

Ellen Murphy, LCSW, MPH
Performance Coaching and Counseling
Adolescent and Adult Individuals, Couples, Families, Teams
(703) 281-9671- work; (202) 957-0023 – cell
Ellen.murphy1@netzero.net
www.TysonandMurphy.com

Training the Mind to Maximize Athletic Performance

Program Description:

While most of an athlete's time is spent in physical training, the mental agility training that goes into athletic performance often has been underestimated. Recent brain science research suggests that mental game training is extremely important to produce optimum individual and team performance.

The athlete trained in the mental game sets himself/herself apart and holds a significant edge over those unfamiliar with this aspect of training. These skills can be learned and honed with intentional practice.

Training the mind can improve the following skills for better self-control during competition:

• Relaxation	• Concentration and Focused Attention
• Managing Emotions and Physical Energy	• Tolerating Stress and Frustration
• Performance Anxiety	• Building Confidence
• Motivation	• Positive Self-Talk
• Positive Error-Recovery	• Psychological Recovery from Injury
• Effective Communication Skills	• Team Building
• Conflict Resolution	• Interpersonal Relationships

Mental agility training emphasizes the importance of cognitive and emotional skills training, the mental game, in athletic performance. Educational and experiential learning opportunities help identify and manage emotions, thoughts, and physical responses and are imperative in developing the all-around, physically, cognitively and emotionally mindful athlete.

This series includes educational and interactive discussions each focusing on a different topic related to athletic performance and the mental game training. Participants are encouraged to think about the topics in advance and come prepared to learn new concepts, engage in targeted exercises and discussions on each topic.

Topics:

➤ *This is your Brain on Sports: The Neurobiology of Championship Play*

Explore the concepts of how changing our brains through improving mental processes can significantly improve athletic performance. The ways we think, feel and behave are often driven by nonconscious factors—unknown to us—outside our mental awareness. **Developing an understanding and awareness about our patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving will produce better decisions, exhibit better self-control, on and off the court, recover more quickly, and enhance performance.**

➤ *Positive Performance in the Midst of Adversity: Building Mental Strength, Flexibility and Resilience*

Learn and experience effective ways of coping and developing resilience. Stress from everyday life affects how we operate both on and off the court. How we perceive our situations—as an opportunity, versus simply risky—affects how we will react or respond. **The relationship between performance, stress, coping and resilience will be explored.**

➤ *Bring our A-Game to the Moment: Training the Mind to Improve Attention, Focus, and Concentration*

Through mindfulness exercises, participants can practice for greater mental and physical awareness. Developing and practicing the skill of focusing our attention in the present (mindfulness) helps improve our capacities of concentration, awareness, relaxation and calmness. **Mindfulness helps develop greater self-awareness and understanding of our body's physical signals.**

➤ *Using Visualization for Improved Performance*

In order to perform successfully, we must be able to imagine it in our mind first. Research shows that when we visualize an event or activity, the neurons in our brains fire in the exact same pattern as when we are performing the activity. **Through mental imagery and rehearsal, athletes can build performance skills.**

➤ *Silencing the Inner Critic: Working through Self-doubt and Negative Thinking*

Patterns of negative thinking will be identified, explored and corrected. Mental barriers can get in the way and prevent optimum performance. **Even high-functioning athletes and teams can suffer setbacks from self-doubt and situations that challenge positive thinking, resulting in less-than-successful outcomes.**

➤ *Shifting the Inner Saboteur: Managing Fear and Destructive Emotions*

Recognize early internal indicators of triggering and ways to avert the negative reactions of a stress response and recover a more poised frame of mind. In addition, the session will explore how fear and anger affect the brain's stress response. **If unresolved, a player's negative emotional energy not only affects ability, but can negatively affect team morale and performance.**

➤ *Relaxation Methods for High-Pressure Situations: Improving Self-Control*

Demonstrate skills that athletes can use in real time to integrate their minds and bodies favoring successful outcomes on the court. The challenge for trained athletes is not remembering how to perform the practiced technical skills as these have been committed to their minds' implicit memory networks. The challenge comes in the ability to remain calm during high-pressure competitive situations, allowing the physical body to carry out the goals set by the brain and mind. **If fear associated with pressured thoughts gets in the way, a disconnection occurs such that the body is unable to successfully complete the goal.**

About the Presenter: A former collegiate volleyball player at James Madison University, Ellen Murphy understands the performance rigors and expectations of these highly competitive environments. Currently, as principal owner of her private practice of counseling, psychotherapy and performance coaching, she enjoys helping others navigate through emotional challenges. She coaches girls' club volleyball in the Northern Virginia area and is Coaching Accreditation Program (CAP) I certified.

Ellen is dedicated to helping people improve their lives by quickly understanding core concerns and needs. She employs integrated brain-body awareness, believing how we think, feel and behave is often driven by factors outside our mental awareness, therefore unknown to us. Since our thoughts, feelings, actions and physical reactions are so closely interrelated, if we can develop self-awareness and understanding about how our patterns of thinking, feeling (emotionally and physically), and behaving impact ourselves and our relationships with others, we can make better decisions. This means we can choose to exhibit better self-control on and off the court, can recover more quickly, and enhance our individual and team performance.

Ellen has more than a decade of clinical experience and extensive post-graduate training in mind-body treatment modalities, including: Guided Imagery/Visualization, Mindfulness, Meditation, Hypnosis, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Gestalt, Somatic Imagery/Ego State, Sensorimotor, Interpersonal Neurobiology, Conflict Resolution and Mediation, and Cognitive-behavioral therapies. She incorporates the most current evidence-based neurobiology research to educate and provide a foundation for improvement. Ellen has combined these for athletic applications for individuals, coaches, organizational leadership, parents and teams.

She may be reached at (202) 957-0023 or by email at ellen.murphy1@netzero.net. For more information, visit www.tysonandmurphy.com.