Implementing Imagery For Coaches

Lisa Rogerson, PhD.

Understanding Imagery

Mimics real experience

We can be aware of seeing an image, feeling movements as an image, or experiencing an image of smell, taste, or sound without actually experiencing the real thing.

Imagery is most effective when the images created are vivid, under your control, and include emotion.

3

Association Effects of Imagery

- Cognitive science: Physical action is partly mental; mental actions are physical.

- Functional equivalence: The same neural networks used in visual processing are used in visual imagery.

- Imagery produces more associations than other cognitive processes.

Imagery Research

- Individualistic
- More effective when combined with Physical Practice
- Internal images produce localized muscular movement
- Should be used with relaxation

5

Specific Uses of Imagery

1. Acquiring and developing new skills more rapidly
2. Performance improvement (Recall, Preserve, Instant replay)
   - A player imagines a successful block she has practiced countless times
3. Mental Preparation (confidence, relaxation)
   - A player imagines an upcoming competition and strategizes responses to several situations.
   - A player uses imagery as a relaxation ritual before the game begins
4. Reinforce Desired Attitudes
   - A player imagines coping with poor line calls and mastering that situation
5. Speed recovery from injury and maintain skill levels while injured

6

Implementing Imagery Program

Awareness - What is it?
- ☐ Discuss importance in performance
- ☐ Types of imagery
- ☐ Include anecdotal information
- ☐ Ask athletes about imagery
  - What is imagery?
  - What kinds of things do you image?
  - Why do [volleyballers] use imagery?
  - Try an imagery script with them

7

Imagery Scripts

Imagine you are at home in your bedroom, what do you see?

Imagine the feel of ball – the soft smooth feel, the sharp edges, and the depth or the seams.

Imagination Serving - This activity can be done with any serving drill. Ask the players to close their eyes and imagine themselves in a game situation. Walking back to take a serve, standing behind the line…. Encourage them to do this activity from an internal perspective (see what they would really see). What can they see? (looking ahead to target) Hear? (Contact with ball) Feel? (in their body). As they image each skill in their mind get them to move their bodies in the correct way too.

8

Using Imagery in Training

- ☐ Create a positive non-distracting environment and select simple exercises /drills.
- ☐ Use all senses progressively.
- ☐ Practice regularly to develop conditioned responses (set aside time each practice)
- • Try a simple skill and focus on 'feel' while executing
  - ☐ Become aware of the movements – know 'that's right,' or 'that's not it'
  - ☐ Expect it to disrupt performance – 'all of a sudden you'll notice your elbow or knee'.

9

E.G. Imagery for Skill Development

Awareness:

- ☐ Work on new skill and notice what you feel while executing
- ☐ Try to limit evaluation during awareness
- ☐ Add recall of the last execution to help with awareness

Teaching Skills:

- ☐ Match image with objective performance – do you see what is real?
  - ☐ pick one aspect of the trial, compare image with feedback or video
  - ☐ goal is to give the athlete control over their performance

10

E.G., Imagery for Desired Attitudes

Awareness:

Image peaceful places – to stimulate relaxation

Recall best and worst performances – note the emotions, feelings, cue words

Create a list of positive images that 'tie into' the best performances

Develop a list of emotionally charged images for inspiration, challenge, freedom, joy, etc..

Teaching skills:

Use cue words to stimulate images

Create a 'Power Image' to evoke the specific attitude and feeling that is desired

For Competition and once images and cue words are set:

☐ Create a recording of imagery sessions - Practice regularly

☐ Add emotional context by reliving best performances

11

Typical Athlete Problems

1. Using coach feedback to make changes

2. Coach needs to allow time after each trial to image

3. Images don't need to be like movies, use what you have

4. Understand the difference between athletes' and an observers perception of performance

5. Corrected action does not initially feel 'right'

12

Guidelines

• Integrate imagery into training and competition

• Calculate how imagery can meet performance demands

• Talk with athletes about their imagery and the meaning of their images, so that more effective advice and support can be provided

• Utilize individuals' experiences and terminology when creating imagery protocols and content requirements

13