let go halfway (another 5 seconds) and relax for 10-15 seconds. Focus on how your abs start to relax slowly after you've released the tension.



Relax your stomach muscles for 10-15 seconds.



Tense your stomach muscles for 5 seconds.

6. Tense your back muscles

Again, you can do it either way: Standing, sitting or laying down. I'll show another example of how to do it when you lay on the ground.

You start by pushing your back really into the floor. You should do it with a maximum amount of effort. Contract your back muscles while doing it and you can feel the tension. Hold this position for 5 seconds.

After that, let go of half of the tension and hold it for another 5 seconds. Now, you can start relaxing by simply laying down relaxed on the floor for 10-15 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety



Tense your back muscles for 5 seconds. You can see how the upper body is raised compared to in the relaxation picture below.

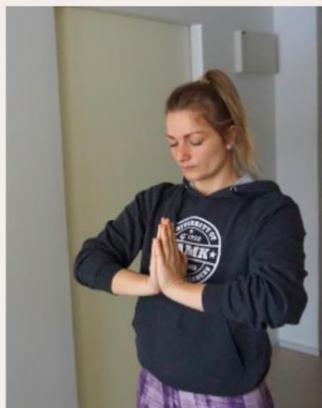


Relax your back muscles for 10-15 seconds.

7. Tense your chest and shoulders

If you want to tense your chest and shoulder muscles, push the palms of your hands together in front of your body. You really should push them to feel the tension in your chest and in your shoulders.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds, let go halfway (another 5 seconds) and relax for 10-15 seconds. Remember to concentrate on those muscle groups and to feel the relaxation after you've released the tension.



Tense your chest and shoulder muscles for 5 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety



Relax for 10-15 seconds.

Remember that you can also sit or lay down. It's up to and what's more comfortable to you.

8. Tense your upper arms

You can tighten your bicep by bringing your forearm towards your shoulder – as if you're doing a bicep curl. While doing it, you should make a fist. You can do both arms at the same time or first the one and then the other one. Just don't forget the other arm, if you do one at the time.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds, release halfway and hold another 5 seconds. Release completely and relax for 10-15 seconds.



Tense your biceps for 5 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

9. Tense your hands and fingers

Raise and extend your arms in front of you. Now, clench your fists as hard as you can. Hold the tension for 5 seconds before you release it halfway and hold it for another 5 seconds. After that, release the tension completely and relax for 10-15 seconds.

Same thing as before: You can do it standing, sitting or laying. And you can do both hands at the same time or one at the time. All up to you.



Tense your hands and fingers for 5 seconds.

10. Tense your neck

For tensing your neck, you bring your head forward, so that your chin touches your chest. You can really push with your chin into your chest and feel the tension in your neck. Try to relax all the other muscles such as your abs, arms and legs.

Hold the tension for 5 seconds, release halfway (another 5 seconds) and relax for 10-15 seconds. When you start relaxing, let your neck be in a comfortable position so that you don't feel any tension.



Tense your neck for 5 seconds.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety



Relax for 10-15 seconds.

Another way to tense your neck as well as your shoulder muscles, is to raise your shoulders up until they (almost) touch your ears.

11. Tense your forehead

Raise your eyebrows as high as you can and hold them for 5 seconds. Then, you release halfway and hold it for another 5 seconds before you release completely. Relax your forehead for 10-15 seconds.



Tense for 5 seconds.



Relax for 10-15 seconds.

12. Breathe controlled

Last but not least, do a breathing exercise. It'll help you to relax even more and is a good ending for the muscle relaxation.

Breathe in shortly couple of times (about one breath per second). Then, when your chest is full of air, hold the air for 5 seconds. After that, breathe out slowly for about 10 seconds. During the exhalation think about the word 'relax' or 'calm'.

Do this breathing process about 5 times and try to relax more and more with every time.

Muscle Relaxation to Decrease Muscle Tension and Anxiety

Instructions for you – in a video!

I've prepared a video for you, in which I describe and show most of those instructions from above. It can be useful for you to understand each of the exercises better and to understand how you can tense the specific muscle group.

Have a look and see for yourself:



Try and practice

Great! Now, you know what muscle relaxation is, how it helps you and, especially, how it works. It's a great technique to reduce your anxiety and to become aware of your muscle tension.

I'm sure that after practicing it couple of times, you'll be able to use it for your anxiety before your instructing. And then, you'll feel more comfortable when instructing because your anxiety is way less than what it used to be!

Don't start tomorrow or next week but start **TODAY!**

Further reading:

AnxietyCanada. (n.d.). How to do progressive muscle relaxation. Retrieved from:
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/MuscleRelaxation.pdf>

Weinberg, R. S. & Gould, D. (2003). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (3rd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.