

EXERCISE 2.1

INCREASING THE INTENSITY OF SELF-REINFORCEMENT

Aim

The purpose of this exercise is to increase the frequency and variety of self-reinforcement.

Steps

1. An important feature of self-reinforcement is to have a variety of reinforcers. Usually, athletes do not have a rich vocabulary of potentially reinforcing words. This exercise step is designed to increase the number of positive self-reinforcing words and the manner in which you say them.

1.a The following list contains synonyms for the word "good." They should be studied. Other words with strong positive connotations should be added on the lines under the list if you think they are important and potentially effective.

POSITIVE WORD SYNONYMS

Good	Top notch	Capital
First class	First rate	Magnificent
Stupendous	Superlative	Radical
Super	Fabulous	Amazing
Far-out	Dynamite	Phenomenal
Tremendous	Gorgeous	A-1
Grand	Beautiful	Incredible
Fantastic	Proud	Superb
Splendid	Right on	Hot
Magnifique	Terrific	Great
Marvelous	Wonderful	Grand
Excellent	Unbelievable	
Out of this world		

When you use words or expressions as self-reinforcers, the same word should not be used on successive occasions. The repetition of the same content usually becomes boring and ineffective. It is important for you to vary the content of positive self-talk as much as possible.

1.b The actual expression that you use in self-reinforcement is important. It is not sufficient to have you just say words: they must be self-

spoken with emotion. Thus, your self-talk "voice" should be enthusiastic and "motivational." To produce such an effect, you can vary your voice by:

- increasing or decreasing the volume of the expression;
- emphasizing or de-emphasizing the tone of syllables within the words; and/or
- changing the pitch of the words when you say them.

By constantly changing the content and manner of presentation of positive self-talk words, the nature of the reinforcement will maintain meaningfulness for you.

2. Other events that you can imagine could also serve as self-reinforcers.

2.a **Significant others.** The positive reactions of other persons to your good performances and behaviors can serve as strong reinforcers. The vivid recall of past reactions can be used as consequences that produce a strong positive experience. In the spaces below, develop at least three scenes where significant others (e.g., a parent, coach, friend) reacted positively and meaningfully to a behavior or performance. These events should be recalled and interspersed among positive self-talk when employing self-reinforcement.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2.b **Significant group reactions.** Situations occasionally arise where groups of persons have created a positively rewarding situation for you. Recalling such occasions can also be used as reinforcers. In the spaces below, record at least three scenes where the general reactions of groups of persons (e.g., other athletes, crowds, family) were high in positive characteristics. These events are to be recalled and used occasionally as positive self-reinforcers.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
3. The above features of words, significant others, and significant groups, can be embellished at any time. Strong reinforcing events can also be fantasized (imaginary outcomes), particularly when events are anticipated (e.g., the winning of a race, the successful completion of a training item). The major task for you in this exercise is to enrich your manner of providing self-reinforcement, that is, your self-talk has to become more varied and interesting, and to increase the use of imagined positive events.
4. The learning process depends largely on how conscientious you are. It may be possible to just take the events that have been determined, learn a variety of words, and then employ the enriched self-reinforcement procedure. When that is difficult to do, the following steps should be followed.
 - 4.a Complete a *Self-reinforcement Worksheet* (see Figure 2.1.1). Any entries made in the above sections need to be transferred to the worksheet.
 - 4.b Attempt to learn the content of the prepared worksheet.
 - 4.c When the learning is completed, attempt to employ self-reinforcement at practices and in competitions.
 - 4.d At practice and when doing things concerning your sport, it is necessary for you to practice using positive thinking. The above steps have prepared you for what to do. You should attempt to be positive about everything that involves your sport. After every training item, preparatory activity, or organizational event, you should concentrate on what went well and use the appropriate positive self-talk or imagery as reinforcement. This behavior has to be learned to the extent that it becomes a natural occurrence for all sporting activities.
 - 4.e On a daily basis, evaluate the use of the content that has been prepared. The usual time for do-

ing this is in the evening when sporting activities have been completed for the day. The evaluation is accomplished by completing the *Self-reinforcement Use Log* (see Figure 2.1.2). The log contains columns for words, significant others, significant groups, and anticipated events. The activity indicated for each column should be evaluated for two features. First, if the class of activity was or was not employed as a reinforcer in that day's sport setting has to be recorded. A "+" should be entered if it was and a "-" if it was not. Second, the vividness and effectiveness of the imagined activities and words should be evaluated on a scale from 0 to 5. If it was very clear and effective, then enter a 5. If they were used, but did not seem to be of any value or influence, enter a 0. If evaluations are poor then repeat reading the instructions contained in this exercise and attempt to be more enthusiastic about the procedure.

5. When five consecutive days are recorded with totally positive evaluations, the evaluations should be conducted every other day.
6. When five consecutive every-other-day recordings are positive, the recording procedure may be terminated but your intent should be to always use positive self-reinforcement.
7. It is worthwhile to periodically conduct the evaluation described in Step 6 to ensure that enhanced self-reinforcement is consistently and continually being used.

