

PEAK PERFORMANCE FOR ATHLETES

The Heart of the Matter:

What is Heart Rate Coherence & Why do I want to get there?

The Heart is the center of power and wisdom, it has 'intelligence' and knows what to do to function for our best performance. The "Zone" is a function of the heart that improves concentration, streamlines the body's ability to perform during stressful situations in the most efficient way possible. The heart is a muscle, it has memory and with practice will reboot to *heart rate coherence*, smooth and even heart rate patterns, to quickly and efficiently improve concentration and performance.

We often use these phrases –“Heart felt”, “Heart ache”, “Heart throb”, “Heart break”, “Follow your Heart”, “Trust your heart”, “Listen to your Heart” or “Get to the Heart of the Matter.” Intuitively we know the heart is the manager of our emotions. Learning to control your heart rhythms will let you replace stress, fear and frustration with positive emotions that boost performance.

In any sport anxiety, fear, anger, pain or frustration bring on coordination-killing, speed-slowing and mind-blanking forces. The secret of controlling emotion is in the Heart!

According to HeartMath, a research organization in Northern California, different emotions trigger different heart rhythms, which in turn send different messages back to the brain. Those messages determine what your brain tells your body to do, from effective performance or giving up. The key is in being able to shift from the destructive and jagged heart rhythms brought on by the agitated stress response in pressured athletic endeavors to the positive, smooth rhythms created by emotions like love, compassion, appreciation. The smooth and even heart rate patterns produce the calmness, clarity and coordination associated with peak performance.

When the pressure is on, it is your mental game that makes or breaks your performance. The HeartMath philosophy contends that the first reaction occurs in the heart, not the head. In times of stress or pressure there is a space in time between stimulus and response. Getting into Heart Rate Coherence, smooth and even heart rhythm, widens this space to allow the athlete the shift to focused and efficient performance. Shifting your emotional state is imperative to improving performance. You can't have two emotions running at the same time. When you replace fear or frustration with a more productive emotions like appreciation or confidence, you shift the message to the brain and thus to the body. This “coherent” heart rate pattern triggers optimum performance potential in the brain.

The heart provides a unique point from which anyone can regulate many of their reaction patterns. Learning to control your own heart rhythms gets to the heart of emotional control. It is self-empowering and self-transforming. It gives you access to an internal source of power and intelligence. The heart is so powerful, generating

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sixty times the electrical amplitude of the brain-that it can draw your brain, nervous system, and emotions into its coherent rhythms and unlock more of your own innate intelligence.

Getting into and shifting back into your “Zone” will improve your performance and your recovery! Using the HeartMath tools will help you reset and reboot your system when you need it most, during the stress and strain of ongoing training and during emotionally charged race situations.

I can teach this to individuals and groups, small and large settings, to athletes and coaches. I’ve helped people master these tools while applying them to swimming, biking, running, golf, tennis, martial arts, ice-skating and gymnastics.

From My Heart to Yours,

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