
Dance and Psychological Well-being

Lecture: Goal Setting
Imagery
Self Talk

Goal setting, Self Talk and Imagery

Goalsetting helps dancers sequence tasks, choose appropriate strategies to support goal attainment, and concentrate their efforts on the performance elements key to present and emerging performance needs.

Self-talk can be used to help plan, recall, focus, and reflect on the key elements of performance.

Imagery enables students to recreate and manipulate in their minds the actions and outcomes to be achieved, enhancing the preparation, execution, and review process involved in skilled performances.

What are Goals and what is Goal Setting?

- A goal is something we are trying to accomplish.
- It is the object or aim of an action.
- Two basic components are direction and quality or quantity.
- Goal selection and refinement should be a methodical, deliberate process constructed in response to a careful assessment of needs, aspirations, and abilities.
- Goal setting is a behavioural technique that works – 90% of more than 500 psychological studies show goal setting has consistent and powerful effect on behaviour (*Foundation of Sports and Exercise Psychology* 6th Edition)
- Research suggests that goal setting is highly effective – Moderate difficulty, short and long-term, feedback on progress, specificity of goals, public acknowledgement, commitment to attainment, participants in-put, and combination of different goals.
- Influence behavioural changes more effectively than general, as in 'do your best' – or no goals at all

Read - pg 355 'Goal-setting research' *Foundation of Sports and Exercise Psychology* 6th Edition.

Goals – a definition

Objective goals

Attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually with a specified time-frame
(Measurable and specific)

What examples can we give?

Subjective goals

E.g. I want to do well, I want to have fun.

These are not measurable

Goals – a definition

- Performance – Self comparison for improvement
- Process – Actions that lead to improved performance
- Outcome – Beating or surpassing others

- All useful – know when and which is appropriate

Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

- Specific goals influence behavioural change more effectively than general
- Give yourself a clear target – how many, how far, how soon

Be moderately difficult but realistic

Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART

Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – Timely

Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

Be moderately difficult but realistic

- Difficult enough to challenge but realistic to achieve
- Moderately difficult goals lead to best performance (Kyllo and Landers 1995)
- Too difficult – threatening and lead to helplessness, frustration, reduced confidence
- Too easy – lose interest
- Strike a balance
- Know the capabilities and commitment
- Err on side of caution initially

Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

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Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

Be moderately difficult but realistic

Be long and short-term

- Behaviour change doesn't happen overnight
- Long term provide direction
- Short term goals connect starting point and end point of long term goal
- Progression of skills – short term goals
- Start with some that can be immediately achieved

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART

Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

Be moderately difficult but realistic

Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

- For every outcome goal should have several performance/process goals
- What are the difference?

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

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Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

Be moderately difficult but realistic

Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for classes, training and performances

- Large amount of time in classes etc
- Keeps edge in studio by focusing on improvements that one might not normally work on
- Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

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Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

- See your goals
- Write them down/post them up/process log/on the mirror
- Behavioural contracts
- Keep it efficient

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

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Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

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Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

- Developed by Vidic and Burton (2010)
- How to achieve the goal, how much, how often, how many
- Flexibility

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

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Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

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Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

- Influence the goals adopted
- High in personal standard in perfectionism – set goals to achieve best performance
- Performance orientated better at setting goals – failure orientated least skilled in setting goals
- High achievers (motivated towards success) - adopt challenging but realistic goals
- Children in social-comparison stage focus on outcome and competitive goals
- Competitive people – outcome goals, task-orientated – performance and process goals

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART

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Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

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Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

- Encouragement from teachers etc
- Support dancer in setting own goals

Provide evaluation of and feedback

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART

Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – Timely

Principals of Goal Setting

Goals should:

Be specific

Be moderately difficult but realistic

Be long and short-term

Be based on Performance, Process and Outcome

Be for training and performance

Be recorded

Include achievement strategies

Considerate of personalities and motivations

Foster commitment

Provide evaluation of and feedback

- Feedback on goals is essential
- Evaluations strategies should be agreed at start of goal setting
- Be consistent

GOALS SHOULD BE SMART

Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – Timely

Failure orientated Goals

Failure-oriented goals are revealed when learners avoid serious involvement because they fear that negative social comparison will reveal low ability.

E.g. I will make half hearted attempts; therefore, if I am unsuccessful, at least I have an excuse.

Considerations when setting goals

- Short-term goals are attainable within a dancer's next few attempts.
- Long-range goals, although important for giving short-term goals direction, may be too far down the road to maintain learner interest and training intensity. Goals that are achievable within a few days or weeks inspire diligence and maintain the learner's focus. Longer terms goals are still important which short term goals should relate to.
- Realistic goals are within the dancer's limits.
- Goals should be aligned with physical abilities, fitness levels, amount of practice time, age, and stage of development.
- Performance-oriented goals are focused on the means: the strategies, fitness training, technical skills that enable dancers to achieve their desired outcomes.
- Goals should be stated so that dancers can observe and measure their performance against performance standards that represent levels of achievement within their learning limits (time, talents, needs, interests).
- "I want to be the best in the class" may seem to be a clear goal, but it is better to set goals such as double pirouettes, improved cardio-vascular ability, headstands in preparation for choreography

Also to consider...