When to Use

Employ self-reinforcement for every task that is involved with your sport. Once the preparatory materials have been completed, you should attempt to develop this mental skill to the level where it becomes a natural reaction to any activity. That developmental process can be evaluated by completing the *Self-reinforcement Use Log*.

Athlete Preparations

Obtain a copy of the *Self-reinforcement Worksheet* and reproduce at least two copies of the *Self-reinforcement Use Log*. Each is appended to this exercise. These pages should be completed as outlined above and placed in your personal folder.

Athlete Actions

All events associated with your sport should incorporate positive thinking. You should:

- 1. Learn a large repertoire of positive words and images.**
- 2. Emphasize in your self-talk the positive repertoire that is developed.**
- 3. Always use positive self-talk and/or imagery as a consequence of doing things associated with your sport.**
- 4. Concentrate on what you do well in your sport rather than errors or failures.**
- 5. Periodically review this exercise to ensure that you are using all the factors that are associated with positive self-reinforcement.**

SELF-REINFORCEMENT WORKSHEET

Positive Words

On the list below, circle at least 10 words that, when said to yourself, will be meaningful indications that you are pleased with what you have done. Spaces are provided at the end of the list for you to add any of your own words that will achieve a similar effect.

Good	Top notch	Capital	First class
First rate	Magnificent	Stupendous	Superlative
<u>Radical</u>	Super	<u>Fabulous</u>	<u>Amazing</u>
Far-out	<u>Dynamite</u>	Phenomenal	Tremendous
Gorgeous	A-1	Grand	Beautiful
<u>Incredible</u>	<u>Fantastic</u>	Unbelievable	Proud
Superb	Splendid	Right on	<u>Hot</u>
Magnifique	Terrific	<u>Great</u>	Marvelous
Wonderful	Grand	Excellent	Out of this world

Awesome, intense

Significant Others

Develop at least three scenes where significant others (e.g., a parent, coach, friend) reacted positively to your behavior or performance.

- 1) *Coach H walks over and congratulates me*
- 2) *Dad runs over and hugs me*
- 3) *Cathy goes wild and yells to me from the stands*

Significant Groups

Develop at least three scenes where the general reactions of groups of persons (e.g., other athletes, crowds, family) were high in positive characteristics.

- 1) *My friends in the audience scream and applaud me*
- 2) *The team stands up and does a cheer for me*
- 3) *Officials from the NSGB come over and congratulate me*

Anticipated (Fantasized) Events

Develop at least three scenes that employ what you anticipate will happen if an important sporting goal is achieved.

- 1) *On the podium at the Worlds and the national anthem is played*
 - 2) *My teammates throwing me in the air after winning Fukuoka*
 - 3) *Doing a back flip to celebrate beating the Cuban*
-

Figure 2.1.1. An example of a completed *Self-reinforcement Worksheet* used to determine significant words and events that could serve as positive reinforcers for an Olympic judo player.

SELF-REINFORCEMENT USE LOG

Date	Words	Others	Groups	Anticipations	Vividness/ Effect
<i>12/18</i>	+	+	+	+	5
<i>12/19</i>	+	+	+	+	5
<i>12/20</i>	+	+	+	+	5
<i>1/2</i>	+	+	+	+	5
<i>1/3</i>	+	+	+	+	5
<i>1/4</i>	-	-	-	+	3
<i>1/5</i>	+	+	+	+	4
<i>1/6</i>	-	+	+	+	4
<i>1/7</i>	+	-	-	+	4
<i>1/8</i>	+	-	-	+	4

Figure 2.1.2. An example of a completed *Self-reinforcement Use Log* used to track the development of self-reinforcing behaviors.

SELF-REINFORCEMENT WORKSHEET

Positive Words

On the list below, circle at least 10 words that when said to yourself will be meaningful indication that you are pleased with what you have done. Spaces are provided at the end of the list for you to add your own words that will achieve a similar effect.

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|------------|
| Good | Top notch | Capital | First class | Grand | First rate |
| Magnificent | Stupendous | Superlative | Wonderful | Radical | Super |
| Fabulous | Amazing | Marvelous | Far-out | Dynamite | Phenomenal |
| Tremendous | Great | Gorgeous | A-1 | Grand | Beautiful |
| Terrific | Incredible | Fantastic | Unbelievable | Proud | Magnifique |
| Superb | Splendid | Right on | Hot | Awesome | Intense |
| Excellent | Out of this world | | | | |

Significant Others

Develop at least three scenes where significant others (e.g., a parent, coach, friend) reacted positively to your behavior or performance.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Significant Groups

Develop at least three scenes where the general reactions of groups of persons (e.g., other athletes, crowds, family) were high in positive characteristics.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Anticipated (Fantasized) Events

Develop at least three scenes that employ what you anticipate will happen if an important sporting goal is achieved.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

SELF-REINFORCEMENT USE LOG

Date	Words	Others	Groups	Anticipations	Vividness/ Effect