



# Athlete Preparation - Managing Anxiety/Stress: *why it is important!*

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# A few questions

- What are some issues you are facing with your athlete(s) re: anxiety, stress?
- What are you doing for yourself, as a coach, to manage your own level of stress?
- Further questions?

# Competitive Stress

- Competitive stress – occurs when psychological demands are perceived, (consciously or unconsciously) by your athlete to exceed her/his available coping resources (Hanin, 2000, Lazarus, 2000)
- Emotion – a psychophysiological response to.....

Why do care?

- Because – when we are stressed, we have reduced brain functioning – cannot ‘attend’/focus on correct factors

# Questions I often get asked

- Can we learn these psychological skills, to manage the stress??
- How long will it take??
- We talk a lot about ‘managing the environment’. What does that really mean, and why is it important???
- What about emotions, such as anxiety, fear???

## How long will it take, to learn these skills??

When athletes are *ready*, athlete learns, uses the tools, begins to perform consistently well, and gains self-confidence,

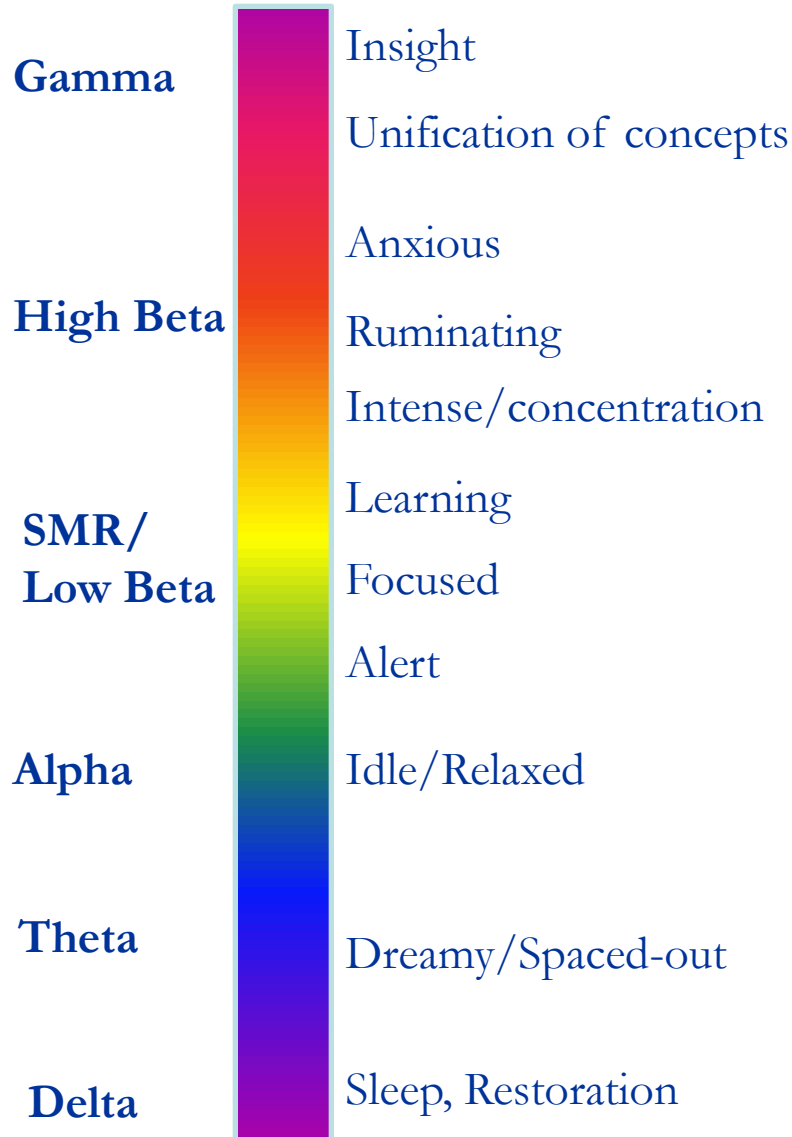
For example:

- *1 season* – athlete (silver medalist, Beijing 2008), good coach – working on consistency, and fear (from previous poor Olympic performance)
- *2 seasons* - athlete (bronze medalist, Beijing 2008), good coach - (clear plan for racing, what he needed re: training, living environment)
- *3 Olympics* - bronze medal, Sydney 2000 (*committing to his plan for racing, not over-analysing, taking care of coach issues = lowering his anxiety*)

## Fear of injury, regular debriefs

- not a hard worker initially, negative and ‘scared’, fearful of re-injury
- worked on clear daily goals – holding athlete accountable
- Focus – (smart individual)
- worked on managing his fears, his anxiety (using bioneurofeedback as a tool)





# The Brainwave Dial

*We always have some degree of each of these brainwave bands present in different parts of our brain.*

*If we are exceptionally anxious and tense, our brains present an excessively high frequency of beta brainwaves.*

*That feeling of being bright-eyed and alert when we engage in intellectual activity and outwardly focus our concentration occurs when low beta brainwaves are present.*

*Ever notice a cat when it's ready to pounce on its prey? They're presenting abundant sensory motor rhythm brainwaves. These brainwaves help humans sit still in the classroom.*

*In an alpha state, we are relaxed and broadly focused, waiting to respond when needed. If we close our eyes and begin picturing something peaceful, our alpha brainwaves begin to increase.*

*If we are inattentive to external things or daydreaming we are displaying a theta state.*

*If we are becoming drowsy, there are more delta and slow theta brainwaves creeping in.*

*Delta brainwaves occur when we sleep and when areas of the brain go "off line" to take up nourishment.*

# Key findings from Canadian **Beijing 2008** **Report**

*Those who performed well/ won Olympic medals:*

- ***Strong coach-athlete relationship*** (necessary, but not always sufficient)
- ***Development of deep awareness of what they needed/what worked for them***, and planned accordingly
  - solid preparation, with flexibility
  - support staff - directed/lead by coach-athlete
  - well-trained focus (thinking, feeling, level of intensity)

# Key findings from Canadian **Beijing 2008** **Report**

*Those who did not perform well:*

- *Loss of best focus* (no discussion) – better heat than expected, worse heat than expected
- poor planning, poor management of the media
- underestimated the ‘expectations’
- *IST issues – managing those who help*
- *Real issue is analysis of these devastating performances – coach must do this, athlete most often cannot!*