

Psychological Counseling as a Means of Developing the Athlete's Personality

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Abstract: *The article analyzes theoretical and methodological foundations of sports psychological counseling, taking into account professional requirements for the personality of the athlete. The problem of the influence of psychological counseling on the personal development of the athlete is theoretically examined. Recent technologies of psychological counseling for the personal development of athletes are presented. The main tasks of sports and psychological counseling on personal development are considered. The personal criteria of formation of psychological readiness of the athlete for professional activity in the context of the personality-oriented approach to sports-psychological counseling are specified. The influence of professional deformations on the structure of the athlete's personality is emphasized and consultative technologies of their weakening are offered. At the methodological and applied level it is proved that in the sports-psychological counseling the problem of development of the athlete's personality is inextricably linked with his / her individual sports style. Recommendations on technologies for the development of the client's confidence on the principles of trust and partnership in the process of counseling work with the conveyance have been developed, taking into account the individual approach, the presence of personal deformities in the client-athlete.*

Keywords: *sports; psychodiagnostics; psychocorrection; achievements; client; personal resource; positive changes; sports career; sports competitions; sports team; psychological support.*

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Introduction

Psychological support of athletes, in particular psychological counseling is focused on expanding professionally significant personal potential, extending sports longevity in conditions of fierce competition. A high social status and prestige as the result are associated with personal and professional potential as a psychological means of overcoming enormous physical and mental stress and crisis periods in the life of any athlete, which can often be accompanied by neurotic states, emotional and personal disorders, internal and interpersonal conflicts. Therefore, the study of sports psychological counseling as a means of developing the athlete's personality is the most pressing issue in contemporary sports psychology.

The purpose of our article is to study the problem of the impact of psychological counseling on the personal development of the athlete. The novelty and practical significance of the article lies in the implementation of theoretical and methodological analysis of the features of sports psychological counseling, taking into account the professional requirements for the personality of the athlete; development of technologies of psychological counseling for the purpose of personal development of athletes; recommendations on technologies for the development of confidence in the client have been developed on the principles of trust and partnership in the process of counseling work with the conveyance, taking into account the individual approach, the presence of personal deformities in the client-athlete.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the psychological counseling support of the athlete's personality development process

Sports psychological counseling is one of the forms of work on the psychological support for the training of specialists in the field of sports. The main tasks of the sports psychological counseling on personal development are: activation of self-sufficiency and responsibility of athletes to achieve their goals in solving personal and professional problems; formation of personal qualities (at the level of professional competence) that contribute to satisfaction of significant needs for critical sports situations, without the inclusion of rigid mechanisms of psychological protection that can deform the manifestation of positive personal characteristics; formation of personal qualities related to teamwork, building optimal, especially business and interpersonal relationships in the system "coach – athlete – athlete"; formation of psychological readiness (as a set of personal

dispositions) for sports competitions with leadership positions regarding the process and results of victory; optimization of personality-motivational regulators (especially motivation for success and professional motivation) as a factor of the effective psychological self-regulation in sports (Demchenko et al., 2021; Palamarchuk et al., 2020; Sarancha et al., 2022).

Thus, the psychological support of sports performance and a professional adaptation in specific sporting situations is influenced by many factors of psychological self-regulation of the athlete, important among them are: personal qualities (self-confidence, self-sufficiency, determination, courage, strength of will to achieve goals, etc.); specialized cognitive processes (included in achieving the goals in a particular sport); motivational features of achievements in sports activities (dominant behavioral strategies in sports activities, the ratio of significant motives and needs, values and level of claims, etc.); properties of the nervous system and the temperament. The least studied is the identification of the personal factor of success in sports activities – one of the most important, in our opinion, which “starts” the motivational process of formation and development of the personality of a highly qualified athlete.

According to Klymenko (2006), a personality is the epicenter of any activity, creativity. In the process of its harmonious development, the physical culture and sports are of great importance, ensuring physical perfection, promoting spiritual development and formation of better character traits. Psychological support of personal and professional development of athletes is carried out through: improving the ability to control oneself – to one's own self in stressful situations; development of self-realization; optimization of mental regulation of movements, actions, deeds and behavior – bodily skills; determination of mental state and direction of development to the top of human capabilities – self-regulation; strengthening the state of public loneliness is created by the ability to listen to oneself, understand and regulate one's actions, act on their own behalf and form judgments about their appropriateness and at the same time be independent of circumstances - maintaining one's self-sufficiency; use of psychomotor tests that promote self-control and adjustment of the self-fulfillment. The athlete's personality can be properly understood only in interaction with the team, taking into account the system of stable mental interpersonal relationships and values, which he / she focuses on and which are the meaning and content of joint activities (Klymenko, 2006).

