



Building A Mental Toolbox

7: ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Our year-round, multi-level aquatic programs emphasize
Personal Achievement, Team Unity & Competitive Excellence

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PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ENERGY

Controlling Your Energy Level for Competition

I mean I try to just, you know, be calm. Sure, you can be nervous but control your nervousness. That is my key. Controlling it. I've been through it enough to know it is not the end of the world. I've just got to get in there and do as well as I can. I just do not let myself get to the point where I am overly nervous.

American Record holder - - Swimming

I was a little bit too anxious. More anxious than focused in. I was too worried about what other people were doing. And (in the race) I really fought hard to get out in front and I think I went too hard in that first part of the race.

Elite Open Water swimmer

Managing Energy to Facilitate Performance

At the most basic level, you can't perform at a high level without enough energy, just as you can't drive a car without gas, watch TV without electricity, or listen to your Walkman® without batteries. Athletes must have good stores of energy and use them wisely. Success, in part, is based on the proper control of an athlete's energy level. Too low, and you may not have the intensity you need to battle a tough opponent. Too high, and you may be too wired or nervous to perform a complicated skill. "Optimal" energy level is very individualized which means that two swimmers on the same relay team may perform best at very different energy levels.

Read through the following two examples that illustrate how energy levels can impact performance

1. Colby is on the blocks getting ready to swim 200 fly prelims at Regionals. This is his first time at such a high level meet. He is so nervous he feels like

he is going to puke; his muscles feel tight and all he can think about is not embarrassing himself. How do you think he is going to perform?

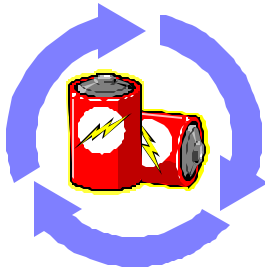
2. Candice is so excited to swim the set of 6 x 800. She knows she is ready to swim fast, she is prepared for the challenge, and knows she needs to focus on even splitting. How will Candice perform in practice?

Energy management can be the difference between making finals or not getting out of prelims; having a great set in practice or just finishing the set. Let's look at how you can start taking control of your energy levels.

Understanding Energy

A first step in learning how to manage energy is to recognize the two types of energy – physical energy and mental energy. Physical energy relates to the activation level of your body from low energy (lethargic) to high energy (heart racing, jittery). Mental energy relates to the activation level of your mind from low (no motivation) to high (racing thoughts, excessively worried). This distinction is critical because different strategies will be used to target mental versus physical symptoms. In both practice and competition, you have an energy level (physical and mental) at which you perform well. The challenge is to manage your physical and mental energy levels so they help your swimming in both practice and competition.

What affects your energy level?



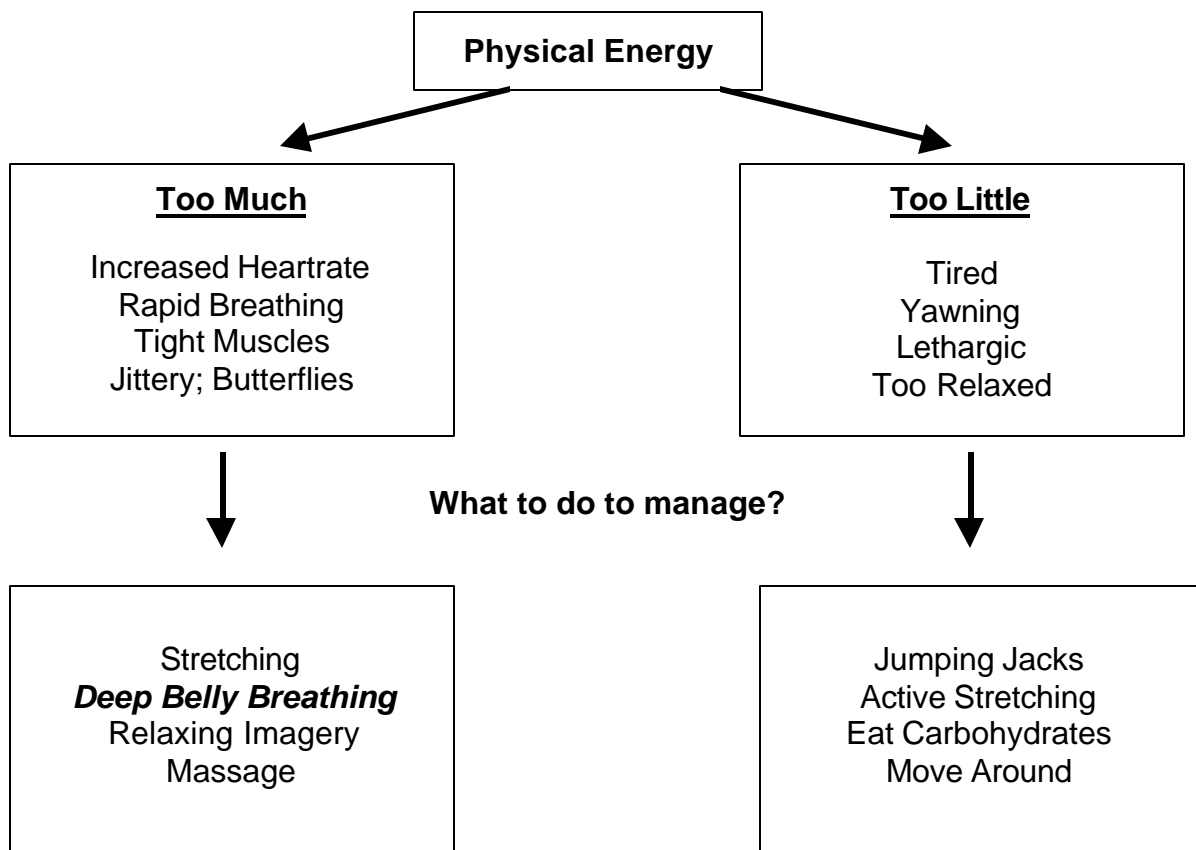
It is sometimes useful to think of yourself as a battery in that you can either be “zapped” of physical and mental energy or you can be “charged” with physical and mental energy. Other people, events, and things can affect your physical and mental energy; knowing how things affect your energy can help you better manage it. Complete the table to help identify what zaps you and what charges you.

