

St. Vincent Sports Performance
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**Mental Training Tips: Keep Calm under
Pressure...Composure Skills**

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Being a competitive gymnast (optional level) can generate many distractions and “pressures” (stress), such as the hours of training, injuries, balancing schoolwork/practice, and traveling to meets. However, a gymnast should understand that he or she can only FOCUS ON THE THINGS HE/SHE HAS CONTROL OVER.... I have found that the most successful athletes are those that are able to keep calm and composed in the most anxious moments...by trusting in themselves and their training, a sense of “calm” can permeate a tense moment...from there a great routine can occur.

In gymnastics, whether you’re just starting at your first level 6 meet, or preparing for level 10 Regionals, the use of mental training can assist in how you deal with your anxiety, fears, doubts, and “butterflies”. When an athlete visualizes successful performance, they are likely to report feeling “calm and focused...it was easy...my energy was perfect...” In my sport & performance psychology practice at St. Vincent Sports Performance, I work very hard with my clients (athletes) to help them learn how to be focused on their goals, learn how to manage “butterflies” (get them to fly in formation), and help them create mental “plans” that they can use throughout their competitive season.

Here are some mental training “tips” to help you maintain your focus and composure in practice and competition:

- *Remember your BEST PERFORMANCE...Use Cue Words to Focus on how it feels when you are competing at your best... VISUALIZE that performance...*
- *Practice BREATHING and RELAXING exercises... This will help you to be able to take a deep breath...and relax...when situations are tense.*
- *USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK...Focus on positive statements about performance you can control...not outcome...State to yourself the “cues” that you associate with your best skill one at a time...*
- *Have CONFIDENCE in your abilities...and let that belief be INTERNAL...you are the only one that knows how composed you can be...*
- *FOCUS ON THE MOMENT...the most important routine is the one you are doing right now...*
- *LOVE WHAT YOU DO...The smile on your face keeps you composed and focused!*

“I had to take my goggles off to make sure the No. 1 was next to my name. When I saw that ‘1’ next to my name, that’s when I sort of let my roar out.” – Michael Phelps (after winning by .001 second to win his 7th Gold Medal)