For the purposes of our research we are interested in the works related to professional growth and career counseling (Gledding, 2002) and methodological principles of individual counseling (Aleshina, 2004),

psychological support in the system of training and development of athletes and sports teams (Hryn, 2014), activity approach to the essence and subject of sports psychology and the art of mental regulation of athlete behavior (Klymenko, 2006), basic principles of meta-technology of sports psychological counseling (Arpenteva, 2019), comparative analysis of personal characteristics of high-class athletes (Aprosimov et al., 2018), models of sports psychology from improving performance to personal development and psychological well-being of athletes (Hong & Rao, 2020).

Foreign researchers also considered the problems in our study: the possibility of personal development in the process of psychological counseling (Bager-Charleson, 2012; Donati, 2002), in particular Merry & Haugh (2020) in their work examined in detail the impact of personality-centered counseling on personal development of the client, in particular personality-oriented values, personal qualities, conscious attitude of the client's personality to oneself, others and the world.

Personality-oriented approach to sports psychological counseling on the issue of actualization of the personal development of athletes covers the task of forming their psychological readiness to achieve successful results in sports, the key features and components of which are personal and professional characteristics, including subjectivity, focus, self-sufficiency, endurance, initiative, attentiveness, self-confidence, adequate professional self-esteem with the position "my today's sports results are better than yesterday's". Such personal qualities, in our opinion, can be considered a personal criterion for the formation of the psychological readiness of the athlete for professional activities, including sports competitions, besides, taking into account his / her unique personality.

Professional sports counseling should not focus on the dominant analysis of the psychological characterological portrait of the athlete, rather than his / her actions as an active component of self-regulation of behavior in sports. It is desirable to consider their relationship. In addition, the professional competence of a counseling psychologist cannot be reduced to "labeling" due to the personal level of the client, thus maintaining the motivational potential for both successes and failures. Such counseling strategies are appropriate in counseling athletes with disabilities. Martin (1999) built a model of personal development of athletes with disabilities in the context of sports psychology. Sports psychologists can play an important role in helping athletes with disabilities to achieve personal excellence in sports and life, increased confidence and adequate self-esteem.

Sports psycho-counseling is one of the main areas of psychological assistance and support of the athlete's personality – it is a specific type of

practical work of a sports psychologist, characterized by special formal and substantive features. Counseling activities in the system of psychological support and support of athletes in their tasks is close to educational and preventive work and the ultimate goal is to create favorable conditions for full personal development, communication, life in general (Hryn, 2014).

Psychological counseling in the framework of sports and health work focuses on the problems of human relationships with themselves and the world through the prism of his / her sports and health activities, it will consider these relationships as a source of problems and as a way to overcome them. Sports and psychological counseling appears as a complex, polymorphic phenomenon associated with different groups of clients in sports and health work in solving problems of their relationship with themselves and the world: intrapersonal, interpersonal, as well as intragroup and intergroup functioning, development and recovery (habilitation and rehabilitation). Arpenteva draws on the principles of counseling highlighted in Rogers' client-centered psychological approach, in three main aspects of the dimensions of counseling interaction: power, competence, love – transformative, dialogical and relative (as attitude) intentions; as well as in relation to the life of a sports psychologist-consultant in general (Arpenteva, 2019).

Psychological counseling with an athlete in the conditions of information and time deficit is most often described by the following algorithm: establishment of a contact with the athlete by creating a psychological climate corresponding to the communication situation; figuring out the true actual problem of the athlete, his / her positioning in it, its joint clear formulation; determining the goal of the athlete, his / her ability to achieve it, discussion of positive ways of action, which will lead to the desired result; development of alternative behavioral and action options; summarizing the results of interaction with an athlete, motivating him / her to implement in life an adopted decision by the psychologist. In the advisory practice it is expedient to adhere to the following general principles: voluntariness, benevolent and unbiased attitude, confidentiality, professional motivation as protection of the interests of the athlete, abstaining of a psychologist from advising and recipes (Hryn, 2014).

