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Anxiety and Its Impact on Sports, Academics, and Performance:

Understanding and developing the mental and emotional side of performance

*New Jersey Center for Tourette Syndrome Webinar
Presentation by Graham Hartke, Psy.D.
NJ Board of Psych Examiners Permit Holder # 093-980
NJ Certified School Psychologist
(973) 303-3690 104 Eagle Rock Ave Roseland, NJ 07068*

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About the Presenter

Dr. Graham Hartke, Psy.D.

- NJ Board of Psych Examiners Permit Holder # 093-980
 - Supervisor Ken Schneider, Ph.D. Springfield Psychological Associates
 - Anxiety disorders/OCD, Tourette Syndrome, behavioral management, ADHD/ODD, and HFA/ Asperger's Syndrome
 - Mental coaching for sport performing arts working with children, adolescents, and adults
 - Psycho-ed assessment
 - Populations served: Children, adolescents, and adults
- NJ Certified School Psychologist
 - Shepard High School Morristown, NJ 973 984-1600
- Training: Rutgers University Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
 - School Psychology
 - Tourette Syndrome Clinic, Sport Psychology Concentration
- Contact information
 - (973) 303-3690 104 Eagle Rock Ave Roseland, NJ 07068

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Presentation Overview

1. Goals of presentation
2. Overview of Performance Psychology
3. Common Areas of Difficulty
4. Performance Anxiety
5. Take home strategies
6. Resources
7. Questions

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Goals of the presentation

Provide and overview of:

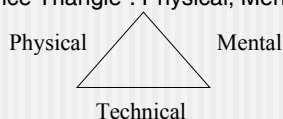
- Performance psychology
- Some strategies that can help with performance anxiety and performance enhancement

The information presented is applicable to both TS and non TS populations

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Overview of Performance Psychology

- Performance psychology (young field):
 - Branch of (research and applied) psychology concerned with mental and emotional side of performance
 - Focus on improving performance and quality of life
 - Includes many aspects of performance including:
 - Performance enhancement, individual and team development, performance anxiety, injury prevention.
- Psychology and Performance
 - Part of “Performance Triangle”: Physical, Mental, Technical



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Overview of Performance Psychology

- Covers all areas and levels of performance:
 - Performing Arts
 - (Music, Dance, Acting, Stand-up, Juggling..)
 - Sports and other competitive activities
 - (Baseball, football, tennis, swimming, archery, chess, card tournaments, pageants, etc.....)
 - Academic performance
 - (test taking, class participation, homework)
 - Work and business
 - Other

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Overview of Performance Psychology

- Performers are at all levels of Age, Skills, and Ability
 - Elementary School, Middle School, High School, College, Graduate school
 - Children, Adolescents, Adults
 - Recreational, Youth, inter-scholastic, collegiate, Semi-Professional, Professional
- Some performers with TS you might have heard of:
 - Tim Howard -USA Soccer, Everton Football Club
 - James Durbin - American Idol Singer
 - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (*it is thought*)

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Overview of Performance Psychology

Fundamentals of Performance Psychology

- Focus on control
 - Focus is on what you can control : Process
 - Example: giving your best effort
 - Focus is not on what you can't control: Outcome
 - Examples: audience reaction, judge decisions
- Focus on all aspects of performer development
 - Not just about when performing
 - Developmental Levels of performers (C Maher, 2003).
 - Person, Coper, Teammate (Group member), and Performer

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Process of developing mental and emotional skills

- Assessment and Education- (Essential!)
 - Need to know what to target for intervention
 - Mental skills and needs assessment
 - Learn about strengths and area's needing improvement
- Plan - Develop plan based on needs and goals
 - Goals must be specific, attainable and in your control!
 - Controllable Process goal (good): To practice for 30 min a day
 - Uncontrollable Outcome goal (not good): To get a standing ovation
 - Strategies should be based on needs and goals
- Implement Plan
 - Monitor plan, make adjustments if needed
- Evaluate plan
 - Have goals been met? Set check points

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Common Areas of difficulty

- Performer as a person:
 - No clear vision or goal of what you want to accomplish
 - Parent and child could have differing views
 - Why do you want to perform?
 - Difficulty balancing performance activities with other life demands
- Performer as a coper:
 - Coping with Tics, obsessions, compulsions
 - Dealing with risks, distractions, bad influences
 - Not enough supports

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Common Areas of difficulty

- Performer as a Teammate/Group member:
 - Trouble working with a group
 - Communication skills, roles and responsibilities
- Performer as a Performer:
 - Performance Anxiety!
 - Lack of preparation before performance
 - Difficulty with focus, concentration, and effort during performance
 - After performance harsh self evaluations, lack of plan to continue growth and learn from mistakes

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Performance Anxiety

- Anxiety is a normal reaction to stressful situations
 - Natural reaction evolved as a helpful mechanism
 - Automatic response that gets us aroused and ready for action: Fight or flight response
 - Natural response to get us ready for a performance
- Key: How much anxiety are you experiencing?
 - A little discomfort? Moderate amount? Complete state of panic?

