

# MENTAL EXCELLENCE IN TRIATHLON TRAINING AND COMPETITION

*“ I think you can talk yourself out of, or into, almost anything. Triathletes are especially good at both, and they can swing from one extreme to another...”* “ Scott Tinley

**Mental excellence** is having the natural or developed psychological edge that enables you to be: more consistent in remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control under pressure.

## **What are the components of mental excellence?**

- staying positive in face of challenges
- recognition of, and control of, the controllables
- high level of commitment with healthy attitude
- ability to deal effectively with anxiety
- capacity to extend limits mentally and physically during training and competition
- possessing confidence and self-focus ...”walk the walk”

## **A top mental area for triathletes:**

### **Managing emotions** (i.e. stress and anxiety)

- anxiety is worry about future events = arousal + fear
- affects your thoughts, behaviours, and physical self
- “What is the first sign that I’m getting anxious?”

Goal of: a relaxed state of being alert and ready to perform

**Physical strategy:** Simple breathing technique

### **Thought strategies:**

- i) Keep things in perspective
- ii) Self-talk
  - a) “What am I thinking?” Are they + or – thoughts?
  - b) If negative, use thought stopping(a cue word/action)
  - c) replace the negative thought with a realistic positive thought

See: **The Sport Psychology Library: Triathlon.** Baker, J. & Sedgwick, W.A. (2005). Fitness Information Technology: Williamsburg, WV.  
[www.fitinfotech.com](http://www.fitinfotech.com)

## **Other key mental excellence areas:**

### **Goal setting and motivation**

- internal (i.e. love being fit) and external (i.e. free shirts) drive to be a triathlete
- types of goals (short term, long term, social, outcome)

### **Concentration**

- focus attention on relevant cues (i.e.your pace), at times block out distractions (i.e. crowds)

### **Dealing with pain and injuries**

- use of thought strategies combined with physical rehabilitation i.e.(ice on sore muscles) and mental relaxation

### **Pre-competition planning**

- putting all aspects of mental excellence into a concrete plan for race day (i.e. plan for the “What ifs?”)

### **Imagery**

- using all of your senses to create or recreate an image in your mind (i.e. clean flip turn)

### **Self actualization**

- who you are as a triathlete informs who you are as a person (your determination, commitment, etc.)

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