

PERFORMING ARTISTS BENEFIT FROM MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology Certified Consultants aid performers in achieving personal best

CHAGRIN FALLS, Ohio – June 2013 – Dancers, musicians, actors...they endure rigorous auditions, rehearsals and performances and live under constant pressure. In addition to the physical demands, mental skills are put to the test on a regular basis in the entertainment industry. To cope with these issues, performers are finding help from sport psychology consultants who are known for assisting athletes who deal with similar issues.

According to Certified Consultants from the Association for Applied Sport Psychology, many of the mental stresses they help performers cope with are similar to those faced by athletes, including those at the elite level: coping with injury and returning to work, maintaining focus and concentration, and performing under audience scrutiny.

“Self-doubt, lack of confidence and having the personal resilience to deal with setbacks is quite universal,” said Dr. Sharon Chirban, owner of Amplifying Performance Consulting. She serves as a performance coach with the Boston Ballet and works with members of the Boston Symphony, as well as professional opera singers. “This grouping of people (performers) tends to be perfectionistic, so tolerating failure is often quite difficult. We work together to build strategies to manage perceived setbacks.”

Dr. Charlie Brown is the owner of Get Your Head in the Game consulting and works with the North Carolina Dance Theater, specializing in performance enhancement. One issue he frequently sees is commonly called “overtraining,” though Dr. Brown said it is actually better termed “under recovery.” “I see this as one of the most prevalent issues with elite performers, including both Olympic athletes and dancers,” he said. Dr. Brown helps these high-level performers find the right balance.

In addition, Dr. Brown helps performers improve focus and concentration. “When performing artists struggle, it is similar to an athlete suffering ‘paralysis by analysis.’ They are thinking about what they are attempting to accomplish, rather than trusting their training. To cope, this requires learning skills such as attention management and imagery/mental rehearsal.”

Dr. Kate Hays, a sport psychologist with The Performing Edge, said issues among her performing clients can often be more “real-life” based. “Like sport, dance is often a short-lived profession. For actors, some 95 percent can be out of work at any given time,” Hays explained. “Those are real life issues that we also have to work through.”

Regardless of the specific issues at hand, one point is clear. Sport and exercise psychology has extended its positive impact in the performing arts. The Association for Applied Sport Psychology offers free resources and a complete listing of AASP Certified Consultants, visit www.appliedsportpsych.org.

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes ethical practice, science and advocacy in the field of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals in the field of sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,700 members in 42 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its website, www.appliedsportpsych.org.