

Brief Contact Interventions in Sport Psychology: Theory and Practice

Sport psychology consultants are often called upon to provide consultation without an opportunity for extended interviewing. These situations may occur on the field, during practice, at competitions, or during travel with a team. The unique challenge in offering such service is to address the athlete's need with only limited time and background information. Care must be exercised to remain focused on performance issues rather than psychopathology. In this colloquium, practical and theoretical considerations in brief interventions will be presented and discussed. The theory behind such interventions derives from both traditional and strategic therapeutic approaches. The strategies are action-oriented, present-centered, solution-focused, and limited to the issue identified by the athlete.

Principles from counseling psychology, gestalt therapy, and cognitive therapy provide significant contributions to the theoretical basis for these strategies. From counseling comes emphasis on client's strength; from gestalt is the importance of present functioning; and from cognitive therapy is the significance of thinking as the major determinant of feelings. Each of these will be discussed more specifically in the presentation. In practical terms, the consultant follows the athlete's lead, staying focused on his or her abilities and options in the present, and assists in creating a shift in the athlete's perception of the situation. Examples of these principles and strategies will be drawn from the consultants' experiences in sport psychology consultation. The audience will then have the opportunity for questions, comments and discussion.