

## **Sports Shooting Psychology - Concentration**

Written by ELEY shooter Matt Emmons (USA)

Concentration – staying focused in stressful competition situations

There are tons of books out there totally devoted to concentration, so I what I am about to write is only my opinion and take on the subject matter. There are so many aspects to the game of shooting, whether it be rifle, pistol, or shotgun. At the same time, one of the constants is concentration. Concentration is one of the things that allows you to be your best and keeps you in the “zone” when you are performing extremely well. It’s also a piece of the puzzle that has often disappeared when things go awry.

So how do you concentrate when the pressure is on? The exact recipe will be slightly different for different people, of course. Two important things for anyone, however, are practice and a great imagination! If you never practice focusing intently on anything, or especially during training, you will never learn to do it when you really want to. You must practice every situation that could occur during an important competition and practice what you will do so that you can continue to be your best. That means imagining and practising what you will do in the biggest match of your life when things are going incredibly well. How will you react? How will you work with it so that you continue to perform beautifully?

What will you do if you are in that same biggest match of your life and something goes wrong? How will you keep your poise, get back on track, and do what you’re capable of to achieve your goal? The answer depends on you. A great shooter needs to have a great imagination and needs to be able to look deep inside themselves to know how they might react in every different situation. If something doesn’t feel comfortable or there is nervousness, that means the athlete needs to work on preparing for it in training so that if the situation happens in a competition, there will be no lapse in concentration. There is a plan and it has be rehearsed so that it flows effortlessly.



I certainly can't recommend any "quick fixes" to help anyone concentrate better. That doesn't really exist. A couple things that always help in stressful situations, however, are these:

- Breathe!! Stop and take a few slow, deep breaths to slow the heart down. You'll be surprised how much this can help.

- Keep your thoughts rational and focused on things you can control. Any worries about "what if's" or things out of your control are completely useless and will only take your concentration off of what you're trying to do.

- Stay in the moment! Good or bad, the past is done! You cannot change it. If the past was great, enjoy it for a moment and move on to now. If it was bad, learn what you can from it and move forward. The future is what you create. Every future moment is this current moment. Enjoy and make the best of this current moment and the future moments will come by themselves. Make the current shot the best shot you can possibly make, enjoy it then repeat on the next one.

- Picture what you want to see happen. Imagine a short video of the "your perfect shot" and play it over and over again in your head. Keep it short, keep it simple.

- Lastly, no matter whether it's your club championship or the Olympic Games, remember why you are shooting. Hopefully you are in that particular moment because you love the game. At the heart, that is why we play any game – because we enjoy it! Never forget that no matter how stressful any competition might be. Aligning the sights and making a great shot is a whole lot of fun to do wherever and whenever you do it.

Good luck and great shooting,

Matt Emmons

<http://www.eley.co.uk/en/the-bulletin/sports-psychology-concentration/>

=====

**Sports Shooting Psychology – confidence**  
Written by ELEY shooter Nicco Campriani (ITA)

Confidence - how to believe in what you're doing and why you're doing it.

I would first like to start with this citation that describes my idea of the purpose of sport:

"It's not always necessary to be strong, but to feel strong".

When I started my career I wanted to win a Gold medal at the Olympics. That was my ultimate goal and the only way I thought I could prove to everyone that I was the best.

I was young and I was wrong.

Somehow I confused cause with effect: it's not what you do that defines who you are, it's exactly the opposite. I learned that at my first Olympics in Beijing. At the time an Olympic medal was just too much to handle and it was more than a dream, it was almost a need.



After the lessons I learned in Beijing I drastically changed my approach. First of all I tried to become the best shooter I could be, regardless of what rankings and scores were saying. I did not care anymore about world rankings and I did not need any “evidence” of how good I was. The most important thing for me was to have no regrets, to know that I gave my very best at every match and at every training session.

I started to think like a “champion” and then only as a consequence, I won two Olympic medals in London.

This way of thinking was the best gift that shooting could give me. It’s something that I will take with me for the rest of my life, both inside and outside of the shooting range.

My message to the young shooters is to not try to be somebody else or, even worse, try to be a “star”. Just be yourself and believe in it.

There are no real finish lines: World Championships or Olympics are just stages. This is a pursuit of perfection and it will last for your entire life. I wish you a great journey.

SPECIAL THANKS to Dr. Edward Etzel that helped me to find my path.

Nicco Campriani

<http://www.eley.co.uk/en/the-bulletin/sports-shooting-psychology-confidence/>

## **Sports Shooting Psychology – Control**

Written by ELEY shooter Petra Zublasing (ITA)

Control – how to keep cool and keep your emotions in check no matter what’s happening during a competition.

