MENTAL PREPARATION FOR HARD WORKOUTS AND FOR RACE DAY



Racing and hard workouts can indeed be a high-pressure affair, with participants often setting lofty expectations for themselves. The physical strain experienced during a race or intense training session also demands a high level of mental strength.

Here are some strategies I personally employ to mentally prepare for hard training sessions and races. I hope you find (some of) these suggestions beneficial !

MUSIC

I find that listening to music prior to a race or workout, or even during visualization exercises, helps trigger emotional responses such as happiness and motivation, which in turn, enhance performance.

VISUALIZE

VISUALIZE SUCCESS AND DARE DREAMING

I like to envision myself crossing the finish line, having met my time goal, and feeling proud of myself. I often extend this visualization to imagine achieving the highest possible outcome I believe I am capable of and aspire to attain. This usually brings a smile to my face and sparks a surge of adrenaline. It also instills a strong desire to actualize this goal, not just in my imagination but in reality as well.

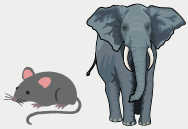
METHODS THAT HELP ME TO PREPARE MENTALLY



Music



Visualize



Relativize



Do it for yourself, not for others



Believe in your capabilities



Crave for pain

VISUALIZE THE RACE OR TRAINING

It's also beneficial to imagine various scenarios that could unfold during the race. Unforeseen situations can be a significant source of stress, so pre-emptively considering all possible scenarios and planning reactions to them can help alleviate pre-race anxiety. For example, if I'm running a 5000m race with a pacer for the first 3000m, I plan in advance how I would react if the pacer sets a pace that's too quick or too slow.

VISUALIZE PAIN

During every race, our brain instinctively signals us to slow down when we're tired. It's this annoying little voice in our head. I try to envision this moment of pain when I am likely to slow down, and then imagine myself resisting this urge. Also, having pushed myself during training, I experience a sense of 'deja-vu' and gain additional confidence that I can replicate this resilience during the actual race.

RELATIVIZE

What if the race or workout doesn't go as planned? It's essential to remember that it's not the end of the world. There are more significant issues in life than an unsuccessful race or workout. So, keeping things in perspective before a race can help alleviate stress. However, it's crucial not to minimize the importance too much, as it could diminish your determination to perform well.

DO IT FOR YOURSELF, NOT FOR OTHERS

As humans, we often feel external pressure and concern ourselves with what others think of us, although ideally, we shouldn't. Reminding yourself that you are participating in this race or workout for your own satisfaction, and not for the validation of others, can help eliminate unnecessary performance pressure.

ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN DO IT

Remember, any race or workout begins with the mental conviction that you can do it. Without this belief, you'll only impose limitations on yourself, and never make the decision to push beyond your comfort zone when it truly matters. The belief must exist beforehand that you're capable of pushing your limits.

The encouraging fact is that everyone has the capacity to push themselves to their limits. However, the challenge lies in understanding that mental toughness isn't something that magically appears during a race - it needs to be honed, similar to training a muscle. For instance, familiarizing oneself with a certain level of physical discomfort during rigorous training can help attain the same mental state during a race, thereby allowing one to push their boundaries even further.

CRAVE FOR PAIN

After several rigorous training sessions, I've noticed an unusual desire to embrace the pain. I find myself eager to exert myself to the limit, almost akin to a form of masochism. This mindset has proven quite beneficial before races, fostering an appetite to withstand the inherent discomfort of endurance running.