

There are many components that come in to play when preparing for an event. When a tournament, gala, match, or event is coming up, one starts to ask questions such as, “Am I prepared for the event”? You might start to think about the number of hours of training you have put in and whether it is sufficient, or you might look at your technique and determine whether you have practiced it enough and come to the conclusion that you are ready and prepared for the event. And indeed you are, but only from a physical aspect. Have you taken into account your mental preparation? You might not even be familiar with the mental preparation that needs to take place, or you may be doing it already without realizing that you’re doing it.

The most important part of any mental preparation is that

you have to have a routine in place before your event, to enable you to start preparing mentally. It is essential for you to have a **mental preparation routine**. You have a certain routine when it come to your physical preparation, you do your stretches, move into a warm up and practice a few key techniques. Just as you prepare you body, so you need to prepare you mind, this can take place at the same time as you are doing your physical preparation.

Using a mental preparation routine helps you to build your **self confidence** before the event; it helps you to **focus**, to get into the ‘**zone**’ and helps to regulate your **arousal levels**.

So what should you include in your mental preparation routine? Below is a basic outline of the different areas of mental preparation you can work on before an event.

### Goals

- remember that you need to set a goal for the event. It needs to be realistic yet challenging, outcome or process orientated. Goals help you to keep motivated and directed during the event.

### Self talk

- the conversation that you have with yourself at this point should be very specific. You should be using trigger words and phrases to help you get into the zone. Your self talk needs to be positive and congruent with the goal you have set yourself. Do not engage in conversation with yourself that is not linked to the event or distracting in someway. A distracting conversation could look like this, “I have 50 hours of training time in my legs, did I need 50 hours or was it 60 hrs?”

### Visualization

- this allows you to start rehearsing the event in your mind. Again it brings you to focus on the task at hand allowing you to become familiar with the feelings and sensations that are about to take place. It is a fantastic way to get your physical body and your mind into a state of readiness.

### Arousal level

- the level of energy that is required for an event by each athlete differs. It is important that you know the level of energy that is required for you to perform at your optimum. You can use your mental preparation routine to help get your arousal level to its optimum level before the event starts, so that you are not using time during the event to get your arousal level to the correct place.

In summary, a mental preparation routine is as important as your physical preparation routine. Start to include some of the above mentioned in your pre-event routine and you will start to experience better performance, less anxiety and you will feel far more comfortable in your experience. This might be just the thing that will give you the edge and allow you to achieve your optimum performance.



# MENTAL PREPARATION

*Text: Melissa Brokensha-Lawrence and Monja Muller Image: Reg Caldecott*