



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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Coaches Guide

- Being by describing what is meant by energy level.
- Talk about the two types of energy levels: mental and physical
- Read the descriptions of the two types of athletes and have your swimmers guess which one is going to perform well and which one isn't
- Remind your swimmers that not everyone is the same, what might be right for one athlete is totally wrong for another.
- Have your athletes fill out the chart that identifies both their drains and charges (Exercise 1).
- Talk about these charges and drains and help your athletes develop strategies to get them into the right energy zone. (Exercises 4 and 5)
- Take some time to teach your athletes belly breathing. Some athletes may need to use this technique to calm down before a race where as other athletes may only need to use this skill the night before when trying to get a good night's sleep.

Exercises to Develop Your Energy Management Skills

The following exercises are designed to help you become aware of your energy levels and control them in both practice and competition.

Exercise **1** can be used in conjunction with the coaches talk, to help athletes recognize what charges and zaps them.

Exercise **2** can be used to help swimmers of all ages understand what energizes them and what depletes their energy stores.

Exercise **3** takes athletes through a series of questions helping them to discover their optimum energy levels for performance.


Exercise **4** teaches athletes a relaxation technique to help them control their energy levels when they are too high.

Exercise 1: What are your Physical and Mental Charges and Drains?

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

Energy Management Exercise 2: What Affects Your Energy Level?

Write down three things that charge your physical and mental energy in training.




1.

2.

3.

Write down three things that zap your physical and mental energy in training.




1.

2.

3.

Write down three things that charge your physical and mental energy in competition.




1.

2.

3.

Write down three things that zap your physical and mental energy in competition.



1.

2.

3.

How much control do you have over these charges and drains? One key step in increasing your energy for training and competition is to take charge of your environment, adding as many charges as you can, and eliminating as many drains as you can. Make an energy plan for competitions, and then make one for daily training sessions.

Energy Management Exercise 3: Finding the Correct Energy Level

To swim well, it is critical for athletes to know what energy level works best for them. We know, from research and practical experience with elite athletes, that athletes can be physically and mentally over-activated, leading to nervousness, muscle tension, and/ or attention difficulties. We have also seen athletes who simply can't get "fired up" enough to mentally focus or to activate their bodies for the task at hand.

To figure out the ideal energy level for you, think of your 3 best and 3 worst performances. Try your best to remember how you felt before and during those performances.

Best Performances

| | Lo | | Moderate | | | Hi | |
|-------------------|-----------|---|-----------------|---|---|-----------|---|
| Muscle Tension | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Heart Rate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Breathing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Doubts/ Worry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Negative Thinking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Worst Performances

| | Lo | | Moderate | | | Hi | |
|-------------------|-----------|---|-----------------|---|---|-----------|---|
| Muscle Tension | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Heart Rate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Breathing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Doubts/ Worry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Negative Thinking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

I bet there is a difference between your best and worst performances in terms of what was going on related to your physical and mental energy.

How do you think your physical and mental energy levels influenced your performance when you swam poorly?

What can you do to "create" this physical and mental energy level prior to your races?



Exercise 4: Gaining Control of Your Energy Level Energizing or “Relaxation” Techniques

We all know how to breathe, we do it every day without knowing it, and it doesn't even take practice. However, if controlled properly, we can use breathing as a form of relaxation during stressful situations.

Controlled Breathing

Breathing is one of the easiest physiological systems to control. If done correctly, breathing can have a calming effect on the body by delivering the appropriate amounts of oxygen to the body as well as working to remove waste products associated with physical activity.

Breathing from the Diaphragm

Diaphragmatic (Belly) breathing is a key component to using the breath as a relaxation tool. To learn diaphragmatic breathing follow these steps.

1. Lay down on your back. Place one hand by your side and the other on your stomach, on top or just below the belly button.
2. As you breathe concentrate on using your diaphragm to fill your lungs. You will know when you have done this by the way your stomach expands each time you take a breath. The hand you placed on your stomach should rise and fall each time you take a breath. Try not to raise your shoulders as you breathe in.

Rhythmic Breathing

Rhythmic breathing involves breathing to a measured count. For instance, you might inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four and exhale for a count of four (i.e. count it as IN-2-3-4, HOLD-2-3-4, OUT-2-3-4). While doing rhythmic breathing become aware of each breath you take. Try to fill your lungs completely when inhaling, as well as, completely exhaling by squeezing your muscles to eliminate all the air. Also pay attention to the period of time when you are holding your breath. Become aware of the tension felt in the muscles as well as the release of this tension when you are exhaling.

Ratio Breathing

Ratio Breathing consists of using a specific ratio for breathing. For instance a 2:1 pattern. When using this ratio you might breathe in for a count of four and exhale for a count of eight (i.e. IN-2-3-4, OUT-2-3-4-5-6-7-8). At first you may have to concentrate heavily on the breathing pattern, however, as you become better at controlling your breathing these breaths should become automatic.



Learning to control your breathing over time will help to improve overall balance, power and coordination, which eventually should lead to a greater tolerance for the physical pain associated with training.

