

SPORTS SCIENCE FORUM

Dr. Robert Heller, USPTA Elite Professional

Tips for Peak Performance On and Off the Court



In my practice over many years as a psychologist, sports psychology consultant and tennis teaching professional, I have found that there are several important mental skills critical to performing at one's best whether it be in tennis, business or one's personal life.

Learn to be in the present moment and not be thinking of the past or the future. Being in the "zone" is characterized by the absence of conscious thinking. I teach self-awareness training to help clients recognize when their mind are wandering and to bring it back to the here and now.

Learn to relax your body. A quiet body leads to a calm mind and an improved ability to focus and avoid distractions. I teach clients methods like diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided visualization, that can be used between points, on changeovers and throughout the day to regulate mood.

Learn to use positive and self-instructional self talk before and after important events and to reduce negative, overly self-critical talk. I teach clients how to notice the connection between thoughts and feelings and replace unwanted beliefs and thoughts with more desirable ones.

Learn to use self-hypnosis. When relaxation combines with positive thoughts and images, powerful new habits can be formed resulting in desired changes in thoughts, feelings and actions. I teach clients how to create suggestions and images designed to facilitate accomplishing their goals.

If you are a "life long learner," the sky is the limit on what you can accomplish.

Until next time- Dr.Bob

Dr.Robert Heller is a psychologist, sports psychology consultant and USPTA professional. He has a private practice in Boca Raton, Florida. For questions, comments or additional information visit www.cognitivetherapy.cc, www.mentalskillstennis.com or e-mail drrobertheller@gmail.com.