

My Background to my SPP Coaching and Philosophy Statement

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SPP 6570 Capstone

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January 27, 2022

Professional Philosophy Statement

My background, professional certifications, degrees, and experiences at the top echelons in my sport as a professional athlete compels me to lead with my passion to empower people to achieve the fulfillment and success that they desire in their own sports, performances, and life. My life and coaching philosophy are twofold: For one, to make the world a better place by leading by example with compassion, love, acceptance, authenticity, generosity, willingness to learn from others, and an appreciation for growth and development, with each interaction that I have with each person that I am fortunate to support and encounter. Two, I want to make a difference for people with my strengths and multifaceted skillset to empower people to achieve their full potential in every aspect of their life that I am qualified to support them with my competencies and credentials. My intention as a professional is to continue to grow and develop in my field to best support clients. I remain open-minded and maintain my development in culturally relative processes for respective cultures and ensure that I develop the knowledge base to competently support multicultural and LGBTQ+ populations. I utilize advocacy plans to support individuals in sport and performance and ethical models to efficaciously navigate ethical issues and dilemmas, ensuring ethical, inclusive, and safe practices for all individuals.

My reasons for becoming an SPP coach

Highlighted in my professional philosophy statement, surrounds my passion to empower people. From my own experiences in sport and life, there is almost no greater empowerment than through the realization of our own individual strengths, values, and the development of an expansive skillset that we can call upon to support us. This at its essence is what SPP and MST are for me. Empowering individuals with their own strengths, increased self-awareness, and an

expansive skillset to self-regulate their own experience to achieve their individual zone of optimal functioning where they experience, confidence, composure, competence, motivation, optimal physical activation to achieve performance excellence in sport, performance, and ultimately every facet of their life with transferrable skills, empowering them to lead a life of fulfillment and overall well-being.

- 1) **My approach to Mental Skills Training (MST)** involves first, informing individuals of the integral role MST plays in achieving performance excellence and over-all well-being, and second, providing them with a clear understanding of the myths and misconceptions of MST (e.g., MST is a quick fix to achieving optimal performance). All individuals are provided with a clear understanding that MST is most effective, like all skills, when they are applied consistently and systematically with regular application. After providing a clear understanding of MST, I determine individuals' baselines and background, including identifying their strengths, challenge areas, and experiences, allowing me to develop individualized, systematic approaches for each individual and their MST to support them most effectively. MST can be introduced, acquired, and implemented in individual and group settings, supplemented with one-on-one sessions, ensuring the correct and most beneficial application of each facet of MST (e.g., imagery, confidence, motivation, goal setting, concentration, relaxation, energization, routines, positive self-talk).

Each facet of MST is integrated into an individuals' skillset in three distinct phases with respect to their individual differences and multicultural considerations. Phase 1:

Education - defining the specific mental skill (e.g., imagery, confidence, concentration, relaxation, energization, motivation), providing the background and the mechanisms of the skill, correct application of the skill, and establishing the individuals' baseline for the specific skill; Phase 2: Acquisition - informing individuals how to correctly apply and utilize the skill most effectively; Phase 3: Implementation - supporting the individual in establishing a routine for regular application of the skill to best benefit from the MST, supporting them in their achievement of performance excellence (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

2) My preparation for games/competitions begins with establishing consistency and quality approaches to MST prior to the games/competitions, so that on game/competition day individuals have a well-established, systematic application of their MST to support optimal performance in games/competitions. Individuals are supported in developing their own pre-performance routine, involving the various elements of MST (e.g., imagery, relaxation techniques, confidence, self-talk) that support them in establishing their optimal mindset in practice and competition.

Individuals are also supported with the principles of positive psychology and a strength-based focus, regularly emphasizing, and utilizing their strengths, allowing them to operate in the realms of their highest potential. My preparation for games/competitions is also supplemented with the principles of mindfulness, such that I help individuals to establish a non-judgmental, present-moment awareness, so that they are not affected by

negative experiences, and can be empowered by their positive experiences, allowing them to step into flow more easily, ultimately achieving performance excellence.

