



Feeling the Pressure?

Most athletes experience some form of performance anxiety. A certain amount of anxiety can actually lead to improved performance, but too much can lead to poor play and “choking.” The most successful competitors learn to control their anxiety and perform well under pressure.

Symptoms of anxiety vary from one person to the next and can include:

- Increased resting heart-rate
- Trembling, unsteady hands
- Fear of failure
- Lack of enjoyment for the sport
- Sweaty palms
- Excessive worry
- Reduced self-confidence
- Desire to avoid competition

The sources of stress also differ for each athlete. Common stressors include:

- Expectations of others
- Prior injuries
- “High stakes” situations
- Hostile spectator environments
- Self-imposed expectations
- Thoughts of past mistakes

The good news is that you can do a number of things to reduce performance anxiety or to perform well while feeling anxious, such as:

- Relaxation / breathing exercises
- Identifying & avoiding major stressors
- Embracing pressure situations
- “Over-preparing” for competition
- Use of imagery
- “Thought-stopping” techniques
- Focusing on process vs. outcome
- Using a pre-performance routine

What can you do about it?

Practice controlling your anxiety. Check out the biofeedback in the Hendrix Room November 6-9.

Call or visit the Psychological and Counseling Center at (615) 322-2571
www.vanderbilt.edu/pcc

Check out the sport psychology seminar to be offered later this month. Check with your SAAC representative for more details

