

## **Mental Skills Training**

### **Goal Setting**

Mental skill training is as important in ski/snowboard freestyle as developing technical and tactical skills and physical fitness. It is often the most overlooked performance factor by athletes and coaches.

Mental skills training will help entry level skiers/riders to:

- **set goals** for themselves with help from the coach
- recognize the relationship between **positive self talk** and **self confidence**
- **visualize** themselves performing the task before actually doing it
- perform the task, then review the performance to reinforce **self learning**

Coaches can help young skiers/riders learn to set goals for themselves by:

- encouraging skiers/riders to establish daily goals based on what they feel they have just learned
- helping skiers/riders understand the difference between a daily goal, a short term goal (week) and longer term goals (season).
- ensuring that the goals originate from the skier/boarder
- ensuring the skier/rider knows that the goals he or she set are attainable and realistic

Coaching considerations:

- Keep the goal setting process as simple as possible
- The coach acts as a facilitator in the process

### **Positive Self Talk**

Positive self talk can have a positive effect on:

- the athlete's mood
- the ability to concentrate or focus
- the ability to refocus when things go wrong
- self esteem
- self identity

The role of the coach is to help skiers/riders learn to:

- differentiate between positive and negative self talk
- use positive self talk to build confidence

### **Self Confidence**

One of the key roles of the entry level coach is to help young skiers/riders develop a sense of self esteem and self confidence.

Those who display a sense of confidence are:

- more willing to work within a group
- more receptive to coaching feedback
- a more willing participant in the self learning process
- ready to challenge themselves
- better able to cope with frustration
- better able to follow verbal and visual instructions

The role of the coach:

- Set up the learning environment so that the participants are more successful than not
- Make sure the participants are active and not standing around
- Provide encouragement

### **Visualization**

Learn to picture a performance in your mind before actually doing it. This helps:

- develop basic focusing skills
- learn to integrate mental imagery with physical activity
- use imagery and focusing skills to control emotions

The role of the coach:

- Ensure participants have a good visual image of the task
- Ensure verbal instructions are precise and to the point
- Give participants time to perform mental imagery before each task

### **Self Learning**

Young athletes learn best through guided, active play. Exposure to all the variables of skiing/riding will help them:

- discover what they are capable of doing in different conditions
- discover different ways of dealing with changing situations
- become more self reliant

Implications to the coach:

- Encourage the skier/rider to visualize themselves doing specific things
- Encourage the skier/rider to think about performing the task and not the outcome
- Encourage the skier/rider to review their performance and let them draw their own conclusions
- Provide feedback to the skier/rider based on the athlete's own conclusions