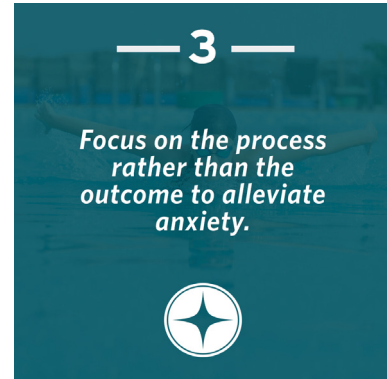
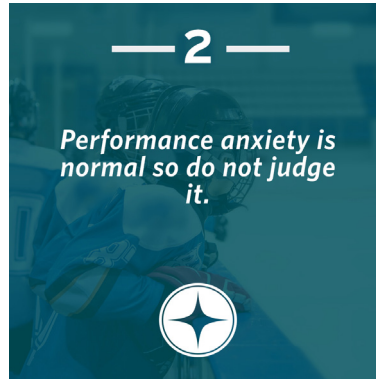


Performance Anxiety



3 Key Takeaways



The Basics

- Performance anxiety is common among many people, especially athletes who must perform in the presence of others.
- One common type of anxiety is generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), or persistent worries about daily life and routines - small and large.
- There are two predominate forms of therapy that are aimed at lessening performance anxiety: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).
- By preparing, practicing, and rehearsing the management of performance anxiety in a low-stress environment first, athletes gain coping skills to prepare for when anxiety-inducing situations arise.

Performance Anxiety: Ambassador Story

Amro El Geziry, three-time Olympian, Team USA modern pentathlete, and U.S. Army Sergeant, knows firsthand how pressure can create performance anxiety. At the age of 13, Amro started competing in modern pentathlon, a sport comprised of five different disciplines: fencing, freestyle swimming, equestrian show jumping, pistol shooting, and cross country running.

From the very beginning, Amro saw the sport as an opportunity for unique experiences like traveling, making friends, and exploring different cultures. As he ages and progressed in his sport, however, Amro began to experience new pressure from his coaches around major competitions, including World Championships and the Olympic Games. His sporting experience quickly transformed from one focused on making the most of unique experiences to one solely focused on winning. The better Amro performed, the more external pressure he felt. The more external pressure he experienced, the more he began to internalize the need to win.

Amro entered the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as one of the top contenders for a medal. There were broad expectations for him to reach the podium, and in the end, the pressure to perform became overwhelming. After having the best year of his career and being physically prepared for competition, Amro experienced his worst finish in more than four years.



It was a difficult lesson for Amro, but he now looks back on the experience as a remind to trust his training, the process, and himself. Now when he competes, even on a global stage, he avoids focusing on placement and where he will finish. Instead, Amro focuses on doing his personal best and finishing a competition both satisfied and proud of the process rather than the outcome.

Amro went on to compete in the 2019 Pan American Games, where he recognized similar external pressures that he had faced in Rio. When his performance began to be impacted by his anxiety, Amro remember to trust his skills and focus on the process. Learning to recognize the triggers for his performance anxiety and how to manage it was instrumental, leading Amro to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

1. *What were the main points you took away from the ambassador story?*
2. *What common themes are noticeable in Amro's experiences?*
3. *What techniques do you practice in order to remain calm and focused during intense competition?*