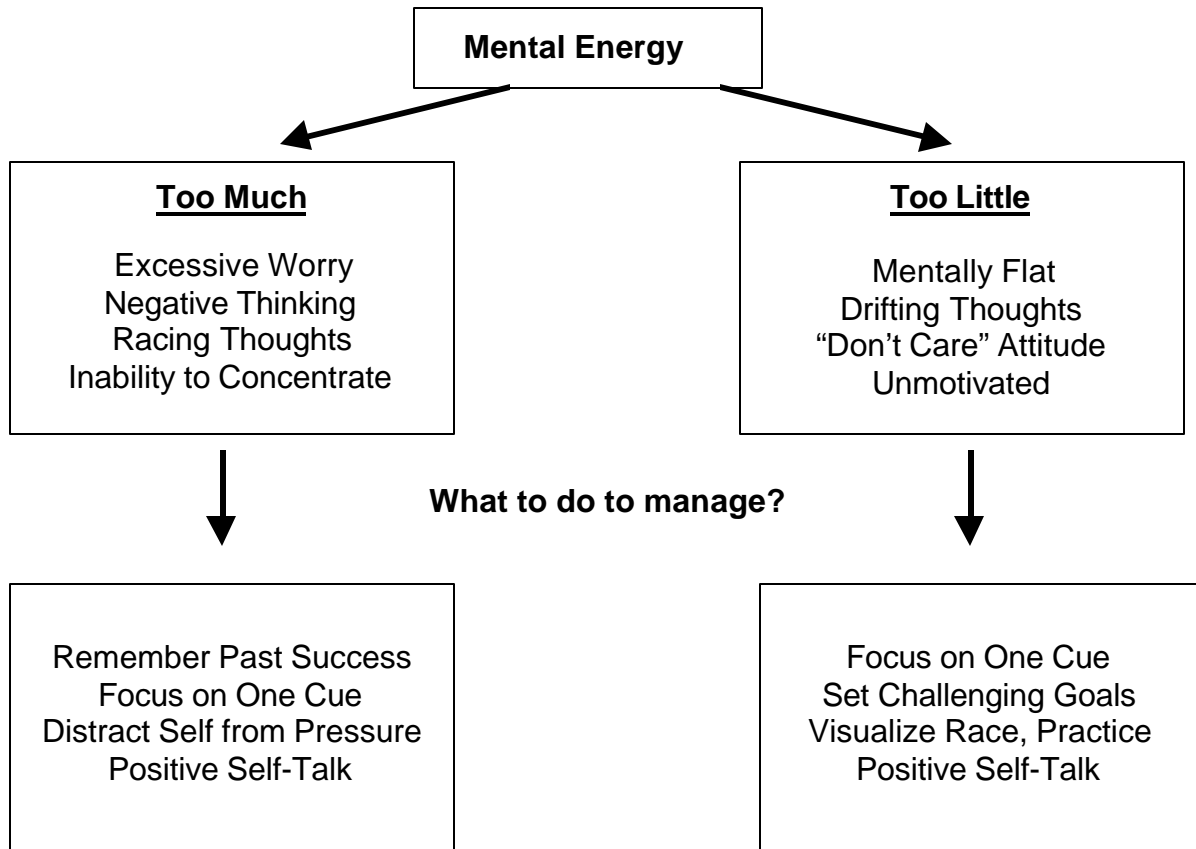
	Examples	You
Zappers	Poor Sleep Not Eating Well Negative People Worry/Stress	
Charges	Listening to Music Being Confident Being Physically Active Remembering a Great Race	

This chart is duplicated as exercise one at the end of the chapter for your convenience.

Strategies to Manage Energy Levels

Now that you are aware of what zaps and charges you, let's take it a step further and discuss specific strategies you can use to manage your physical and mental energy. In doing so, we'll also discuss symptoms related to too much or too little energy to help you identify when you need to put these strategies into play. One of the strategies, Belly Breathing, will be discussed in detail at the end of the chapter as it is useful when trying to manage excessive nervousness - - a common ailment of athletes.





Now that you know about physical and mental energy, the importance of managing energy in practice and competition, and strategies to help you manage your energy levels . . . it is time to GET STARTED! Begin with monitoring your mental and physical energy levels in practice. Use some of the strategies outlined in the previous figures and at the end of the chapter when you feel your energy is either too high or too low. Then, once you have practiced these skills and strategies, use them in competition to help you manage your energy.