

Presentation Transcript

Topic: The Theory of Self-Determination and its Application in Coaching Goalball

Speaker: Hansen Bay & Joan Hung

Hansen: Good day. My name is Hansen.

Hansen: I'm the national coach for the woman's Goalball team. Besides that, I also serve as a performance mindset coach, I work with athletes ranging from students to those competing at the Olympics to improve on their mental game and perform under pressure. Besides that, I also serve as a coach educator for the IPC, and also for the Singapore Sport Institute. Joan, would you like to share with us a little bit about yourself?

Joan: Hi, I am Joan, I play in the Women's' National Goalball team. And I have been playing under Coach Hansen since 2015. Until now, I work as a facilitator for resilience programs through Goalball. And also, I coach the sport at lighthouse, which is the school for visually impaired children.

Hansen: Thanks, Joan. So, what will we be discussing about today? Here's a quick overview. We will first be spending on the definition of motivation. What really is motivation and how it relates to the Self-Determination Theory. Then after, Joan will share with you about how the Self-Determination Theory relates to the Para-athlete. Thereafter, of course, we want to think about how can we put this theory into practice. And we end off in closing by reiterating some important takeaways that we hope that you will take away from this particular sharing.

Hansen: First off, what is motivation? A lot of times, when we talk about motivation, we think about the reason behind why somebody does something. I'm driven to do better for myself, I work because I want to make more money. So, we are talking about why, and why is the reason is to make more money. But motivation isn't just about that.

Hansen: There's more to motivation. Motivation is actually a process, where we initiate certain behaviors, and we try to sustain these behaviors over a prolonged period of time. So, this goal-oriented actions have to be sustained, especially when we meet with inevitable setbacks.

Hansen: And motivation also has these continuums, there are three types of motivation on this continuum, we have a Amotivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Intrinsic Motivation (IM). An example of Amotivation in the context of goalball or rather a Goalball player will be like, I really bad at Goalball, this player could be experiencing some challenges playing the game, and maybe struggling to pick up the skills or to block the ball effectively. So, he or she is on the verge of giving up altogether. And there's Extrinsic Motivation. I play Goalball because I want to be recognized. Now, this is a very common motivation for a lot of the Para-Athletes who are going into sports. Nothing wrong with that, because social approval is part of the human condition. And last but not least, we have Intrinsic Motivation, where players just want to play because they want to be better at the game that they love. So as coaches, which form of motivation do we value the most in players? Your answer is probably right, it's Intrinsic Motivation.

Hansen: Now, why is it important to distinguish between Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation? Intrinsic Motivation is important because you relate to the love for the sport, and it can increase the ability for the athlete to learn quickly and to perform well. What do I mean by performing well? This relates to the flow state, where the athlete is not only able to bring what she or he has done in practice in competition but is able to even exceed what he or she has done in practice during competition. In other words, he or she is able to compete effectively under pressure. Now, it's important to know that Extrinsic Motivation can have negative effects on Intrinsic Motivation. For example, if a player is primarily motivated by money and praise. Now, what happens if there's no money? What happens if the praises stop? This player is likely to give up on the spot. Now, is it true that the player can only be either Extrinsically Motivated or Intrinsically Motivated? Now, they don't exist on separate continuance, in fact, or rather, they actually exist on separate continuums. Meaning, a player can both be Intrinsically and Extrinsically motivated. In other words, somebody can be high on both Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.

Hansen: As coaches, you'll probably be most interested to think about how can I improve Intrinsic Motivation. Now, according to the Self-Determination Theory, there are three conditions to be met for Intrinsic Motivation to be activated. Number one, competence followed by autonomy and relatedness.

Hansen: Now, the Self-Determination Theory suggests that all human beings are motivated to his growth and development by three innate universal psychological needs, Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness. You can remember this easily by remembering, C.A.R.

Hansen: What is Competence? It is simply a sense of feeling that you can and are able to do something well. It increases confidence, pride and motivation.

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Hansen: Autonomy primarily relates to a sense of being in control. Meaning, you have a say in what you're doing, instead of being dictated by others.

Hansen: Relatedness, relates to how we relate to others, especially when we are in a group. So being in a team sport and being with others who all share a common goal and vision helps to improve relatedness. In fact, a lot of my players, I suspect they play Goalball, not because they like the game, but because they enjoy the friendship in the game. They seem to look forward more do the drink sessions after training, rather than the training itself.

