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Introduction

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1.1 The cognitive–behavioural approach

There are many approaches to applied practice in sport psychology. Poczwadowski, Sherman and Ravizza (2004) stated that ‘it is the professional philosophy of a consultant that drives the helping process and determines the points of both departure and arrival regarding the client’s behaviour change and also guides consultants in virtually every aspect of their applied work’ (p. 446). Accordingly, the case studies detailed in this book are informed by a cognitive–behavioural approach. This does not suggest that this is a more efficacious psychological model, but rather it acknowledges that a cognitive–behavioural approach is adopted by many practising sport psychologists.

Briefly, cognitive–behavioural therapy (CBT) is an umbrella label for approaches originally based on cognitive therapy and behaviour therapy and describes interventions that aim to decrease psychological distress and maladaptive behaviours by modifying cognitive processes (Greenberg & Padesky, 1995; Hill, 2001). This model postulates that individuals’ perception of their world is subjective and cognitively mediated, and emphasizes the interaction between current situations, cognitions (what we think), emotions (what we feel) and behaviour (what we do). In practice, the sport psychologist using a cognitive–behavioural approach will engage in a collaborative relationship with their athlete/s. Moreover, the focus of the consultancy will be on ‘client’ difficulties in

the present and historical information will be gathered only in so much as it has a direct link with the present. According to Scott and Dryden (2003), within this approach the emphasis is upon breaking down negative links between cognition, behaviour and emotion, generally using the cognitive and behavioural ‘ports of entry’. In other words, emphasis is upon facilitating change via thought processes and behaviours, the assumption being that there is a direct connection between the two.

1.2 Types of assessments and interventions

The case studies included within this book employ assessment, which is essential to begin the consultancy process. A key impact of assessing athletes, which can often be considered an intervention in itself, is the raising of self-awareness in the client. This is incorporated within many of the case studies within this book either explicitly as a targeted area for development, or implicitly within the assessment process. The range of assessment modes available to the applied sport psychologist can be summarized as interviews, questionnaires (or pen and paper assessments) and observations. The relative strengths and weaknesses of each mode of assessment in eliciting accurate and reliable information establishes the need to triangulate findings from different modes to maximize the accuracy of subsequent intervention decisions (see Beckmann & Kellmann, 2003; Vealey & Garner-Holman, 1998; Taylor, 1995). Once these decisions have been made, the applied sport psychologist can then feel confident to intervene with the performer using a range of techniques (or methods) through which they aim to influence psychological skill, well-being and ultimately performance (Anderson *et al.*, 2002).

1.3 Techniques and skills

The content of the case studies reflect a range of different objectives in the applied consultancy situation. In many cases, however, the delivery of interventions is based on the development of psychological skills. An important distinction to bear in mind whilst reading the case studies is that between the objective of developing psychological *skills* and the *techniques* used to achieve this. Vealey (1988) outlined psychological skills of importance within sport, including self-awareness, self-confidence, optimal attention and optimal arousal. The *techniques* adopted within the case studies such as self-talk, goal setting, imagery and profiling are methods through which the sport psychologist can influence the psychological *skills* of the performer. It is important to recognize that applied sport psychology practitioners may use the same technique to influence different psychological skills and that a number of techniques may well be used in combination with the intention of enhancing a single psychological skill.

1.4 Reflective practice

Each of the case studies includes a section relating to reflections on the process from the sport psychologist's perspective. This is an essential element within all applied work, regardless of the focus of the intervention. Reflection is a process by which knowledge can be developed based on professional practice (Durgahee, 1997). The reflective process can help applied sport psychologists to be more confident in their professional practice in the face of uncertainty (Ghaye & Lillyman, 2000). Therefore, reflective practice helps professionals to learn from experience in a systematic manner and understand that the nature of working as an applied sport psychologist involves uncertainty within dynamic circumstances. Being able, through reflection, to embrace that uncertainty enables the practitioner to interpret this as a challenge. A number of authors have identified systematic, often circular, representations of the reflective process to guide practitioners (e.g. Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne, 2004; Johns, 1994), some of which are specifically used within certain chapters of the book.

The book is separated into three sections. Section one covers five cases of support work with individual athletes. Chris Harwood reports an intensive intervention programme to build self-efficacy in an emerging professional tennis player; Brian Hemmings details the process of assisting an international test cricketer deal with various on and off field distractions; Andrew Lane describes the use of a videotape intervention with a professional boxer preparing for a world championship bout; Caroline Marlow documents the challenging of limiting performance beliefs with a nationally ranked tenpin bowler; and Iain Greenlees reports an intervention programme to build confidence in a youth golfer.

Section two consists of three chapters on team interventions. Chris Shambrook chronicles interventions with Olympic rowers to enhance communication between crew members; Jenny Page describes her experiences as a trainee sport psychologist delivering group educational workshops to age-group rugby league squads over two seasons; and Richard Thelwell details the effects of a goal-setting intervention within professional football.

The final section includes three chapters on aspects of working with support staff. Jonathan Katz reports the task of developing and delivering psychological support services to athletes and support staff at a Paralympic Games; Sarah Cecil documents the role of the psychologist working as part of a multi-disciplinary team with an injured rugby union player, whilst Tim Holder describes a skill acquisition approach to coach education in table tennis.

The chapters included are not fictional stories or hypothetical scenarios. They are real-life people and real-life events, though in many cases they have been anonymized to protect the identities of the athletes involved. Each case study starts with relevant

background information and reports the initial assessment, the psychological intervention/s used, and the monitoring and evaluation of those interventions. Each chapter also includes the reflections of the practitioner on the process of support and their effectiveness, and finishes with a summary and five questions for students.

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