

Officials Positive and Negative Emotions

Negative Emotions That May Hinder Performance

Many negative emotions and mental states can affect your performance as an official, but these ten are the primary culprits:

- **Fear:** occurs when the official does not have control over the situation and may not know the outcome of certain behaviours.
- **Anxiety:** tension produced by a situation that involves uncertainty, unpredictability, a perceived lack of control, or a threat to a person's self-esteem.
- **Anger (which leads to aggression):** is a natural emotion most often manifested in negative ways, through either physical or verbal abuse. Sometimes anger is also displayed as passive-aggressive behaviour.
- **Frustration:** is generated when the official loses control of aspects of a game, either because the environment isn't ideal (this could relate to spectators, state of the field/court etc) or the required skill set is lacking.
- **Sadness:** a common reaction to the inability to perform well or achieve a goal. It can lead to feelings of despair.
- **Depression:** is a response to intense, long-lasting sadness. In an officiating situation, it is usually the result of continual failure, which could be getting consistent calls wrong, poor relationships with players etc.
- **Detachment:** is a sense of alienation from others. When officials feel they don't belong, they detach from the performance situation as well as from the people around them.
- **Confusion:** leads to an inability to make decisions, choices, or complete tasks. Confusion is the result of too much stress, anxiety, fear, or any of the negative emotions.
- **Shame:** is a reaction to the embarrassment of not having a good game or making an incorrect ruling that had a bearing on the overall result. It usually relates to how officials feel others will perceive them.
- **Distraction:** is an inability to maintain concentration and focus on the task at hand. People get distracted when too many instructions on how to perform a task are being thrown at them by players or spectators or there is too much going on in their environment.

All of these negative emotions or mental states are harmful to performance and attempts at improvement. They impede learning and ultimately perpetuate a negative cycle. Once a negative emotion is repeatedly linked (anchored) to a poor performance or an inability to improve, it tends to strengthen that negative relationship.

It is up to the individual and the official's coach/mentor to create an environment in which the official experiences a series of successful events and positive emotions flourish. Only when that is done is it reasonable to consider working on improving performance.

Positive Emotions That May Help Performance

Positive emotions improve performance. Unfortunately, people have to look a little harder to find the positive emotions that come into play during a good performance. This task can become easier if you just ask people who are experiencing flow what else they are feeling.

Here are ten positive emotions or mental states that can help anyone engaged in a performance or trying to create a performance improvement situation:

- **Joy, happiness, elation:** three names for one of the most natural emotions—and one that is not experienced often enough during any type of performance. Officiating can be fun and happiness naturally follows because of the intrinsic satisfaction derived from the performance.
- **Achievement motivation:** is a measurable construct of risk-taking behaviour that tells us how much risk a person is willing to take in order to achieve a goal. The effort an official puts into the off-season to get ready for their first game is an example of what a person can look back on with a sense of achievement.
- **Approach motivation:** is the positive side of a motivation continuum between approach and avoidance. People with this outlook will actively seek outcomes they desire instead of working to avoid those they fear.
- **Appreciation:** is the number-one need of all people. The more ways and times we show appreciation to our officials, the better they will perform.
- **Relaxation:** is a highly effective mental and physical state for reducing stress, increasing visualisation abilities, and improving performance in a variety of endeavours.
- **Confidence:** people feel confidence when they truly believe in themselves and their ability to achieve goals. Self-confidence can elevate performance to much higher levels than any training programme or other performance intervention.
- **Engagement:** is part of the flow concept, where an official is totally absorbed in a what they are doing.
- **Faith:** officials who believe in themselves and their capabilities can also believe in improvement interventions from others—at which point, success is inevitable.
- **Pride:** is the feeling that goes with accomplishment. Being proud of something done well helps officials grow and increases their motivation to do well.
- **Enthusiasm:** is a positive feeling toward officiating at an event and its accomplishment that also leads to peak performances, happiness, and a great deal of self-esteem.

Focus on arousing these positive emotions and mental states in the officials you are trying to influence and you will generate significant improvements. Remember one thing about emotions and motivation: you can never really create emotions in someone else, nor can you motivate someone else.

The only thing you can do is create the conditions that will enable people to motivate themselves, to feel good about themselves, and to expect to succeed. This expectancy of success will lead to greater and greater confidence in future performances, along with an increased desire to keep improving. Sometimes this improvement will be incremental, and other times it will be a quantum leap. In any case, it will occur as long as the official is in a positive emotional state.

Just remember, everyone makes mistakes. Most of them are not mind blowing, yet players, the media, and parents often overreact. It's better to consider the situation when the mistake was made, the emotional state of the official, and the outcome that occurred. Then you can make a constructive assessment of how to handle the person and the situation.