Hansen: Okay, some points related to the Self-Determination Theory, that I'll go through really quickly. These trainees are universal, it does not relate only to Para-Athletes, it relates to person of all cultures and abilities. Feelings of Competence, do not enhance Intrinsic Motivation, unless, it's accompanied by a sense of Autonomy. And Relatedness is also important for Intrinsic Motivation, at least as a backdrop. At this point, I'm going to get Joan to share with us about these three psychological needs and how it relates to the Para-Athlete. Joan, over to you.

Joan: I will break visual impairment down into three different categories. The first will be Congenital, which means it's from birth. The second is an Accident, you suddenly lose your sight. And the third, will be Degenerative. These three categories generally dictate the experience in motivation. So, for some context, I have a congenital condition, my sight used to be better, and is deteriorating right now. So, I'll begin with Competency. Unfortunately, visual impairment is usually associated with helplessness. And this 'helplessness' will generate two different responses. The first is "Oh poor thing, you are blind, let me do everything for you." And when the VI decides to do something, you'll be "Oh, wow, you can do [insert thing here], good job!" which is not helpful, especially when what we are doing is completely mundane, or where we straight up perform a skill wrongly, we are not getting any useful feedback. And this is just focusing on what we CANNOT do. This is the external environment, in the headspace of someone who maybe just lost their sight or is deteriorating. That definitely is a tendency to compare what you could do in the past, and what you think you cannot do anymore. This creates an environment where it's learned helplessness, or even fake confidence. And this is just not generative. So, for me, my experience was slightly different because I was brought up in a maybe different environment. Both my parents are completely blind. So, I had the benefit of vicarious observation. I saw how they adapted to doing things without their sight and I followed suit.

Some skills, like maybe learning how to ride a bike was also a bit difficult for them to teach me. So, I had to learn it on my own, but they gave me the space to kind of learn and make my own mistakes, to figure things out. This kind of helped me to focus on what I couldn't make use of it. In Goalball, the environment is specifically made for people with visual impairment. Even without your sight, you still can make use of what you have to play well and be competent at a spot. A lot of people may think that spot is off the table, because without your sight, how do you play and be good at it. But Goalball is a good avenue, because it gives you a choice. You can decide whether you want to put in the effort to play well or not.

The last will be Relatedness. A lot of the time, everything in the 'blind world' is quite solo. Especially in visual impact sports, most of it is either maybe one or maximum two people. Goalball is one of the only team sports in Singapore. This creates an environment where people with visual impairment may not tend to look out for other people or look out for yourself most of the time. And sometimes it is necessary. But in Goalball, after learning how to help each other get better and playing together, we managed to kind of work better as a team because it is difficult, especially since in the beginning, our team was really, really diverse. We also have unified games where a sighted person and visually impaired people we team up to play together. And it kind of fosters sportsmanship and bond, I guess? I would say between the general populace and people with visual impairment.

Hansen: Thank you, Joan.

Hansen: I'll be running along with what Joan has shared. And if you recall, she said, as somebody who has acquired a certain disability, it could be visual impairment, it could be a physical disability. So, for example, I can't walk anymore because I got into a car accident. Now, he or she will inevitably compare back to the past where he or she could do something, and now he or she cannot do. And this may spiral down to even mood disorders and what we call, catastrophic thinking. Which is a form of unhelpful thinking style, where you only think about a worst-case scenario. Sports can actually be a really, really powerful vehicle, to bring somebody out of catastrophic thinking, and to help them to improve their self-concept, social awareness, and also social integration, which Joan mentioned about earlier about playing together in a team sport. And also, she also mentioned about unified sports, where they begin to train together with able-bodied persons.

Hansen: It is also a great way to have a new focus on what they can do, rather than what they cannot do. Now, this is really powerful, but it does not happen simply by getting them to take part in sport.

Hansen: It takes a coach to deliberately and intentionally designed coaching practices and an environment that will help them to shift away from catastrophic thinking, to improve self-confidence and improve self-esteem.

Hansen: So, we are coming to a close and it's important for us to think about how we can apply this theory and integrate it into our coaching practices. Here are some suggestions. Here are some behaviors that support Competence and Autonomy.

Hansen: So instead of using mainly directives, mainly telling the athlete what to do, you must do this, you should do this. Try this. Ask and listen. Ask them for their perspective. Ask them what they think, how they feel instead. Instead of always mothering them or fathering them and providing solutions, invite the athletes to formulate their own solutions, and show you what they can do. Instead of focusing only on the outcome, and whether you win or lose, encourage and acknowledge the effort that leads to improvement. Bite-size improvements and make use of formative assessments. Instead of standardized practice designs, you want to consider the abilities of different athletes. For my case, there are athletes who are still able to see some have low vision and some total blackness. So, you want to adapt a practice that is inclusive. And instead of during competition, only feeding stronger players, have a longer-term perspective and encouraged effort and learning by allowing the play time to be dictated both by effort and ability. In other words, it is just an able-bodied sport, you want to feel somebody because they commit to training regularly, rather than feeding somebody who could be a better player but does not come for training that often.

