

## ***Confidence is King!***

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### ***Confidence***

Confidence, also known as your degree of self-efficacy, is the belief you have about yourself when attempting to perform a task. Interestingly, your past athletic success (or lack thereof) is far less important than your personal belief about what you can achieve in the future! In other words, regardless of what happened in the past (even yesterday), the only thing that is truly important is how confident you are about your abilities today.

Overcoming fear is the first step to improving confidence. When you stop to think about what you are afraid of in sports, you will discover that almost all of your fear is irrational fear. Real fear is the fear of death – or even a serious, permanent injury. The good news (and reality) is the odds of those things happening are incredibly slim. The fear most athletes deal with is fear of failure or fear of embarrassment – pretty harmless stuff when you think of it!

Once you begin eliminating irrational fear, your confidence will begin to immediately increase. Even better, as your confidence grows, so will your athletic ability!

### ***Why confidence works***

Confidence is vitally important for several reasons. First, confident athletes also develop a positive emotional mood state – and research has shown this helps athletes get “in the zone” more frequently. Confidence also helps with skill acquisition, memory, and conditioned, automatic athletic “muscle memory” responses. Confidence also helps you focus on what you need to pay attention to (i.e. the next play) – as well as block out things that don’t matter (the crowd booing).

Confident athletes play to win – not to avoid losing. Confidence also helps prevent burnout, as well as break you out of slumps. Perhaps the best thing about confidence is that it is 100% under your control! No matter what anyone says about you, or how terrible you may have played recently, you have every ability to redirect your thinking and attitude toward the future and how successful you can be by continuing to believe and work hard!

### ***How to use confidence***

- Remember how important confidence is every time you go out to compete. Confidence and positive self-beliefs lead to peak athletic performances!
- Forget about bad games, and remember that tomorrow is another day. Your confidence will begin to immediately improve the moment you make this decision.
- Only you can increase – or decrease- your self-confidence level. Choose wisely and you will go far!
- Keep a journal of your athletic successes and re-read your entries often. Train your memory to think of the good plays you have made and are capable of making again in the future.
- Get rid of irrational fear! Who cares what anyone else thinks of you – those people are not perfect and have made their fair share of mistakes, too. You are human and will make mistakes in sports, so chalk them up to learning experiences and quickly move on to the next play!

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Dr. Chris Stankovich, known as “The Sports Doc” for his segment on Ohio News Network and featured column in Columbus Parent magazine, is a national expert in the field of sport psychology and offers an entire line of peak performance educational training products for student athletes, coaches, and parents. Please visit [www.drstankovich.com](http://www.drstankovich.com) to learn more.

