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**“SWASTHA BHARAT IN INDIA : PROBLEM – PROSPECTS AND WAY
FORWARD”**

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COPING STRATEGIES OF SPORTS PERSONS

NAWAZ BASHA .C* & VIRUPAKSHA .N.D*

Introduction:-

Many times during a game, athletes of all levels and from all sports must not only fight physical exhaustion, but also psychological pressure and bad sentiments. Stress is an unavoidable aspect of life for everyone. It can be brought on by both positive and negative circumstances, and there are numerous strategies to deal with it. In this paper, we'll look at the ins and outs of coping, as well as what coping tactics look like and how to rely on others to make coping efforts more effective. Coping refers to the athlete's conscious and effortful cognitions and activities that he or she employs to deal with the perceived demands of a circumstance. Sport and exercise psychologists are interested in coping because athletes are continuously under pressure to succeed. Coping skills in athletes are essential predictors of performance; these skills should be taught, exercised, and improved because they have a direct impact on athletes' personal and professional lives. When it comes to performance athletes' mental health, they may encounter issues relating to their own skills and performance that overlap with everyday issues. Athlete performance is influenced by a variety of factors, in addition to physical, technical, and tactical training. A strong mentality and stress resilience can frequently distinguish between equal opponents. An important part of sports performance is the capacity to perform well under severe stress.

Coping: - Coping is a major component in the transaction stress process; It defined as an "individual's ability to cope with his/her environmental stimuli and personal responses". The ability to cope with stress-related reactions depends on the individual. Coping has been also defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". In sports, athletes frequently deal to alleviate undesirable nervousness or performance worries.

"The ability to perform successfully under pressure is a crucial aspect of sport performance." (Mesagno, 2010). A major problem for elite athletes is to deal with the feeling of 'choking' under pressure. What causes stress varies from athlete to athlete, since it is governed by one's perception of a situation's expectations, as well as their ability to handle associated obstacles and challenges. When an athlete believes they lack the "required" tools to adequately cope with a problem, unpleasant sentiments may occur. Coping skills kick in at this point and can be quite beneficial in stress management. It's important to keep in mind that not every athlete will find the same situation unpleasant. Two athletes can have comparable experiences but react to stress in totally different ways. This is because what matters most are the athlete's perceptions of available resources/abilities and the threat level of the situation. This will certainly vary from sports person to sports person.

Coping strategies of Sports persons (Athletes):-

Coping strategies are being used as a way of eliminating an athlete's level of stress and arousal before a game (Morgan, 2010). Coping refers to conscious and effortful cognitive and behavioral efforts to deal with the perceived demands of a situation. Every athlete uses coping mechanisms, but some athletes aren't aware of when or how they use them. This is

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Because, unlike coping methods, coping actions are frequently automatic; the individual does not always make a conscious decision about how they address situations. They are more than likely to engage in unconscious and instinctual acts in order to escape stress or relieve unpleasant emotions. As a result, these activities might be beneficial or harmful. Negative coping strategies, on the other hand, are generally maladaptive and include avoidance, risk taking, and aggressive or damaging acts in sports.

The fundamental difference is that a coping technique usually entails a more deliberate and direct approach to difficulties. While confronted with a stressful or unpleasant scenario, or when striving to change one's behavior in such a situation, it could be a single action, a sequence of actions, or even a thinking process.

Coping strategies used are self-talk, mental imagery or visualization, pattern breaking or breaking bad, positive reframing, regularly practice self-soothing techniques, practice good sleep hygiene, maintain a balanced diet, and give yourself regular breaks.

