



# Top 5 Ways to Manage Performance Anxiety

**PERFORMANCE ANXIETY CAN SIMPLY BE DEFINED AS THE ATHLETE'S PERCEPTION OF HOW THE EVENT, MATCH OR GAME IS GOING TO UNFOLD.** Typically, stress and anxiety are reported by 89 percent of athletes polled. Deciding where the anxiety is coming from is important to determine if it is a healthy anxiety or related to maladaptive coping to performance. Very often, athletes may doubt their own ability based on fear of failure, lack of confidence or inner self doubt. Athletes often find it difficult to perform at the “top of their game” if nervousness, doubt or tension are interfering with their own abilities. All of us have an “inner voice” that can contradict our performance or enhance it depending on the content of the anxieties.

Dr. Amy Carnall of Clarity Psychiatric Care offers the following tips for athletes to deal with performance anxiety.

**1 VALIDATE.**  
Prior to the beginning of the event, the athlete should validate one's self. Telling yourself, “It's OK to feel this way” is empowering one's self worth. The physical and emotional symptoms the athlete feels are an adrenaline rush. This is a normal psychological response to performance.

**2 VISUALIZE.**  
Allowing yourself ample time to be prepared with gear, fluids and other essential equipment for the event greatly reduces anxiety. Then allow yourself a few minutes prior to the event to visualize yourself in the event. Walk yourself through the event step by step, doing everything correctly. Do this by closing your eyes, visualizing and self-talking. Positive self-talk is incredibly powerful. Positive attitude leads to positive results!

**3 STAY IN THE MOMENT.**  
Many athletes let their mind get ahead of their physical body. This leads to an increase in unhealthy anxiety and decreased focus. Focusing on the event at hand and not the outcome increases optimal performance. Be present in the moment. If negative thoughts or self-doubt enter your mind, stop and refocus.

**4 ENJOY WHAT YOU LOVE.**  
Go out there like you don't care about the outcome! Continue to push negativity out and focus on the mechanics of your athleticism.

**5 REFLECT.**  
Review your performance and recall the event logically, step by step. Ask yourself, “What did I do correctly?” “What actions, behaviors, sense of the game, awareness of skills in the moment did I do well?” Focus on where you are going; not where you didn't. ♦



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