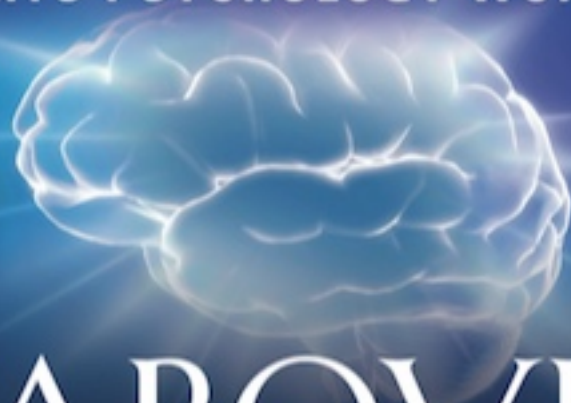


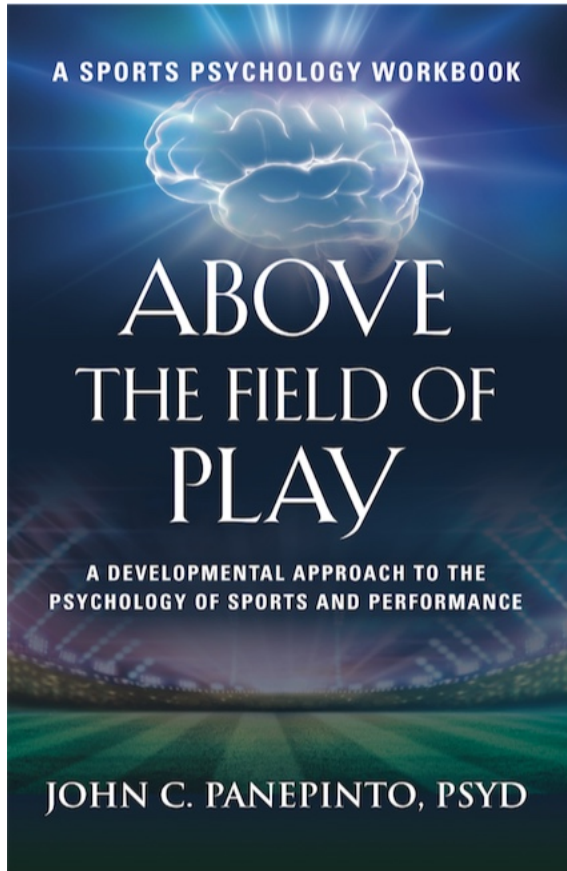
A SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY WORKBOOK



ABOVE THE FIELD OF PLAY

**A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO THE
PSYCHOLOGY OF SPORTS AND PERFORMANCE**

JOHN C. PANEPINTO, PSYD



Above the Field of Play offers the most important principles of sports psychology and performance presented in a user-friendly format. This workbook provides the information, tools, and processes essential for any athlete who is serious about leveraging the most important element of actualizing potential: the mind.

**Above the Field of Play:
A Developmental Approach to the Psychology of
Sports and Performance**

by John C Panepinto PsyD

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Above the Field of Play

A Developmental Approach to the
Psychology of Sports and Peak
Performance

A Sports Psychology Workbook

John C. Panepinto, PsyD



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The information provided in this book is intended for general consumer understanding and education on various developmental issues. Utilizing the advice in this book is voluntary and at the sole risk of the reader.

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5 - Two Sides of Experience: Competitive IQ and EQ

(A version of this content first appeared in *Tennis Pro*)

Mental toughness, grit, bounce back, resilience... These terms describe a certain quality a player must have to endure in competition and the many cycles of improvement. Setbacks are certain, and failure is a part of the path of growth. Simply put, things will go our way sometimes, but assuredly things will not go our way as well. What if we were to look at these outcomes as part of **two interconnected developmental processes**? Would we gain valuable insight into the development of a mindset that enables us to learn and grow—and endure? In other words, a mindset that allows for coping *and* developing.

At the simplest level, in practice or in competition, things go according to a perceived plan or expectation—or do not. A player executes a pattern to take advantage of an opportunity—or the player fails to execute due to one of many factors. While there are a multitude of factors influencing the outcome, the only aspect a player has control of is his or her internal environment. A player can control what he or she thinks, emotes, or his or her actions, all of which are based on mental models that have been engrained through learning and repetition.

These mental models are based on things that work regardless of the sport or endeavor. Despite endless practice and the best information, things don't work and if this is not acknowledged properly, momentum shifts, emotions build, and the player succumbs to stress and negativity. I suggest that on a fundamental level these two processes—things work and things not working— are better considered as **building blocks of success and resilience**.

