



*A Guide to Choosing a
Sport Psychology Professional*

Sponsored by:



Do you or the athletes you coach. . .

. . .lose focus during competition?

. . .lack confidence during games?

*. . .choke during important
competitive events?*

*Are you looking for a
competitive edge?*

*Are you concerned with your child's
experience in youth sports?*

*Are you looking for a way to get
more out of your sport or
exercise experience?*

*If you answered "yes" to any
of the above questions, then
you should read this brochure
for useful information about
sport psychology.*

During the last two decades sport psychology has received increased attention from athletes, coaches, parents, and the media. Consider, for example:

- A growing number of elite, amateur, and professional athletes work with sport psychology professionals.
- Coaches at the high school and university levels seek sport psychology professionals to work with their athletes and teams on game preparation, team cohesion, communication skills, and other areas that affect performance.
- Universities have added sport psychology professionals to athletic department staffs to assist athletes with life skills development and to improve coping with the demands of being a student-athlete.
- Exercise specialists, athletic trainers, youth sport directors, corporations, and psychologists use sport psychology knowledge and techniques to improve exercise adherence, aid injury rehabilitation, educate coaches, build self-esteem, enhance group dynamics, and increase program effectiveness.

This brochure will explain what sport psychology is, why people seek sport psychology professionals, what sport psychology professionals do, and how you can find a qualified sport psychology professional in your area.

What is sport psychology?

Sport psychology is (a) the study of behavioral factors that influence and are influenced by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity and (b) the application of the knowledge gained through this study to everyday settings.

Sport psychology professionals are interested in how participation in sport, exercise, and physical activity may enhance personal development and well-being throughout the life span.

Why do people contact a sport psychology professional?

To improve performance. This is the most common reason for consulting a sport psychology professional. In general, performance may be enhanced through the teaching of mental strategies that either refine the practices of effective performers or help other performers overcome obstacles that prevent them from reaching their potential.

To deal with the pressures of competition. Athletes at all levels seek help in dealing with the pressures of competition. Such pressures may stem from parental and/or coach expectations as well as the athlete's own expectations regarding performance.

To enhance the experience of youth sport participants. Youth sport organizations may employ a sport psychology professional to educate coaches about how to increase the satisfaction and enjoyment of participants and about the coaches' role in promoting the development of healthy self-esteem.

To get psychological assistance with injury rehabilitation. People with injuries may seek assistance with adjusting to nonparticipant status, adhering to physical therapy, tolerating pain, or other issues.

To assist with an exercise program. People who want to exercise regularly may work with a sport psychology professional to increase their motivation and help with other issues related to exercise adherence.

To receive guidance in dealing with life challenges. Concerns with personal problems can adversely effect exercise and athletic performance. People often find that counseling helps to put things in perspective and allows for greater satisfaction in life, career transition, and time management.

What services can a sport psychology professional provide?

Sport psychology professionals may provide a variety of services depending on their professional training. The most common services focus on:

- providing information about the role of psychological factors in sport, exercise, and physical activity to individuals, groups, and organizations. They may, for example, assist with exercise adherence, communication, teamwork, or program development and evaluation.
- teaching participants specific mental, behavioral, psychosocial, and emotional control skills for sport, exercise, and physical activity contexts. They might, for example, focus on relaxation, concentration, self-talk, or the use of imagery.

Sport psychology professionals who have special training and/or certification in such areas as diagnosis and treatment of psychological difficulties (e.g., depression, eating disorders, substance abuse), marital or family therapy, or the administration and interpretation of psychological tests, may provide additional clinical services in addition to the services listed above.

What roles may sport psychology professionals assume?

Sport psychology professionals may be trained primarily in the sport sciences with additional training in counseling or clinical psychology, or they may be trained primarily in psychology with supplemental training in the sport sciences.

The activities of a particular sport psychology professional will vary based on the practitioner's specific interests and training. Some may focus primarily on conducting research and on educating others about sport psychology. Typically, these individuals teach at colleges and universities and, in some cases, also work with athletes, coaches, or other athletic personnel. They provide education as well as develop and implement programs designed to maximize the overall well-being of sport, exercise, and physical activity participants.

Other sport psychology professionals use sport psychology concepts and principles to enhance sport, exercise, and physical activity performance or enjoyment. These sport psychology professionals may consult with a broad range of clients and often serve in educational and/or counseling roles.

Who is considered a "qualified" sport psychology consultant?

Only those individuals with specialized training and appropriate certification and/or licensure may call themselves a *sport psychologist*. Anyone seeking the services of a sport psychology professional should ask about the professional's credentials, clientele, experience, and membership in professional organizations such as the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) and/or the American Psychological Association (APA).

A growing number of sport psychology professionals are certified by AAASP. These professionals--who earn the designation **Certified Consultant, AAASP** (or **CC, AAASP**)--have met a minimum standard of education and training in the sport sciences and in psychology. They have also undergone an extensive review process. The AAASP certification process encourages sport psychology professionals to maintain high standards of professional and ethical conduct while giving service to others.

Some sport psychology professionals may be listed on the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) Sport Psychology Registry, meaning that they are approved to work with Olympic athletes and national teams. To be on the Registry, a professional must be a **CC, AAASP** and a member of the American Psychological Association (APA).

How can a person find a qualified sport psychology professional?

Word of mouth . . . talk to athletes and coaches who have worked with a sport psychology professional to find out how it was helpful, the types of services provided, and the names of competent professionals they have worked with.

Your local college or university. . . many institutions have academic programs in sport psychology and/or sport psychology consulting arrangements with one or more qualified professionals through their athletic department.

AAASP, APA Division 47, the USOC Sport Psychology Registry. . . you can get more information about sport psychology, people certified by the AAASP, and/or individuals listed on the USOC Sport Psychology Registry by contacting one of the organizations listed on the back cover of this brochure.

For more information contact:

Certified Consultants, **AAASP**
APA Division 47 (Exercise & Sport Psychology)
APA Division Services
American Psychological Association
750 First St., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002-4242
202-336-6197
800-374-2721

USOC Sport Psychology Registry
United States Olympic Committee
USOC Sport Science and Technology
1 Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
719-578-4516

World Wide Web:

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~aaasp>
<http://www.psyc.unt.edu/apadiv47>

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