

Self-Awareness for Sport Psychology Practitioners

Abstract: It is important for sport psychology practitioners to know their own feelings, wants, and needs well enough to assure that the work they do addresses the needs and goals of their clients rather than their own. This workshop is based on an assumption common to most therapeutic approaches: that some of the practitioner's inner experience is not in their awareness, and that lack of such awareness might be to the detriment of the client. The purpose of this workshop is to provide opportunities for practitioners to increase their self-awareness and avoid this problem. The workshop will include didactic material drawn from concepts in Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Analysis, and Cognitive Therapy. This will include 1) the benefits of self-awareness; 2) barriers to self-awareness; 3) self-awareness without self-criticism; 4) the language of feelings; and 5) the significance of wants as part of our experience. Experiential exercises will be offered to enhance participants' access to their feelings, needs, wants, and thoughts. These will include visualization, journal writing, dialogue in pairs, and demonstration in the large group. There will also be an exploration of a work or family problem using self-awareness to increase understanding.

Workshop on Self-Awareness for Sport Psychology Practitioners

INTRODUCTION - "The journey of learning the art of helping others is a personal one, requiring you to know yourself as you learn to help others." Mark Young (1998), "Learning the art of helping."

Purpose - performance enhancement for practitioners

Method - didactic and experiential; focus on workshop participants

GO-ROUND - What are you aware of right now?

DEMONSTRATION- 1. Awareness Continuum

2. Focus on: thoughts, feelings, wants - in the moment

FOCUS OF AWARENESS-

Outer world - Senses - see, hear, smell, touch, temperature, taste, balance;

- Behavior- action in contact with outer world

Inner world - Physical- pain, tightness, tingling, vibration, palpitation

- Psychological- thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, and values

PAIRS - "I think or I feel or I want" -Awareness of self as subject/listener

Which one was most frequent? Is that usual or unusual?

Which one was least frequent or most difficult?

Repeat exercise with only that one.

Purpose - To increase awareness of inner psychological experience

Benefits of Self-Awareness

1. Fuller knowledge of self - complexity or "wholeness"- opportunity for increased self-acceptance

2. More in charge of self – if unaware of feelings, they can surface in unexpected or unknown ways - fear can lead to controlling behavior
 - anger can lead to criticizing others
 - guilt can lead to defensiveness
 - shame can lead to blaming others
 - if unaware of wants - one can feel powerless, like a victim
3. Opportunity for change--“ABC of Change” - decision, effort, focus, goal
4. Better able to be responsive to others - to be fully “Present”- (here, now)
 - less distracted by own inner experience - alive, open, ready
 - more understanding of others’ experience (insight and projection)

Barriers to Self-Awareness

- A. External - problems at work, school, home, relationships
 - energy-draining distractions
 - B. Internal --1. Discomfort - “negative” feelings - can lead to avoidance
 2. Discounting - “not important” -can lead to unfamiliarity
 3. Disapproval - reprimand, criticism, judgment - can criticize content - what you’re doing
process - how, when, or why you’re doing it
- Examples: “early, on time, late”; “Wizard of Oz” - critical part is expert
-- Importance of “Neutral Noticing” - blind man at intersection
4. Automatic Compliance/Defiance - dependence or counter-dependence
 5. Blaming - “4 B’s of Responsibility” - burden, blame, business, being

GUIDED FANTASY –“Wise person on Mountain”- important question about yourself or something in your life.

VOLUNTEERS – Question, Answer, Reaction to answer.

PAIRS - Describe experience - Listen for changes, difficulty, or omissions. Purpose-- to access your inner wisdom

THOUGHTS - ideas, beliefs, opinions, reasons, judgments, speculations, decisions, expectations, attitudes, memories-- awareness of our thoughts includes how attached we are

1. thoughts are the basis for most feelings - the meaning we give to situations - if seen as challenge, may feel excitement; if seen as threat, may feel anxiety
 2. thoughts are the link between others’ behavior and our feelings - e.g., relay
 3. thoughts are the link between others’ behavior and our behavior - “Burt’s Bus”
 4. negative thinking - can be about task, person, situation; past, present, future
 - a. present to permanent - now to always - negative in time - baseball
 - b. particular to pervasive--here to everywhere - negative in space
 - c. possible to probable - maybe to likely - pessimism - baton, fumble
- overgeneralization and exaggeration - an error, mistake, mishap - becomes a calamity

“I don’t have time” - had time for everything you did – priorities and choices

FEELINGS - (psychological not physical – emotion - not sensation or intuition)

Types – Basic - early in life, physical sensation, range of language for joy, sadness, anger, fear, (disgust?)

Learned - almost basic, not as early, some sensation, no range of language, concept - guilt (wrongdoing), shame (“bad”), embarrassment (exposure), hurt (worth)

Complex - basic plus - envy, jealous, helpless, confused, alienated, inadequate, bored

General - upset, uncomfortable, strange, funny, peculiar -

The word “feel” or “feeling” can be used with other meanings than emotion: “I feel that”

- means think, believe, suspect, imagine, predict

“It is my feeling” - means impression, judgment, understanding, belief, suspicion

GUIDED FANTASY - “Meeting child on the road” - exchange questions about feelings, what’s important to you - do activity together that both would enjoy - pick up child, (if that’s ok), ask if child will return with you. If yes, allow to merge inside you as you return. If no, say goodbye and ask if they would like to meet again. VOLUNTEERS - describe fantasy or difficulties

PAIRS or TRIOS - Listen for changes, difficulty or omissions

Purpose - to be aware of the past you inside the present you

NEEDS - inner psychological experience - basic elements in growth - long range, broad, enduring - Not usually in everyday awareness - therefore, were not specifically in the earlier awareness exercise.