Considering the simplest situation, an outcome will either be what we want or don't want. We win the point or do not. We hit a free throw or do not. We get a hit, or we strike out. On the emotional level, feelings flow given how we evaluate and respond to the presenting situation. Things go our way and emotions we label as *positive* flow, and

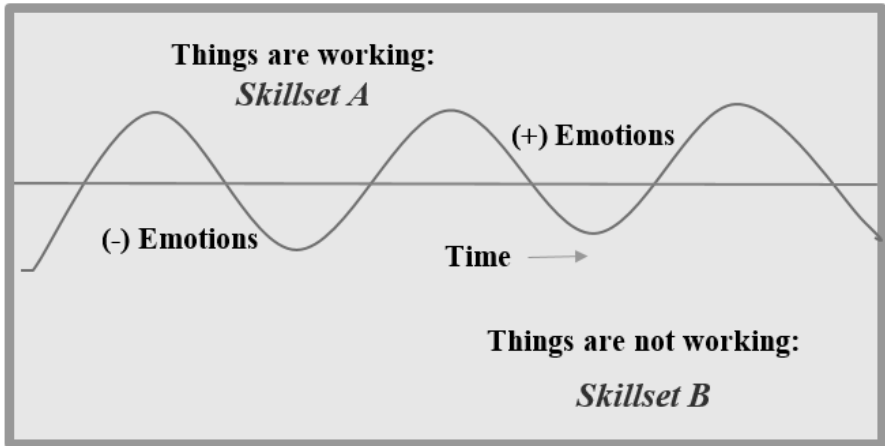
sometimes the experience is pleasurable or commonplace enough that we do not even notice these feelings. On the other side of experience, things do not go our way and so-called *negative* emotions arise. We notice these feelings because they are full of energy and can run from a mild annoyance to full blown anger. The figure below summarizes outcomes and emotions:

Outcomes and Emotions

Moment-to-Moment Experiences	
Things go as expected	Things do not meet our expectations
(+) Emotions	(-) Emotions
Experience matches mental model	Experience does not match mental model

If we put these moment-to-moment experiences together over time, we have what typically happens in competition or a practice session. There is a natural up and down to the process and as athletes we must learn, train, and be versed in both processes to flow between the limiting boundaries of rigidity (failure to adapt) and chaos (no order or structure). The visual below summarizes this flow over time, including outcomes, accompanying emotions, and corresponding required skillsets.

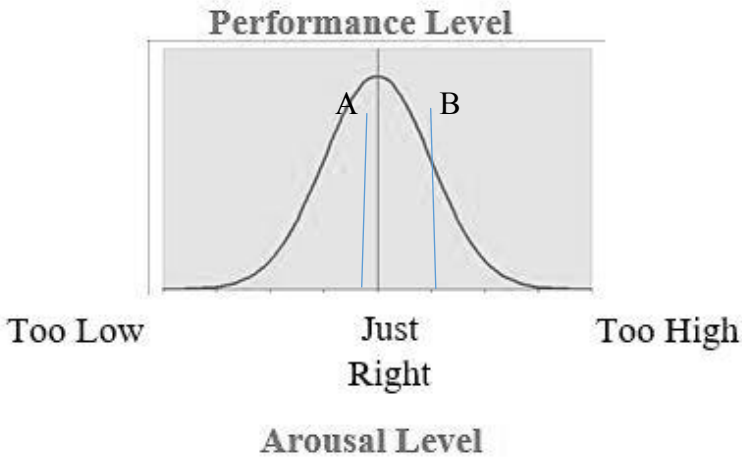
Skillsets over Time



Resonance-Resilience Framework

Building on this concept of developing a resilient mindset, the difference between things going our way and not going our way represents two different *psychological* experiences. Therefore, these experiences require two different skillsets within one overarching mindset. When things are going our way, our intelligence, ability, and skills are in harmony with the demands of the environment. We *resonate* as an open system with the outer world. The player is in flow, reading and recognizing what is happening, responding to the challenge presented, and executing based on this flow. This resonance occurs within the Zone of Optimal Performance (ZOP).

The Zone of Optimal Performance (ZOP)



The X Axis represents activation level, the Y-axis represents Performance Level. The ZOP is represented as the space between lines A and B

The feeling may even resemble qualities of “flow” in that there may be a loss of a sense of self, a loss of a sense of time, and a sense being in control of one’s actions. I refer to this quality as *resonance* in reference to the attunement between the individual’s inner world and outer world. We use Skillset A, our current attitudes, beliefs, and abilities to meet the moment. The balance is just right and remains within the boundaries of equilibrium and the ZOP.

Although it may sound inviting, if everything always went our way we would be living a very small life and our capacities would be stunted. Our skills and way of knowing must grow more complex and the demands require certain qualities to handle the demands of change, challenge, and loss. This process describes *resilience*. This occurs on the outer edges (and beyond) of the Zone of Optimal Performance and represents Skillset B.

