

Interventions for Performance under Pressure in Sports and the Performing Arts

Interventionen für Leistung unter Druck im Sport und in der darstellenden Kunst

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Abstract

Athletes and performing artists often face extraordinary expectations of (flawless technique and) superior performance, which can result in pressure and paradoxically harm performance. Evidence indicates that the performance-harming effect of pressure depends on increased anxiety, maladaptive attention, and disrupted flow of behavior. To counteract this effect and promote performance, researchers have developed and tested a number of interventions that are aimed at adapting performers to pressure, enhancing task-focused and reducing self-focused attention. Of these interventions, anxiety training, a pre-performance routine, quiet eye training, dual task, and left-hand dynamic handgrip are the most effective in sports. However, substantial variations in their effectiveness exist, depending on the type of sport. Also, transferring these interventions from sports to music did not automatically bring the same performance benefits. This indicates that researchers and practitioners are required to target the interventions to particular demands of a task as well as tailor the interventions to specific personalities in order to obtain optimal effects.

Zusammenfassung

*Athlet*innen und darstellende Künstler*innen sind oft mit Erwartungen an eine herausragende Leistung konfrontiert. Dies kann zu Druck führen und die Leistung paradoxerweise beeinträchtigen. Studien zeigen, dass der beeinträchtigende Effekt von Druck von erhöhter Angst, fehlangepasster Aufmerksamkeit und Unterbrechungen im Bewegungsfluss abhängt. Um diesem Effekt entgegenzuwirken und die Leistung zu steigern, haben Forscher*innen eine Reihe von Interventionen entwickelt*

*und getestet, welche auf den Umgang mit Drucksituationen, die Verbesserung aufgabenbezogener und die Reduzierung selbstfokussierter Aufmerksamkeit abzielen. Im Sport sind Training unter angstausslösenden Bedingungen, Pre-Performance-Routinen, „Quiet Eye“-Training, parallele Aufgaben und der dynamische Handgriff mit der linken Hand am wirkungsvollsten; jedoch variiert die Wirkung je nach Sportart. Auch führte ein Transfer dieser Interventionen vom Sport in die Musik bisher nicht zu denselben Leistungssteigerungen. Dies zeigt, dass Forscher*innen und praktische Psycholog*innen die Interventionen für eine optimale Wirkung genau an die speziellen Anforderungen der Tätigkeit und die Persönlichkeiten der Athlet*innen und Künstler*innen anpassen müssen.*

Interventions for performance under pressure in sports and the performing arts

Almost three decades ago, Ericsson et al. (1993) published a seminal study showing that experts differ from non-experts in the cumulative amount of practice hours, which has been since replicated in many performance domains including sports, music, and games (Macnamara et al., 2014). However, everyone who enjoys sports channels on television might have noticed that even experts sometimes fail despite their many years of extensive practice. To name a few, Roberto Baggio was the FIFA World Player of the Year when he missed his penalty to let Brazil win the World Cup in 1994; Karl Malone held the record for the highest number of free throws ever made when, with 9.2 seconds left in Game 1 of the 1997 NBA Finals against Chicago, he botched the chance to put his team in the lead by missing two of them in a row; and Phil Mickelson was in the lead to win a third straight major when he collapsed at the very last hole at the 2006 U.S. Open Golf Championship. Why do such failures oc-