

## Dealing with Pre-Event Nerves

Sport provides challenges and stimulation, but also provides uncertainty. At the precise moment the Olympic archer releases an arrow, or the full forward kicks for goal, the outcome is unknown. The stress that sport provides therefore is inevitably linked with its uncertainty, the “what if” syndrome. Also, nervous energy burns a large amount of precious glycogen, and takes you away from the calm zone where you will be able to perform at your best.

### **STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH NERVES or ANXIETY**

#### **Structured Belly Breathing**

Inhale through your nose to a count of four, pause, and then slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of four. This works as short, staccato breathing floods your respiratory system with carbon dioxide, which means your brain and muscles are not getting enough oxygen they need to function properly. Whereas, deep, long breaths activate the parasympathetic nervous system, slowing down your heart rate and reducing anxiety.

#### **Establish your ‘winning feeling’**

Think carefully about the last time you were performing at the top of your game then list every detail you might associate with your ‘winning feeling’. Pick out the most important aspects of this positive feeling. You can use your winning feeling to help create optimum competition mindset through consciously reproducing the desired behaviours and actions.

#### **Letting go**

You will need to lie down somewhere comfortable where you are unlikely to be disturbed. If you wish, you can also use this exercise to aid a restful night’s sleep. Allow your eyes to close and let your attention wander slowly over each part of your body – starting from the tips of your toes and working up to the top of your head. As you focus on each part of the body, tense the associated muscles for a count of five and then ‘let go’. If this does not relieve the tension in a particular body part, repeat the process as many times as you need to. Once you have covered each body part, tense the entire body, hold for five and then ‘let go’. You will feel tranquil and deeply relaxed.

#### **Other ways to deal with nerves**

- Follow your pre-performance routine
- View the butterflies in the tummy or the sweaty palms as a sign that you are ready to perform
- Focus on the upcoming event as a challenge rather than a problem
- Focus on the things you can control rather than the things you cannot control