

Sport psychology tips to help with your basketball performance

By OHL Psychologist Harley de Vos

1. Don't be afraid of being nervous before a match

- ▶ Nerves are a good thing! Nerves allow our bodies to be physically ready for us to perform at our best.
- ▶ If you are feeling really nervous before or during a match, a few slow controlled deep breaths can help. Breathe in through your nose for 3-4 secs, pause briefly, breathe out through your mouth for 5-6 secs. Breathe in through your mouth for 3-4 secs, pause briefly, breathe out through your nose for 5-6 secs. Repeat this cycle as many times as you need. Remember to breathe in and out of your tummy.
- ▶ Accepting the situation is also important, as bringing your attention back to the present moment, focused on your task.

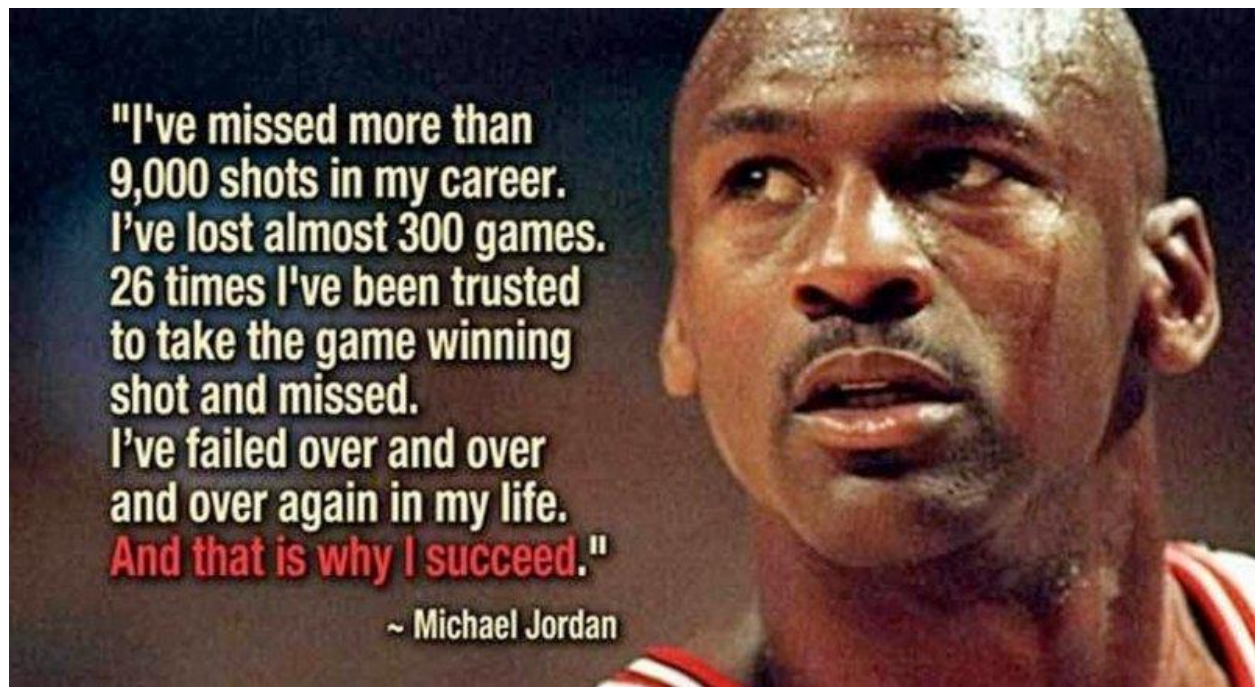
2. What am I thinking about?

- ▶ Before, and during a match, is my mind focused on my role in the team and on the court. What I need to do today. How I can help my teammates to be better? These are all **task-focused thoughts that emphasis the process of performing**. They are focused on how, on *doing*. They are focused on you and your effort.
- ▶ Or am I thinking about the opposition, the venue, the crowd, the referee. Whether I am feeling tired. What happened in the last game. What might happen in the next game. What I will do after the game. Am I thinking about the mistake that I just made, or the one I made in the last quarter. **These thoughts are outcome-focused that emphasis the result of performing**. They are focused on distractions, external factors out of your control, and are not helpful to performance.
- ▶ If you find your mind is wondering and focused on the outcome, or on distractions, try to let these go and bring your attention back to the present moment, focused on your strengths and your task. Having some deep breaths, using a performance/process focused cue word, or some instructional and positive self-talk can be useful.

3. It's ok to make mistakes!

- ▶ Making mistakes and experience setbacks, disappointments, and failure are an important and unfortunately inevitable part of any sport and performance. Mistakes allow us to learn and help to make us better.
- ▶ Mistakes do not define who we are
- ▶ The quote below from the greatest basketball player of all time, Michael Jordan, illustrates the importance of allowing yourself to make mistakes, to experience failure.
- ▶ This short video "Fail Harder" is another resource you may find useful to help further understand the importance of allowing yourself to make mistakes. Enjoy!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEVd0QMjCc8>





4. Some final tips!

- ▶ Remember to **have fun and enjoy yourself!** Basketball is a great sport and lots of fun to play, which is why you play the sport. Make sure to enjoy the experience of playing in the tournament this weekend.
- ▶ There are many things in a game of basketball (some have been mentioned above) that you cannot control. **Your effort is one thing that you can control.** Remember to always bring 100% and try your best!

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About the Author: Harley is a registered psychologist who holds general registration as a psychologist with AHPRA, having completed post-graduate studies in psychology specialising in sport psychology. If you would like to learn more about sport and performance psychology and how it may be able to help you, please contact the team at The Optimal Health Lab on 9431 5955 or visit our website www.optimalhealthlab.com.au.