Hansen: And here's some language things you can say, to support competence and autonomy.

Hansen: The role of a coach is really important and what you say as you interact with the athlete, day in day out, plays such a big role in their mental game as well as their confidence. Instead of saying things like, "Hey, you missed the target again" Try, "Now, what can you do to direct the ball to the left?" A question will help them to think and when a brain does the thinking, it does the learning. And that builds autonomy and competence as well. Instead of saying things like, "You have let yourself down and we lost." Now we are talking, and we are focusing only on the outcome. Try this, "We lost, but we have learnt something useful. To help us get better." We are focusing on a process and how you can get incrementally better and better.

Now, this is quite a big one, Joan will agree with me. Person with impairment or Para-Athlete, always are told "Good job, well done", even though they are making mistakes, they are not doing this correctly. Instead of saying that, be specific with your praise. Say things like, "I see that you have learned to block at a correct timing, well done." So, I'm telling them exactly what they are doing currently, and praising them for that. Instead of saying, "This is really dumb. Why do you keep making the same mistakes?" Of course, if they can help it, they wouldn't be making the same mistakes, right? So, you want to say things like, "I admire your persistence, what can you do differently, to get better?" So, it becomes more solution-focused, and helps them to feel more competent as well. Or, "I understand that this may seem overwhelming and daunting. So, let's break this down into smaller tasks, and attack these small tasks one by one." This is more generative. And this also a form of praise, "You're getting so much faster." Allow them to think about the process of getting better by saying something like, "Do you remember when you first started, how you struggled? Now look at how much have you improved." An athlete will begin to think back to the process where they invested effort and learning to get better and better. And this is so much more impactful to their competence and autonomy.

Hansen: The third condition related to the Self-Determination Theory, Relatedness. I'll go through this really quickly.

Hansen: In a nutshell, it is really about relationship. Get to know the person first, rather than just focusing on his or her athletic abilities. And also encourage them to do well not only in sport, but to spend time and effort to develop other aspects of their lives. We do not want an athlete's self-esteem to be tied just with sport. Because what happens if they don't do well in sport? You're going to feel really, really lousy. But if their self-esteem extends to other roles. For example, how do you do at work? How they are as a friend. And this will help them to have more balance. And not to feel too disappointed when they don't do well in sport. It helps them to pick up themselves up quickly, and to be committed and progress on as well. And whether they do well or not, show them respect. I think this relates not only to para-sports, but also to person or rather to able-bodied persons.

Hansen: Here are some other practices that support Relatedness. You want to have a positive environment where players are 'seen' and not ignored. Simply things like, greeting them when they are here. When you arrived, say hello and goodbye to them when they are leaving. These are all the small little actions that we can do to support Relatedness. Also, try to involve the caregivers and parents when they are present. As much as you can, provide a support network beyond sports. A lot of my players they have some form of, for example, some form of mood disorders. And we have a network of counselors as well as therapists to help them.

Hansen: And in closing, last but not least, what we really hope that coaches can take away from this sharing is a paradigm shift. What do I exactly mean by that? When coaches think about motivation, specifically, how do I motivate my athletes. We hope that you will perceive motivation, as something can direct rather than you can increase. If motivation is fuel to a tank, we are running at full tank all the time. If your athlete is not motivated to do what they have to do, that is because their motivation is directed somewhere else. A lot of times, this motivation could be directing them to do nothing. So, you want to think about how we can direct our motivation, rather than how can we increase their motivation.

Hansen: Secondly, which is a related point as well. Instead of thinking about how you as a coach can 'rara' and motivate your athlete to step up out of their comfort zone. Think about how you can create the conditions that are related to Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness, to motivate your athletes instead.

Hansen: Now with that, we've come to the end of the presentation. Both Joan and I, I think I speak for her, we are really glad to be able to do these sharing sessions or rather this sharing with you. And we hope that you'll be able to integrate some of the suggestions that we have shared as well. After this session, there will be a Q&A, where we have five questions for you to think about. To help you to remember, to join the dots and to hopefully, to increase the chances of you integrating some of these practices related to the Self-Determination Theory. Thank you very much.