You would think that being in control is what you would want while shooting, especially while competing in a big competition.

I spent a long time trying to find 'perfect control'. I thought that if I could just control everything in tiny detail, then I could prevent making mistakes.

I spent some time discussing it with my sport psychologist Dr. Ed Etzel and he always told me that: “You are most in control when you are not trying to be in control”.

The best way to explain this is to imagine yourself on an escalator. You can control what step to stand on and which side you stand, but you have no control over the speed of the escalator and you certainly can’t get off. You just move along.

This is very similar to shooting.



I am in control over technical details like triggering and aiming but I cannot keep control over all technical details. In the same way I do not control the outcome of a shot but instead I control a few elements and the score is merely a consequence of how well I execute those elements. This principle helps me when I feel under pressure.

It is especially hard when people are clapping because it brings to attention the possible outcome of the shot and brings us away from what we are supposed to focus on while shooting. In those

moments I choose one element to focus on - most often triggering, and try to do it as well as I can and let go of everything else.

For me this is the easiest way to get into the flow of being mindful and enjoy shooting. It doesn't always work as sometimes we are just too attached to our thoughts and can't go back to technique, but like all things with lots of training it gets much easier.

Try sometimes to bring this mindfulness into parts of your life outside of shooting. Enjoying just what you are doing in the present moment, without letting your thoughts travel into the future or your mood getting changed by the past.

When you are out with your friends, dedicate your time to them entirely without being distracted. When you are staying with your family, give them your full attention, even if you are just watching a movie - it is much more fun if you catch the hidden puns.

I hope through practising mindfulness you can learn how to stay in control even in the most difficult situations, in sport and in life.

Petra Zublasing

<http://www.eley.co.uk/en/the-bulletin/sports-shooting-psychology-control/>

=====

### **Sports Shooting Psychology – Commitment** Written by ELEY shooter Jamie Corkish (Gray) USA

Commitment - how to keep progressing and working on your goals

Being committed to something can be one of the most difficult things to do in life. It is easy for people to give up or not put their all into what they are doing. So how can you avoid getting caught in this trap? There is never an easy answer, but having distinct goals and following a plan will certainly help. Throughout this article I will use shooting as an example, but this can be related to any part of life.

One of the most important things to do is realize why you are involved in the shooting sports; is it because your parents want you to, because you are good at it, because you enjoy the sport, there are any number of reasons why you chose this path. Be honest with yourself, without first answering this question it can be difficult to be committed.

Now that you have decided why you are involved in the shooting sports you can start to develop goals that will help you continue to enjoy and work in the sport. Goal setting is constantly discussed and I will not go into great detail about how to set goals, however it can't be overlooked. You must have long term, intermediate, and short term goals set, and they should be written down. I like to write my goals down where I see them quite often throughout the day, for example the bathroom mirror. When you have positive SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) goals set you have something every day you are working towards. When you feel unmotivated take a look at those goals and remember why you are putting so much time and energy into training and competing.

Commitment is all about you; you make the decision to be committed. Your friends ask you to go to the movies, but you were going to practice tonight, what do you do? The committed athlete sticks to their plan. This isn't to say you can't have a life, your life bubbles need to be equal to be successful.

What it does mean is you should spend about the same amount of time on all aspects of life (family and friends, work/school/extracurricular activities and sport); one should not be left out, but they may overlap. Without balance in life it becomes very difficult to be successful.



Make a choice to be fully committed to shooting; this means mentally, physically and emotionally. Put your all into what you want to accomplish. This is a huge sacrifice, but to be the best and achieve your goals it is necessary to keep that commitment. You may have to give things up in the short-term that you really want to do to gain things for the long-term. Keep your goals in mind at all times so everything you do can be related back to those goals.

There will be tough times through committing to something that is important to you. These can be the most difficult times you face, but also the most rewarding. It is extremely important to push through adversity to accomplish your goals. I can promise you, at some point things will be difficult, and it is how you approach adversity and how you combat that adversity that makes you a better athlete and competitor.

It takes time to become a champion, but it also takes hard work. No one has reached the top on talent alone. Set goals, follow your plan to reach those goals, and put the time and energy in to achieve those goals and you will be much more successful. Now go out there and start working hard and obtaining those goals.

Jamie Corkish (Gray)

<http://www.eley.co.uk/en/the-bulletin/sports-shooting-psychology-commitment/>

=====

This entry was posted in news, tutorials on 2-23 January 2015 by ELEY Ammunition  
<http://www.eley.co.uk/>