

Empowering  
your life

BY AJIT LUDHER



**S**PORTS hypnosis is the mental game every coach, parent, and player talks about.

Legendary US baseball player Yogi Berra is reported to have said: "Think! How the hell are you gonna think and hit at the same time?" or the classic "Ninety per cent of this game is 50% mental".

What Berra was trying to say was that we don't want to think about how we hit the ball.

The subconscious mind is where we harbour our automated responses. It is the connection between the conditioned mental response and a muscular action.

Hypnosis is the bridge between conditioned mental responses and physiological outcomes. As such, it can affect the success of these outcomes and that is what a sports hypnotherapist can help with.

How does one recognise if there is a problem? Many athletes are able to bounce back and return to previous successful athletic performance after an issue, but some are plagued with problems long-term such as anticipatory anxiety, fears and phobias.

The triggers for these can be elusive even to the athlete. Some may know exactly why they need to see a sports hypnotherapist, and there are some who don't.

But they all are not happy with their performance. They also know that at one time they played their game well and realise they aren't playing at the same level or with the same intensity or confidence any more.

# Conquering fears

> Sports hypnosis is one way for athletes to overcome their insecurities and boost their sense of confidence



A sports performance hypnotherapy specialist needs to examine the possibility of past actions the athlete may be bringing forward into current and possible future events.

Many times, sports performance anticipatory anxiety issues can be evident and often inherently felt.

The athlete may or may not know what their triggers are but they know that they don't want to feel what can ultimately manifest as a panic attack the closer they get to the event or time of performance.

A sports hypnosis specialist

can help with the anticipatory anxiety, but first, we need to root out how far out from the event the athlete is feeling the anxiety and how it is affecting his/her play, before working to systematically desensitise and reprogramme the subconscious mind.

The desired effect is to allow the player to be in control of his/her mental state throughout the duration of an event.

Common issues that can affect an athlete's performance are fears and phobias. A fear is based on an actual event while a phobia is manifested in the mind and may

not be based on something that has actually occurred.

It is said that the No.1 thing people fear most is public speaking; death is No.5 on the list.

Most people are afraid of messing up, not doing well, or simply perceive themselves in a negative way.

Then, there are those who have a fear that is associated with a past negative experience and because of that one instance, that moment, it has instilled a response in the subconscious mind.

A hockey player, who was dubbed the play maker by his

coach and peers, continually risked the big hits in the corner just to feed it to the player in front of the net for the goal. He's a true team player.

One time during a risky play in front of goal, he collided with another player and was thrown off his feet, slamming his head on the turf and losing his bearings for a moment.

Unbeknown to him, it was at that moment that he developed a new reaction: fear had set in.

Now, he doesn't seem to try for the ball, doesn't seem to play with the same enthusiasm or control as before.

Many times, athletes try to overcome these feelings of fear and avoid putting themselves into potentially-dangerous situations. Sometimes, the reverse may be the case.

After a while, it becomes evident to the player, the coach, and his teammates that he's not performing with the same level of confidence as before.

Sports anxiety, fears, and phobias, are just as common as issues that surround our everyday lives. Amateurs and pros come across a vast amount of pressure, and can be susceptible as anyone else.

It is a sports hypnotherapist who can help distinguish between the issues and start a process that can reprogramme the subconscious mind for a desired outcome without the anxiety and fear.

**Ajit Ludher** is a specialist in advanced professional hypnotherapy, a counselling psychotherapist for trauma/crisis and a cognitive behavioural therapist. Write to him at [lifestyle.ajitludher@thesundaily.com](mailto:lifestyle.ajitludher@thesundaily.com).