All types of psychological assistance to athletes are put in practice only at the level of an individual approach. As the athlete gains sports and personal maturity, external assistance is replaced by a self-care of the athlete. Gradually, the athlete becomes a competent "client" of psychological assistance, determining independently one's needs. At the level of sports of the highest achievements, the leading form of psychological assistance

becomes the individual counseling. Coaching is a special form of counseling, based on a contemporary approach to human development and its personal growth. Methods used in it reveal the potential of the athlete and develop his / her abilities. A special value of coaching for sports is that it provides an increase in the personal effectiveness of the athlete. Coaching gives excellent results in situations where there are no standard ready-made decisions, where a lot depends on the athlete. At the stage of preparation for the sport of highest achievements this is the most effective form of work, because the athlete is the most active in finding solutions to problems and, consequently, the results are faster and naturally implemented in practice. The expected results of psychological support of the athlete, which play the role of criteria for its effectiveness: high positive self-esteem and confidence in one's power; awareness of the individual way in sports and the prospective plan of a career in sports; the ability to independently solve problems in sports and life; high authority among rivals, judges, specialists; the ability to independently relieve emotional stress; formation of a high level of the psychological readiness (Kostromina & Smirnova, 2009).

Professional deformations of the personal structure of the athlete even of a high qualification as a manifestation of inadequate personal characteristics, caused by the strategies of behavior typical for the specialists ("struggle above all", "quit", "undesirable reconciliation with the situation") in subjectively significant for him / her sports situation and in the process of counseling can intensify the mechanisms of psychological protection, rigid instructions, low reflexivity, unpreparedness to cooperate with a counselor. In this case, in our opinion, the quality of the counseling process depends on one of its most important tasks - to think with the customer a more constructive position in one's situation, to consider more objective ways of reorientation of the client in his / her problem. The key task for a psychologist in this case is the ability to properly build a hypothesis as an attempt to understand the situation of the client in a *timely manner, that is adequate to the consultative situation*, articulate it to the client in such a way that it would be clear and accepted by him / her and motivate him / her to positive personality changes.

The hypotheses of the counselor are based on the facts that the client tells about oneself and one's problems and this is just the basis for their construction. For a professional well acquainted with various theoretical and practical developments in the field of counseling and psychotherapy, a client's story is a set of behavioral patterns that are interpreted from the point of view of one or another concept. Conceptual vision of what the client says, greatly facilitates the work, allows to better

interpret the material. The more ideas in a hypothesis arise in a consultant about this or other statements of the client, the more he / she is professionally equipped, the easier is work. Verbally pronounced hypothesis by the counselor is an interpretation. Interpretation is the cornerstone of psychotherapy, the turning point of the counseling process. Obviously, in each of the theoretical approaches the ways of interpreting and vision of cause-and-effect relationships are different, but the value of interpretation in the counseling process is difficult to overestimate. Interpretation is a complex technique. In order to use it correctly, a number of additional moments should be taken into account: the client's readiness to accept an interpretation offered by the counselor; the adequacy of the moment of conversation for formulation of the interpretation. It should not be too long in the form; it should be articulated in plane words, close to the language of the client; untimely interpretation can serve as the basis of the client resistance, actualization of the mechanisms aimed at preventing changes in the life of the individual, to preserve his / her conflicts and problems; the most successful option for the development of a consulting dialogue is the situation where the interpretation, as some conclusion from a conversation, is formulated by a person who applied for help, the only thing left to the consultant is to clarify and approve it (Aleshina, 2004).

For the sport and for any athlete, the most important is to achieve high results. Therefore, the problem of development of the personality of an athlete in the sport-psychological counseling on the methodological and applied level is inseparably interconnected with his / her individual sports style, important sports qualities. Thus, Lovyagina (2013) claims that the personal features of the athlete today are not sufficiently studied, there are practically no research of value orientations, self-concept, semantic sphere, etc. Incomplete data on deep personal characteristics (having a specific impact on self-regulation of athletes) does not allow to fully take them into account in the practice of psychological support, thereby limiting its effectiveness. When providing psychological assistance in improving important sports qualities, it is necessary to distinguish the subject and methods of psychological influences. Without understanding how it is possible to improve the manifestation of the required quality: to increase motivation, change the attitude, adjust self-esteem, etc., it is impossible to introduce psychological assistance in practice.

There are connections between the properties of individuality, the nervous system, temperament and the type of sports activity. The system of self-regulation of an athlete, whose components are individual-psychological peculiarities of the individual, allows to compensate manifestations of the

properties of individuality inconsistent with the requirements of a certain sport. Links between multi-level properties of the individuality are formed in the form of an individual style of sports activities. The correction of stylistic parameters is often reduced to recommendations which mostly deal with the necessity to change something rather than how it can be done. It is necessary to adjust the style when it does not match the individual features of the athlete. Presently, improving the style of sports activity is a difficult task for psychological assistance (Lovyagina, 2013).