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How Performance Anxiety Affects Performance

Anxiety causes problems with physical symptoms, thoughts, and behaviors:

- **Physical reactions:** sweating, heart racing, butterflies in stomach, breathing faster and shorter (hyperventilation), shaking, adrenaline released, muscles tense, numbness tingling, detachment or unreality, hot or cold flashes, blurred vision
- **Thoughts:** Discomfort, worry, fear (of losing control, making mistakes, catastrophic thinking), difficulty with memory retrieval
- **Behaviors:** apprehension, avoidance, escape, withdrawal, rituals, safety seeking

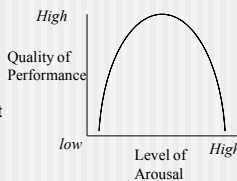
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How Performance Anxiety Affects Performance

- Anxiety can be helpful in the right amount, and problematic if too much.

- Yerkes-Dodson Law – relationship between arousal and performance > Inverted U.

- Performance is best when: anxiety is at a moderate (optimal) level.
- Performance is worst when:
 - When no arousal/anxiety (flat, almost sleeping)
 - Very high anxiety (very anxious and nervous)
- Also depends on task difficulty, familiarity with task, and type of task



Need the optimal level of arousal for the task at hand!

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How Performance Anxiety Affects Performance

- Sources of performance anxiety (Wilson, 2002)

- The Person
 - Predisposition to anxiety or unrealistic thinking, perfectionism
- The Situation
 - Situational stress, environment, circumstances of a performance
- The Task
 - Level of difficulty of the task and the performers level of mastery of the task to be performed
 - Optimal Performance "Flow" - balance between task challenge and skill level.
 - Task challenge level < performer skill level = bored
 - Task challenge level > performer skill level = high anxiety

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How Performance Anxiety Affects Performance

- **Physical Symptoms:** Performers will typically notice anxiety symptoms related to body parts needed for performance
 - Example: Sweaty and shaky hands for golfers and test takers; shortness of breath for singers
- **Cognitive Symptoms:** Anxiety can cause negative thoughts, worry about mistakes, and trouble remembering
 - Negative thoughts intensify other symptoms
 - Disrupts attention, miss cues, forget lines...
- **Behavioral Symptoms:** Anxiety can change how performers go about performing: (Batter might tense up swing)

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Some Take Home Strategies

- Here are some strategies that can be used to help improve the mental and emotional side of performance
 - Not Exhaustive list by any means
 - Strategies for:
 - Assessing Strengths and Area's Need Improvement
 - Setting Goals
 - Performance Anxiety
 - Focus and Concentration During Performance
 - Student Test Anxiety

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Strategy: Assessing Strengths and Areas Needing Improvement

Important to know what areas to target for intervention:

- Complete this chart to identify strengths and areas needing improvement in the following areas

(based on C. Maher, 03, and G. Hartke, 08).

Developmental Level of Performer	Strengths	Areas Needing Improvement
1. As a person: Your goals and self care		
2. As a "coper": Coping with risks, and challenges	<i>Supports that help protect against risk and challenges</i>	<i>Risks and Challenges that could throw your performance off track</i>
3. As a member of a group		
4. As a performer: Before, During and After a performance		

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Strategy: Setting Process Goals

- Goal setting: Focus on process goals: how to make improvements. Provides a plan
 - Be specific and focus on what you can control
 - Stay away from outcome goals and vague goals that you have less control of (i.e. "to win the championship", "to be the best I can be")
- Activity: Write list of 2 or 3 process goals
 - For each goal develop an activity you can perform to help reach that goal, and a way to check that goal
 - Example:
 - Goal: Practice guitar three nights a week
 - Activity: Play Mel Bay Guitar Book for 30 minutes 7:00pm
 - Check: Have chart where I check off when I practice

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Strategies for Performance Anxiety - Questions to ask

- First need to assess the nature and severity of the anxiety. Answer these questions:
 - Where and when does it occur?
 - Just during performance? Or other times?
 - Before, during and/or after performance?
 - How frequent and intense is the anxiety?
 - What does it look like?
 - Physical, Thinking, Behavioral symptoms
 - How long does it last?
 - How Often does it occur? How disruptive is it?
 - Is it helpful for performance?
 - How have you coped with it? Have those strategies helped?