Basic Needs (modified Maslow)

“Acquired Needs” - solution is the problem- strategic therapy- (Haley, Bateson)

Safety and Security

Control/ Dominate (*or the opposite*)

Self-worth/self-esteem

Please/placate/seek approval (“)

Self-acceptance

Criticize/judge/disapprove (me or you)

Autonomy/Mastery

Dependency/defiance/rebellion

Relationship/Intimacy

Workaholic/womanizer/prostitute

Belonging/Group or "Cause"

Withdraw/join cult

Meaning/Purpose (V. Frankl)

Addiction/hedonism

Self-Awareness is not a need - rather, it is a state of being to help people get what they need

Competitiveness is not a basic need - but a way to get basic needs met (self-esteem, mastery, purpose)

WHISPERING EXERCISE - (Close your eyes. Go back in time--5 years at a time). As a child, what short statement would have been good for you to hear about yourself from your mom or dad? - A few words that would give you good feelings about yourself. Whisper that statement in the ear of everyone whose eyes are closed (half of the group). Now (other half) - open your eyes and do the same thing. Come back 5 years at a time - say it to yourself at each age, and ask for something that you want at that age. Do you believe it today?

Purpose - an affirmation for the present, from grownup you to the child in you

WANTS - specifics to meet underlying needs or what's important to us.

Types – A. to achieve enjoyment (feeling good), satisfaction (feeling good about myself), or comfort

B. to avoid discomfort - not identified as a want--can't, have to.

Eric Hoffer – “We can never get enough of what we don't really want.”

BG - “We often forget that what we want is not only what we don't have.”

If we don't get what we need, we may “want” (lack) a lot.

“Priority of Wants”- everything we do is connected to something we want “Have to” - if want is not in awareness - e.g., party vs. study

Want vs. Should – Should is not experienced as a want – do it to avoid discomfort or maintain a good image.

Discuss “Me First” - vertical (hierarchy) vs. horizontal (sequence) (W. Dyer)

KNOWING/ NOT KNOWING - “I don't know what I want” – May start with what the other person wants – to clarify what I want or trigger comply/defy

1) may have given up first choice

2) conflicting wants - almost equal

3) discount importance - eventually lose awareness

4) haven't found new interest/excitement - gave up familiar

5) don't "deserve" it - "selfish" - leads to justification

“I don't know if I want to...”- reluctance to acknowledge or express a want directly - behavior is the clue to the stronger want, e.g., stay or leave

ASKING/NOT ASKING – Indirect asking – Would *you* like...? Or complaint

- statement of what you don't want – contains an implicit want.

- May avoid asking if think you're not likely to get it, or if unpleasant consequences are imagined.

- If not entitled to ask, may seek to be justified.

- “I shouldn't have to ask” implies “If you cared about me you would know” - may hide difficulty asking.

GETTING/NOT GETTING – How do you react when you get your want?

How do you react when you don't get what you want? Varying levels of intensity – disappointment, hurt, fear, anger – if want is seen as need.

Hurt – “If you love me, you will do what I want” – starts in childhood – child tries it, it doesn't work, feels unloved, unlovable, less worthy.

Fear – If I don't get it now, I may never get it loss, survival.

FEELING METER EXERCISE- (Groups of 3 or 4)--Imagine a meter with scale of feeling 0-100

Get reading for yourself - then group score. Try to raise group score. Take new reading - take new group score. Have each group report **how** they went about it - i.e., each person raised own, group had fun, group focused on lowest, nurturing, things in common, etc.

Purpose - To increase group awareness of what was done and how.

In this workshop:

1. what was important?
2. what was uncomfortable? difficult?
3. what was enjoyable? satisfying?
4. what, if anything, did you learn about yourself

“In learning to live with greater self-awareness, we enhance our possibilities for freedom, creativity, and caring which are based on that awareness.” -- Edward Cell (1984), “Learning to Learn from Experience” (SUNY Press, Albany).

Personal Assessment of Inner Experience at Work or School (Pairs)

1. What is your main source of enjoyment or satisfaction?
2. What gives you good feelings about yourself?
3. What do you want most from your work?
4. What upsets you? How do you usually react when you get upset?
5. What might give you bad feelings about yourself?
6. What would lead to your feeling guilty? hurt?
7. What might lead to your feeling embarrassed? ashamed?
8. What do you fear?
9. What do you pretend?
10. Which questions were more difficult or uncomfortable to answer?

Description of Present Satisfactions at Work or School (Pairs)

What are your current satisfactions? Who is the primary source for each of these satisfactions - something you do or something someone else does? If it's something you do, what is that? Can you identify how that behavior led to your satisfaction? If it's a result of someone else's behavior, how did that lead to your satisfaction? Which of these sources is the predominant one? How do you react when this satisfaction is not available? What are your thoughts? What are your feelings? What is your behavior?

Review of Past Problem at Work or School (Pairs)

Think of something you did at work and would do differently if you had a chance to do over - something you might have regrets about, or be bothered by when you think about it.

1. What was the behavior?
2. What was your reaction afterwards? (thinking, feeling, wanting)
3. What was your major concern?
 - a. impact on your job
 - b. effect on the athlete or team
 - c. effect on coworker or others
 - d. other
4. What were the actual consequences?
5. How did that compare with your concern?
6. How would you do it differently now?
7. What different consequences do you imagine?
8. How do you view it now, as you look back on it

Observation of Current Problem at Work or School (Pairs)

Think of a current problem, i.e., what type of situation or person causes you difficulty or upset? Identify the external and internal components - separate the problem into the situation and your inner experience. ($P=S+I$). You may need a colleague to assist you in making the separation. Remember the focus is on self-awareness, i.e. What do you know about yourself that made the situation a problem for you? VOLUNTEER