

Mental Training Skills for SOBC Athletes

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Special
Olympics
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B.C. Strong Minds Clinical Director Sarah Kiengersky developed these tips and tools to practice mental wellness!

- **Set goals** for the next week. What are two challenging but achievable goals you can set for yourself to complete by the end of the week?
 - For example, *“I will visualize myself performing a sport skill twice a day for each day this week.”*
- Practice **deep breathing techniques** that you would use in sport to centre your focus, help control your emotions, and help clear your mind.
 - Practice deep belly breathing, feeling your belly inflate and your chest rise when you bring air in and feeling your belly and chest fall as you exhale.
 - You can follow this formula: inhale (breathe in) for a count of 4 seconds, hold the breath for 7 seconds, and exhale (breathe out) for 8 seconds.
 - Do this a few times in a row. How does it make you feel?
- **Visualize/picture yourself in your sport.** You can picture/visualize yourself competing or you can visualize a skill you have been practicing.
 - To do this, find a quiet place free of distraction. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to clear your mind of other thoughts. Then, visualize yourself in competition or training setting. Maybe it is out on the track, the soccer field, the basketball court, or wherever you train/compete.
 - Picture yourself performing a skill you have been practicing. For example, if you're a softball player playing on third base, maybe you picture yourself making a great catch and getting an out on third. If you're a golfer, maybe you visualize your tee-off on the first hole.
 - It is best to do this in real time. It should take you just as much time to visualize as it does to perform the skill in real life. Try not to rush the image.
 - You can also make it more real by being in a sport-specific stance, or even by wearing some of your equipment such as your softball or golf glove.
 - If getting a clear picture is a challenge, that's okay. Keep practicing. Just as it would a sport skill, learning to visualize takes practice and time to learn.
- **Journal about your last practice.** Write, draw, or voice record for yourself two things you were really happy about during your last practice, and one thing you want to try to improve next time.
 - For those skills you were happy with, how did it make you feel? Who do you want to tell about your accomplishment?
 - For those skills you want to improve on, what can you do differently? Who can help you with this?
- **Building confidence.** What are two wins/successes you've had today that you feel really proud about? Write a little about it, draw a picture of yourself accomplishing it, or tell someone you're close with about it.
- **Self-care** is really important. What's one thing you can do for you today?
 - Some examples are things like listening to music, reading, drawing, reconnecting with an old hobby, playing a card game, the list goes on! Try to do something for you – something that you enjoy!