

Signs of Over-Arousal and How to Low to Lower Arousal Levels

Signs of Over-Arousal

(From Mental Toughness Training for Sports, Loehr, 1986)

Typical signs of over-arousal

1. Muscles become too tight and rigid
2. Fast heart rate, shallow and irregular breathing, often accompanied by a racy, accelerated feeling.
3. Legs feel weak and rubbery.
4. Difficulty in concentrating and focusing.
5. Everything appears to be going faster than it really is.
6. Inability to think clearly and accurately.
7. Attention gets fixed on one thing and refocusing is difficult.
8. Feeling of high anxiety and/or fear.
9. Become fatigued very quickly.
10. Become increasingly negative and self-critical.
11. Decreasing emotional control.

Strategies for Lowering Arousal Levels

(From Mental Toughness Training for Sports, Loehr, 1986)

Strategies for lowering your arousal levels

1. Deliberately slow your breathing as much as possible. Maintain a slow, regular pattern of breathing whenever the situation permits.
2. Take more time doing everything, and deliberately slow down.
3. Focus on doing the best you can - not on winning or losing. Try to play "within yourself," not against an opponent.
4. Stay within the here-and-now context in your thoughts. Focusing on either the past or future makes things worse.
5. If muscles become overly tight, first contract and then relax those muscles. Dangling your arms and hands to your sides and vigorously shaking frequently helps to "shake out" excess tension.
6. Focus your attention away from disturbing thoughts whenever possible. Focus your attention on the appropriate target. This will quickly help you to relax.
7. Play down the importance of the performance in your mind.
8. Keep a positive and constructive attitude. You are already over-aroused. Should you become increasingly negative or angry, the situation will quickly become impossible.
9. Create the strongest mental image that you can of yourself playing "in your finest hour". Recapture "the feeling" as well as you can.
10. Try to have fun and enjoy yourself. If you can momentarily step back and gain this perspective in your mind, negative activators quickly diminish.