

Results of my research on optimal performance and subjective experiences of choking in International competing bodyboarders and surfers including a world champion (with supporting academic research)

Optimal Performance

1. Fun and letting go

Athletes reported have better and their best performances when they just had fun and let go, it may have been post competition or in a competition.

2. Breathing

Breathing was reported as the most accessible and utilised tool in critical situations and in particular in outstanding performance.

3. Positive thinking/ Imagery

Athletes reported using positive self talk or visualisation or a combination of both to help their performance

4. Desire to succeed

Athletes who had the most consistent and outstanding performances reported a strong motivation/ desire to win

5. Social support

When athletes felt social support of at least one person (coach, team members, parent, friend, partner) this was crucial to performance and progression

6. Adverse circumstances

Adverse/challenging personal circumstances were sometimes a stronger motivator to perform optimally and created a strong desire to perform.

7. Deliberate Practise

Increased hours spent engaging in practise lead to increased confidence and feeling of preparedness.

Written and researched done by Bairbre Hassett with thanks to the athletes involved.

For further support contact me at bh sportpsychology.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/bairbre-hassett-a8545861/>

Subjective experiences of choking

1. Adverse circumstances

As well as being a motivator for optimal performance adverse circumstances can also be an inhibitor and lead to choking and underperforming under pressure

2. Lack of perceived support

Athletes who felt unsupported by resources, organisations, other athletes, coaches and indeed equipment reported more underperformance

3. Perceived uncontrollable circumstances (internally or externally)

Those who had difficulty regulating emotions (perceived uncontrollable) under pressure and perceived outside circumstances as uncontrollable were more likely to choke under pressure.

4. Communication issues

Communication issues with coaches or others, lack of clarity, lack of perceived support lead to dysregulation in emotions and underperformance.

5. Lack of experience

Consistently athletes reported more choking instances and underperformance with lack of experience and earlier stages of competition.

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A short list of JUST SOME of the research associated you may be interested in.

Anderson, R., Harrahan, S. J., & Mallett, C. J. (2014). Investigating the optimal psychological state for peak performance in Australian elite athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 26(3), 318-333.

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