1. **Self-talk:** Hardy et al. (2011) defined self-talk as “a dialogue we have with ourselves, sometimes spoken, sometimes engaged in internally.” Self-talk is often used to motivate and enhance confidence levels in athletes prior to or during a sporting situation (Hall, 2009). Self-talk is the process of which an individual may guide him/herself to accomplish a goal. Whether or not the goals are specific or broad, all goals are important to keep in realistic, attainable, measurable and specific. It is the internal discussion you have with yourself. Your subconscious mind influences it, and it reveals your thoughts, beliefs, questions, and ideas.
2. **Mental imagery or Visualization:** - Imagery is a form of cognitive restructuring. The idea is that athletes “re-interpret previous negative experiences by seeing the ‘silver lining’ in the cloud.” (Shaw, 2005). Mental imagery, often known as visualization or mental rehearsal, is a widely used approach. Athletes utilize this strategy to become comfortable with their competitive surroundings, a tough pattern of play, or even to visualize the course route multiple times. Mental imagery, in particular, can be utilized to eliminate negative ideas, allowing you to tunnel and focus just on positive prospects. Some athletes become overly concerned with their anxiety or nervousness, maybe focusing only on a potential blunder or the worst-case scenario for their performance. This is frequently something that cannot be adjusted, such as their opponent's strength or the track's condition. Instead, athletes should try to focus on ways to enhance and/or maintain their current strong performance abilities, thereby shifting their negative mindset to a more positive facilitative one.
3. **Pattern breaking or Breaking bad:** - When an athlete's mental state becomes bad owing to uncontrolled mental imagery, 'pattern breaking' routines are utilized. A 'pattern breaker' is a statement or phrase that an athlete can say to themselves or that their coach or significant other can say to them out loud. Whatever works best for you is the greatest option. There is no such thing as the "correct" word, but this example is one of my favorites for drawing your attention away from unpleasant ideas. Consider your sport's role model and what they would do if they were in your position. Instead of considering their 'superior' abilities, consider how they would react if they were in your place.
4. **Positive reframing:** - Positive reframing involves thinking about a negative or challenging situation in a more positive way. This could involve thinking about a benefit or upside to a negative situation that you had not considered. Alternatively, it can involve identifying a lesson to be learned from a difficult situation. Finding something to be grateful about in a challenging situation is a type of positive reappraisal. For example, after a break-up you could think about the opportunities to meet new people, the things you learned from the relationship, and the gratitude you feel for the time you spent with the person.

5. Regularly practice self-soothing techniques:-Consider your five senses to gain insight into how you can provide comfort for yourself. What has proven to be effective for you. The extensive list of possible techniques to self-soothe includes listening to music, taking a bath, watching a movie, getting a massage, relaxing, and yoga. Make an attempt to include these tactics into your everyday routine because they will assist you in dealing with stress and preventing further stress.
6. Practice good sleep hygiene: - One of the easiest strategies to set you up for better sleep is to pay attention to sleep hygiene. Strong sleep hygiene entails a sleeping environment as well as daily routines that promote regular, uninterrupted sleep. Having a consistent sleep schedule, a comfortable and distraction-free bedroom, a soothing pre-bed ritual, and developing healthy behaviors during the day can all help you achieve optimal sleep hygiene.
7. Maintain a balanced diet:-Many people find that when their minds are full of anxieties and pressures, they fall into the habit of "mindless eating" (eating whatever is available at the time, the vending machine phenomenon or wanting carbs and sweets for a momentary but unsustainable surge of energy). Maintaining a balanced diet of foods that give a more consistent supply of energy (rather than a sugar spike) can be a fantastic first line of defense against stress's negative effects. It will also assist you in maintaining a connection to your long-term objectives.
8. Give yourself regular breaks:-Allow your thoughts to relax and rearrange. Taking breaks, contrary to many people's first reactions when they're stressed, makes you more productive, energetic, and more ready to face the problems ahead of you.

CONCLUSION:-

Coping is a complex topic that involves athletes' stressor assessments, objectives and values, emotions, beliefs, and identity, as well as their resources and ability to deal with the demands of sport. Because of the complexity of the coping process, various antecedents and consequences must be considered. Athletes' coping skills evolve through time and can be enhanced through interventions and training, making this a critical area for improving athletes' performance and overall experience in sport.

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