The personality of a counselor is often a decisive factor that determines the effectiveness of counseling. Consultants need such personal qualities as maturity, empathy, stress resistance, tolerance, sociability, personality maturity, aspiration for self-actualization, authenticity, unbiased attitude to another person, tolerance to uncertainty, flexibility, adoption of personal responsibility, deep relations with others, ability to set realistic goals. They should be altruists in spirit and have resistance to failures and frustration. The model of effective psychological counseling includes the following individual characteristics of the counselor and the client: empathy, interest in clients, motivation to change, reflexivity, openness, responsibility (Afanasieva, 2017).

In turn, Loehr (1990) researched the experience of building a career in sports psychology and providing advisory services to professional tennis players, as well as factors and issues that affect the professional efficiency and competence. The importance of training and competence in all sports sciences is emphasized. The problems and difficulties that arise when building a successful career for this specialty are considered. The need for more efficient and responsible application technologies is discussed.

Rooney, Jackson and Heron (2021) consider differences in the attitude of athletes to psychological counseling of individual and team sports, which is associated with their psychological readiness to consult with a practitioner in the sports psychology. The results of the study indicate that athletes engaged in individual sports are more likely to have a positive attitude towards sports psychology compared with the athletes who compete in the team sports, though women-athletes showed more readiness to cooperate with the sports psychologists to increase productivity than their male colleagues. In some way the results can help sports psychologists understand and solve the problems of athletes, as well as improve the susceptibility of sports psychology.

Western researchers also empirically investigated the problem of attitude towards psychological advisory among athletes in the context of understanding the role of culture and personality. An analysis of multiple

linear regression showed that a lower openness and integrity involve greater stigma for advice on sports psychology; higher neuroticism, integrity and openness predict greater confidence in the consultation on sports psychology; and the lower openness provided for a greater advantage of cooperation with a consultant on sports psychology of the same race or culture. These conclusions may prove to be valuable for practitioners of the applied sports psychology and are intended to help them better understand the athletes and the athletic population they offer their services to (Ong & Harwood, 2018).

In turn, Martin, Lavalley, Kellmann, Page (2004) studied the attitude towards psychological counseling of athletes living in the United States, Great Britain and Germany. Researchers empirically confirmed that the attitude to sports psychology can be influenced by gender, nationality and the type of sport. Practicing sports psychologists should be sensitive to how personal characteristics and past experience affect the expectations and attitude of athletes to counseling on sports psychology to improve the services they offer.

Contemporary technologies of psychological counseling for the purpose of personal development of the athlete

The basis for introduction of methods of contemporary sports-psychological counseling in line with the major psychological approaches are: the humanistic approach (personality-centered counseling, gestalt counseling, transactional analysis, reality therapy (counseling for realism); psychoanalysis; cognitive-behavioral approach. The influence on the development of an athlete's personality is carried out under the influence of both individual and group counseling. The lack of personal resources to solve a psychological problem of the athlete involves the psycho-correction work in the psychological advisory process.

Arpenteva (2019) assures that within the framework of sports and health work a great role belongs to the psychological support of athletes. This role is not yet well appreciated, however, the problems of its technologies and, especially, meta technologies, i.e., the basic principles and guidelines are very acute, it is a technology that allows to integrate and develop technologies of personality development and the relationships that exist in the context of various psychotherapeutic schools and models of human and social development. Obviously, neither health, physical, moral, psychological, social, nor the achievements themselves in sports cannot be purposeful and central for the psychotherapeutic work. The central

meanings are the development of an individual as such, his / her improvement as an individual and social subject of life activity.

Cooper and Dryden, (2016) considered the methodological principles of implementing contemporary methods of pluralistic counseling, which can directly affect the personal growth of the client and the counselor in their interaction: there is no single correct way to conceptualize the clients' problems; counselors should recognize and appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of clients; the clients should be fully involved at every stage of the counseling process; the clients should be understood in terms of their strengths and resources and their problems; it is important that counselors are critical of their own theory and practice, be willing to look at their own investments in a particular position and have the opportunity to move away from it.