Selecting appropriate stepping stones communicates the old adage: the longest journey begins with a single step.

Goal-setting involves;

- analysing the demands of the task
- plot the journey that leads to achievement
- and, then enlist the use of appropriate cognitive/behavioural strategies such as self-talk and imagery to enhance the process.

E.g. Goal-setters should ask what are the parts of the skill I need to learn, what should be done to improve each part, do I have the skill and fitness prerequisites, and what learning tools can I use to make progress?

You can and should have more than one goal – remember short and longer range goals

Task

Set yourself SMART goals

Long and short term

Find the links and connections...

Goal Setting for dance students

- For dance students learning is goal-directed.
- We all learn for a purpose.
- Purposes are reasoned in relation to the student's background knowledge, experiences, and motivations for learning.
- It is important, therefore, to embed the reasons for learning into the act of learning. How would you do this?
- Goal-setting should be taught directly to enable learners to independently set and monitor their own improvements and achievement. In this way, individuals can be more self-reliant and resourceful about their progress.

Cognitive learning theories assume that even when instruction is done very well, it is the learners who must acquire the knowledge, insights, and skills (Brown, 1987).

If learners create understanding, it logically follows that learning must involve some measure of self regulation. How much educators prepare students to engage in the processes involved in affording more control for learning will determine how much students are prepared to function as competent, self directed learners (Jones, Palinscar, Ogle, & Carr, 1987).

Goal Setting for dance students

The planning process should show students how mature learners methodically plot their progress and work diligently and persistently toward clearly identified goals.

Goal-setting exercises should introduce students both to the methods and to the manners associated with expertise.

Important to note – *“goals contribute to performers' perceptions of their ability to accomplish tasks. Goal-setting and goal achievement combine to establish in the mind of the learner an “I can” attitude toward challenges. Goals are seen, therefore, as having a **stress-management** role. Setting short-term, well-defined, realistic, performance-oriented goals that the learner can work progressively toward and literally see him or herself advancing toward motivates effort and persistence, while reducing the anxiety of failure and encouraging the use of strategies to overcome barriers (Locke et al., 1981; Orlick, 1986).”*

Designing a goal setting system

- Stage 1 - **Preparation and planning:** by the teacher, assess abilities and needs, set goals in diverse areas (Performance, process, outcome), identify influences (commitment, potential and opportunities), plan goal achievement strategies
- Stage 2 - **Education and Acquisition:** schedule informal meetings to set goals and strategies, focus on one goal at a time initially with younger dancers/less experienced goal setters
- Stage 3 – **Implementation, follow-up and Evaluation:** Understand appropriate goals, identify goal evaluation procedures – make sure can do it, how and when, provide support and encouragement, plan for re-evaluation

Common problems with goal setting

Not difficult task but:

Convincing students and dancers to set goals is challenging

Failing to set specific goals

Too many goals too soon

Failing to adjust goals when not achieved

Failing to set performance and process goals

Not setting up goal evaluation and follow-up

Concentration

Factors that can influence concentration are motivation, enjoyment, level of arousal, relevant stimuli v irrelevant stimuli.

Concentration in four parts:

- a) Focusing on relevant cues in the environment (selective attention)
- b) Maintaining a focus over time
- c) Being aware of the changes in situation and errors
- d) Shifting focus as necessary

Best performance – being in the zone, focused on the present, focused on the task in hand, aware of your body and the external mind

Optimal performance – performer's ability to focus attention and become more fully absorbed in the game

Use attentional cues, quickly picking up to help perform more seamlessly

Concentration

Concentration in four parts:

a) Focusing on relevant cues in the environment (selective attention)

Irrelevant cues are eliminated and discarded

Thinking of the past or the future raises irrelevant cues

Learn and practice steps, choreography, technique, music, spacing

Focus external rather than proximal - balance, speed, endurance, optimal breathing and force production, increased movement efficiency

Concentration

Concentration in four parts:

b) Maintaining a focus over time

For the length of the show

Hard when we think for about 5 seconds at a time and about 4000 distinct thoughts in 16 hour day

Not an easy task

How to **pull back focus with breaks in rehearsals, during exercises, performance (on and off stage)**

Concentration

Concentration in four parts:

c) Being aware of the changes in situation and errors

Maintaining Situational awareness

Ability to understand what is going on around you

Concentration

Concentration in four parts:

d) Shifting focus as necessary

Altering attention and flexibility to scope situation

Music – spacing – partnering – performing the story – lighting – exits

Attentional selectivity / attentional capacity / Attentional alertness

Learning a new skill/movement – have to focus on that movement, its mechanics, the quality, kinaesthetic sense, speed

Once accomplished can think about music, spacing, using material in a different way

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS

What are these in the dance environment?

In psychology you never lose concentration you just lose direction.

Strategies to improve concentration can include psychological skills such as imagery and self talk.

This can be achieved at many different levels.

Concentration can be improved by mindfulness and openness.

You can practice improving concentration in class and in training.