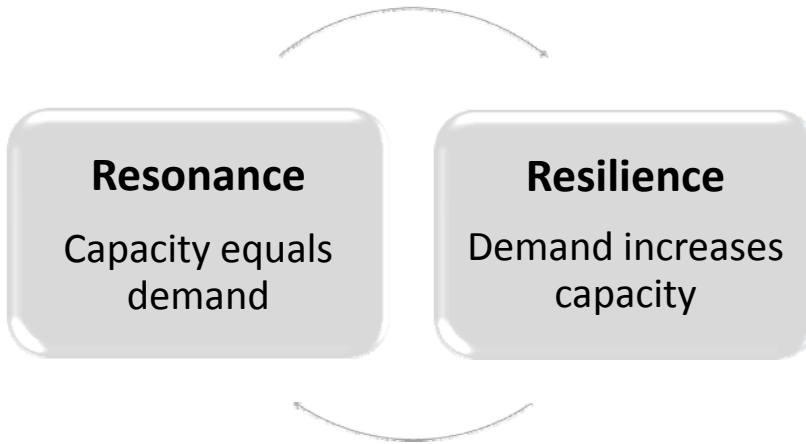
Intentional Progress

To meet a challenge, to grow, or to cope with adversity or a loss, we require some inner quality to handle the internal chaos, deconstruction, and reconstruction. Resilience is more than bouncing back for this describes elasticity and the nature of the fabric has not changed necessarily. Anyone who has used an old rubber band has experienced the degradation over time. The resilience I am referring to is something more. The elasticity increases over time to meet greater challenges. It is an intentional progression towards a higher quality of functioning and motivated by specific goals.

Resilience is not only the bounce back, it is the quality of enduring while psychological structures evolve.

This speaks to the resilient mindset, one that encompasses the skillset of both intelligence (resonance, skillset A) and enduring adaptation (resilience, skillset B). So, competitions, practices, and relationships are full of resonance and resilience. And the more we know about each of these processes, the more we can enlist these capacities to experience greater success and fulfillment in competition—and in life.

Resonance and Resilience



Resilience, EQ, and Meaning

If you were to listen to most instruction and coaching, the slant would be towards what players do in their sport or Skillset A (The information required on the *how* and *what* of the sport). This is the *resonance* side of the framework and represents the development of the players' **Competitive IQ**. On the *resilience* side, player's need to develop their **Competitive EQ** or Skillset B—what to do when things do not work. Interestingly, comparatively little is taught or written of this part of development, yet **EQ is intimately tied to motivation and meaning**.

This is the argument against criticism and punishment. When things are not working, criticism or making a player do push-ups do nothing to build the EQ skillset for they only learn to avoid the situation or that it will be painful. The down cycle, or when things are not working, is the time for constructive feedback and adding tools to players' skillset.

It has been my experience that both sides—resonance and resilience—have influenced players' success or failure to grow. But it seems to me the emotional intelligence (EQ) side has a greater impact on trajectory for EQ is foundational to meaning, beliefs, expectations, and self-

confidence. Research on EQ supports this. In their book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, Bradbury and Greaves (2009) found that EQ is the most significant indicator of performance and success. While this book focused on the business world, it is worth noting that the sample size was 500,000 and the results on the influence of EQ were consistent across industries and cultures. Further, Duckworth (2007) found that the non-cognitive trait of “grit,” defined as the passion and perseverance for achieving long-term goals, predicted success beyond IQ and conscientiousness.

Without addressing the two processes, athletes are limited by Skillset A and innate temperament (which we cover in another chapter). Some personalities are better suited to handle stress and adversity. But using the resonance-resilient framework helps all athletes build IQ and EQ. The graphic below summarizes these processes.

Experiences in Practice and Competition

Psychological Feature	Things Go Our Way Resonance	Things Don't Go Our Way Resilience
Expectations	Expectations are met	Expectations are not met
Mental Models	Alignment with beliefs, values, expectations	Beliefs, expectations, and values are dissonant
Emotions	Positive emotions	Negative emotions
Trend	Momentum Up	Plateau or momentum down
Process	Resonance, Intelligence (IQ)	Resilience, Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
Internal	Flow, Control	Problem solving, adjusting, managing emotions and focus
External	Fidelity between internal and external experience	Creates a demand in emotional and cognitive resources.
Growth	Informative, learning	Transformative, evolving

Zone of Optimal Performance	Within ZOP, equilibrium	On the edges of ZOP and beyond, disequilibrium

Activity: Competitive IQ and EQ

- Make it a regular habit to reflect on what is working and what is not working in practice and in competitive performances.
- Building Competitive IQ involves building competence in performance skills and knowledge of your sport. This is knowing what to do and how to do it. Refer to your goals and be certain that this is a part of your plan. Having a working log of what is working and what is not working will help you adapt or add to your sub-goals. A sample log would look like this (example of Softball or Baseball Pitcher’s log following a start):

Working	Not Working
Fastball location	Got behind too many hitter
Rhythm	Curve ball location
Not giving in to batters, made them hit my pitch	Didn’t pitch inside enough
Mixing pitches well	Too many walks

- Building Competitive EQ involves managing emotions and problem solving when *what* to do and *how* to do it is not working in the moment. We will cover this in the next section.