In the sports psychologist's practical activities systematization and optimization of work are of great importance. Depending on the kind of sport, the athlete's qualifications, the experience in sports, the psychologist should select the appropriate tools and approach to one's professional activities. Based on reliable data on the personal characteristics of athletes and their difficulties in psychological training, a sports psychologist has the opportunity to better plan and analyze the work. This information can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of the psychologist and assess the quantitative and qualitative indicators of his / her activities. Collecting data on the personal characteristics of athletes is a necessary initial stage of activity to correct personality traits. Based on the analysis of the rating of components, the personality qualities needed to achieve a high result in sport can be determined. For example, in martial arts, motivation, will, confidence, concentration, stress resistance, ability to self-analysis, self-adjustment, self-regulation are important. In cyclical sports, confidence, concentration, motivation, and the ability to comprehend one's actions during competitions are important. Such quality as the ability to work in a team is called essential neither in martial arts nor cyclical sports. This may be due to the fact that the sports covered in this work are individual and the ability to work in a team is not as crucial as in the team sports.

The experience of a sports psychologist enables to suggest that one of the main tasks of psychological counseling is the interpretation of the results of psychodiagnostics, in particular the vegetative coefficient (VC) of Shiposh, which allows to determine the characteristics of the current psychophysiological state of the athlete. During the test the coincidence or discrepancy of the signal value of color with the capabilities and the leading attitude of the athlete's organism, which can be quantified in the range from

0.2 to 5 points. The value of VC more than 1 (the ergotropic response) indicates significant psychophysiological capabilities of the athlete's organism and the focus of his / her psyche on the action, expenditure of energy; less than 1 (trophotropic response) - the need for a rest, recovery, minimization of efforts. This indicator, according to many psychologists, is the litmus test that allows to detect changes in the effective current state of the athlete when this cannot be achieved by other methods. The analysis of indicators of control of sports activity of football players of different qualification, age, sports experience of different teams and its interrelation with the results of psychodiagnostics shows that the change of the VC indicator directly proportionally influences decrease in the efficiency of sports activity. It is established that with the help of psychological counseling it is possible to identify personal reasons for the decrease in the value of VC (Voronova, 2013).

In our opinion, the use of such diagnostic data in the process of eclectic counseling allows activating the athlete's reflection on the awareness of individual ways to match one's personal potential, motivation, psychophysiological capabilities of the organism and the athlete's performance; prevention of disharmonies of the athlete's personal development; formation and activation of personal-motivational mechanisms of regulation of sports activity, professionally-significant personal qualities.

Psychological counseling significantly increases the stress resistance of the individual through mastering of the self-regulation techniques and awareness of the organism's internal reserves, which can be used in stressful situations of both professional and personal interaction. The levels of situational anxiety and aggression get optimized. The severity of asthenic symptoms reduces significantly. The emotional tone and comfort increase, primarily due to the reduction of excessive internal tension (Afanasieva, 2017).

As already mentioned, sports and psychological counseling has its own specifics in connection with the personal and professional deformities of athletes, mechanisms of psychological protection, personal problems of public loneliness, etc., which can "slow down" the counseling process. In addition, the effectiveness of counseling depends on the relationship between the counselor and the client, which may be psychologically incompatible and dislike each other. Therefore, Gleding (2002) recommends working on overcoming conveyance and counterconveyance (the projections of the past and present feelings and desires) in order to avoid circular counseling "running around in circles".

In the situation of the conveyance (projection of the client's experiences on the consultant) the athlete (client) due to the dominant positive sport-significant personal qualities or, conversely, professionally deformed personal qualities, may perceive the counselor as a source of frustration, which, in turn, can cause the feeling of rejection, stress, over-control of reactions, etc., on the counselor's part. Therefore, in typical situations in the consultation process we recommend to focus on the technologies developing trust to the result of the counseling interaction in the client (the techniques of client-centered psychological approach, psychoanalysis, etc.), the techniques for overcoming verbal barriers, the effects of improving relationships which undoubtedly will ensure the effectiveness of the counseling process on the principles of trust and partnership.

In sports and psychological counseling, it is necessary to diagnose the important sports qualities, properties of the nervous system, features of the individual style of the athlete and the degree of his / her compliance with the personal characteristics as a psychological integrity, taking into account the specifics of the important sports situation, and problems, gender, kind of sport, qualification of the athlete and taking an individual approach to each client.

Conclusion

Sports and sports achievements cause positive personal changes. The winner is the one who is primarily focused on personal growth, and therefore psychologically prepared for competitions, victories and sports life in general. Sports psychological counseling for the purposes of personal development is aimed at forming a sports orientation of the individual; maintaining physical, psychological and social health; prevention of fatigue, emotional and professional burnout in the post-competition period and personal-professional deformities; expansion of personal resources for successful overcoming of professional crises, effective psychological self-realization and achievement of goals in sports activities; psychological support of personal and professional fitness and sports longevity.

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