Definition of Self-talk

Self-talk is what dancers say to themselves to think more precisely about their performances and to direct their actions in response to those reflections.

Self-talk is a tool for learning and performing because it encourages the dancer to focus on the process of skill acquisition, for example, how to perform new movements.

It promotes a dancer's selective attention to appropriate features of a skill.

The dancer 'gains the ability to use that information to establish appropriate motor plans through self-instruction and to focus on feedback information for error detection and self reinforcement' (Anderson, 1992).

'Self-talk may, in addition, allow learners (dancers) to become more adaptable and creative in solving future movement problems because of their increased capacity to attend to their own learning process' (Vygotsky, 1962; Schunk & Hansen, 1985).

Definition of Self-talk

Anytime you think about something, you are in a sense talking to yourself.

It can be positive, instructional or negative.

Positive self talk focuses on increasing energy, effort and positive attitude.

Instructional self talk focuses on technical execution. May be used to improve the execution of movement.

Negative self talk is critical and produces anxiety. It considers moods such as anxiety, frustration. We need to find a way to control these moods.

Talk that frames your attitude to the activity you are doing

Dancers - Perfectionism – all or nothing thinking – can turn into negative talk

Dancers aren't good at self-critique

Negative Self-talk

Negative self-talk is an impediment to good work/ doing better

Example: in class, difficulty doing something, messages in your brain, too hard, never been able, won't be able, the teacher doesn't think I can do this. I am having a bad class. I am so fat today.

Continuous negative dialogue with yourself

Why are you saying that? Insecure? Pressure? Feel stupid? Perfectionist?

Saying I'm having a bad class – gives you a pass as it is out of your control, "I cant do anything about it."

Task – when have you done negative self-talk. Think of example. What did you say? What could you have said instead? How can you turn it around?

If you see a student using self talk in class and it is negative, talk to them after. What were they thinking? What adaptations could be made?

Turning it around

Dancers are really hard on themselves – perfectionist – we are taught, push, push, until you cry, beat it, with a stick until it breaks...

Positive self-talk is gentler but making more rigorous, not giving easy way out,

It is ok to be frustrated

Strategizing, not giving easy way out by saying bad day.

Separate the feeling from the technique – this is where the work happens.

Positive talk is critical evaluation – I am still working on that rather than I can't do this

What is the process to get to something good?

Can you step back emotionally from something that is hard?

Can you engage with work that is not emotional rather than strategic?

Engagement with the work is where it happens... do you think?

Track your own progress – evaluate yourself to make a positive change for yourself

Thought Stopping – technique to stop NST

Easier to get frustrated and cry rather than do something else,

But step back

See the behaviour/self-talk

Ok. Let's think about what is going on... Can I approach it in a different way?

Goal isn't to build yourself into ego balloon – what is the outcome/what are your goals, what do I need to do to get there.

It starts – emotional about it – hear yourself – Recognise it is happening

Find something to break it – STOP THE THOUGHT

Song Pick a word – phrase – song – when in negative cycle – think of the thing – minute you put that thought in – the other thoughts gone – band aid/cover up.



Mantra – to say instead

Thought Stopping – technique to stop NST

What about a mantra?

- this is just one moment
- My thoughts do not define me
- I like peanut butter
- I am light as a feather
- I am not brain
- Repeat names

Neurological window to cool down to distract yourself and to interrupt the cycle

Whilst not positive self-talk but removes the downwards of NST

What other examples, what works for you.

E.g. Put it on a cloud and float it away. Have a thought and float it away??

Wet wipe – wipe the ink away

Cleansing breath – helps with physiologically

Turn around / change the moment

Experiment – find what works for you.

Mental skills training

These are psychological skills – skills are things that you develop and improve they are not inherent, they can be worked on. Practice.

What makes you feel better?

Try something small – does it work, add others, practice, play around,

Do plies everyday – do this everyday

Identify the pattern, the trigger to the NST – slowly adapt and adopt new skills that works for you to break those.

Competition dancers have skills – that they can transfer over to performances and vice versa or auditions. What can we learn?

Think of them as components of your training. Employ them every day, training in them every day.

Skills training has to become habitual to really be of value in high stress situations/arousal.

Pre-crisis training supports Post-crisis – you have space, time and energy.

Younger dancers might be useful earlier on so when they go through adolescents/transitions to post 16 education, vocation training.

Negative to Positive

Turning negative self talk into positive.

Negative Self-talk

I can't push myself as much as I would like cardiovascularly
I'm bad at this technique

Positive Self-talk

I can work on my cardio for five minutes.
I enjoy dancing the combinations in this class

Concentration improving tasks

Shift attention – sounds, body sensation, emotions – one at a time

Parking Thoughts – throwing the monkey a banana – self talk instruction or visualisation, write them down, store them somewhere else

Learning to maintain focus – Object, focus for 2 minutes on how it feels, colour etc. Then recall it in your mind and if you wander bring attention back, get to five minutes without losing concentration, then add distractions

Imagining performance/class/rehearsal – visual, kinaesthetic, auditory and olfactory

Next week

I Must... I Can't

Personal SWOT

Design a mental skills training programme