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Strategies for Performance Anxiety - Relaxation

- Relaxation strategies for mild-moderate performance anxiety
- Deep Breathing: (practice, practice, practice..)
 - Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, breathe out for 5 seconds
 - Continue breathing until you feel your body relax (1-10 minutes)
 - Breathe through your stomach, making it rise and fall with each breath
 - Meditative version:
 - Take deep breathes while slowly counting to 10. Each breath in is an odd number (1,3,5,7,9) and each breath out is an even number (2,4,6,8,10)
 - Try to keep your mind focused only on the numbers and breathing

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Strategies for Performance Anxiety - Relaxation

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)**
Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body.
 - Tense and hold muscles for 5-8 seconds then release muscles and feel your muscles relaxed for several seconds.
 - Start at the bottom of your body and move up your body.
 - Order for tensing/relaxing: Toes, Legs, Stomach, Back, Shoulders, Arms/Hands, Jaw, Nose, Eyes
 - You can use a script and audio (CD/MP3) to help guide you.
 - While performing you can tense and relax muscles that others can't see very well (toes, hands, stomach, mouth).
- **Deep Breathing/PMR/Visualization combination:**
 - It is helpful to combine deep breathing, muscle relaxation and visualizing yourself in a relaxing place (beach, countryside, etc..). *(can get a CD or mp3 for this)*

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Strategies for Performance Anxiety - Exposure & Practice

- Major component to tackling performance anxiety is exposure to the performance situation.**
- Generally speaking: the more one performs the more comfortable one becomes
- Good to remember the "Three P's" for
- **Prepare:**
 - Practice, study, train in organized manner; focus on self care, set goals
 - **Practice the Performance:**
 - Practice performing in realistic situation
 - Need to expose yourself to performance situation: Can do it gradually, imaginary exposure, in-vivo
 - **Perspective:**
 - Review progress on your goals, use positive self evaluation statements (give yourself credit!)

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Strategies for Performance Anxiety

- Other important strategies to note, but not covered here:
 - Stress management and exercise
 - Cognitive restructuring, thought challenging, automatic thoughts
- Other resources:
 - Self help books, websites, books on sport psychology, performance anxiety, etc
 - see resources at end of presentation
- If anxiety is more severe good idea to seek professional treatment
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Medication

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Strategy for maintaining focus during a performance

- Key word(s) and imagery
 - To help redirect your mind from distracting thoughts during a performance, and keep focused on the moment and the task at hand.
 - Use short simple calming word(s) (can be anything): example "Focus", "Flow"
 - Use the word when you notice your mind drift to distracting automatic thoughts
 - Use during practice and pair the word with imagery (usually in your mind) of you successfully performing the task at hand
 - Example: Baseball pitcher, singer

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Strategies for for test anxiety

- Make sure TS students have appropriate accommodations in school
 - Might need extra time, help with writing (scribe), a separate testing area, extra breaks
- Make testing environment calm
 - If teachers and parents are stressed students will pick up on it
- Parents can get teachers on the "same page" with regard to preparing student for test
- Study and practice material, go over testing process, do a test run with practice test

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Strategies for for test anxiety

- Focus only on what student can control:
 - Before test: Preparing/studying
 - During test: Give best effort
 - After test: focus on positives and ways to improve, don't dwell on negative
 - Teach student to use accommodations that are provided, ask for assistance if tics become difficult
 - Decrease pressure on student to get a "perfect" score (particularly if it is highly unlikely)
 - Practice and use relaxation techniques

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Resources

- **Mental Skills Assessments**
 - Can find online, great for identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement
 - One you can try: AS&K Sports
 - <http://www.appliedskills.com/ASKSportsHome.html>
- **Books:**
 - Maisel, E. (2005) *Performance Anxiety*. Back Stage Books
 - Hamilton, L. H. (1998). *Advice for dancers: Emotional counsel and practical strategies*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
 - Greene, D. (2001). *Fight your fear and win: 7 skills for performing your best under pressure at work, in sports, on stage*. New York: Broadway Books.
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 - Merrell, K. W. (2001). *Helping students overcome depression and anxiety: A practical guide*. New York: Guilford.
 - Murphy, S. (2005). *The sport psychology handbook: A complete guide to today's best mental training techniques*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

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Questions

- Now I will take some questions
- Thank you for attending this webinar.

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