3) My approach to athlete motivation is oriented around the understandings of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), encouraging autonomy-supportive environments that meet each individual's basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy - to have agency to make choices on our own behalf; competence - to experience proficiency when accomplishing different tasks, such as, goal setting; and relatedness - to be securely connected to and understood by others), ultimately supporting intrinsic motivations, allowing them to achieve their highest realms of potential and performance excellence. Intrinsic motivations are also the greatest source of subjective and physical well-being, and happiness, ultimately supporting over-all well-being.

My approach to motivation also involves the tenants of Motivational Interviewing (MI), which is a collaborative, goal-oriented approach to conversation to strengthen an individual's motivations and commitments to change, by eliciting and exploring a person's own desires, abilities, reasons, and needs to change with an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion (Rosengren, 2018). MI is ultimately about inspiring and retrieving the wisdom, experiences, and insight from within the individual increasing intrinsic motivations, resulting in greater commitment and change, such as when aspiring for performance excellence and overall well-being (Rollnick, et al., 2020).

4) My approach to SPP interventions involves approaching individuals with multicultural considerations and respect for individual differences. This allows me to provide individualized, systematic interventions, optimizing the principles of positive psychology and a strengths-based focus, utilizing my strengths to support them most effectively, and identifying and empowering their strengths, ultimately providing them with a framework to achieve self-actualization and their fullest potential. This starts with an intake that involves building rapport (e.g., asking them about their sport, life, interests, achievements, aspirations) with the intention of empowering their authenticity, allowing me to identify their strength areas and values that I can optimize to support them throughout the process. Then I begin gathering a background of the individual directly from the individual, as well as from those who are working with or have worked with this individual, to start to establish a clear understanding of the individual to best support them in their sport or performance.

Throughout the process, individuals are approached holistically, encouraging that they possess and support a multifaceted sense of self, considering mental, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional well-being. This involves understanding the concept of an athletic identity - how much an individual identifies with the athlete role and looks to others for acknowledgement of that role (Brewer, et al., 1993). A healthy athletic identity is one where the individual is balanced, such that they develop and maintain various roles, values, and meaning for themselves inside and outside of their sport (Mackenzie, 2017). This includes, educating them about: The importance of regular, quality sleep and how to achieve that; the integral role a healthy diet plays in optimal physical and mental

performance; and the importance of establishing a sense of self, relationships, goals, and meaning for themselves inside and outside of sport.

It also means informing them about the understandings of an unhealthy athletic identity, so that they can recognize the difference and make appropriate changes to best support them. An unhealthy athletic identity is one where the athlete over-identifies with their role as an athlete, especially at the expense of their other roles and see themselves exclusively as an athlete. They lose a sense of who they are outside of their sport, which can have detrimental and potentially life-threatening consequences if their sports career is unexpectedly terminated due to injury or other life-altering circumstances (Symes, 2010).

After approaching the individual as a person first, to support over all well-being, which is integral to performance excellence, then I begin establishing a baseline for their MST and moving through each facet of MST. This involves moving through each phase of MST (i.e., education, acquisition, and implementation), incorporating mindfulness practices and strengths-based approaches, as well as recording data regarding the individual's performance and progress, before, during, and after sessions. Feedback and evaluations (e.g., feedback logs) are provided throughout the process, personally recorded by the individuals', and documented by me, providing individuals with clear gauges of their progress towards their achievement of performance excellence.

Changes to the SPP interventions are made accordingly to best support the individual. A growth mindset is encouraged throughout the process. Maintaining a growth mindset

allows individuals to understand the value of growth, providing them with the perspective that to develop new capacities to achieve their fullest potential and performance excellence, they must stretch themselves beyond their current abilities and that often comes with facing unfamiliar realms of potential, often accompanied by inevitable challenges.

What lies behind and what lies before you...are small matters compared to what lies within you – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Program objectives and outcomes include expanding my skillset and competencies to support various athletic and performance populations from the novice to the elite with achieving performance excellence. My objective is to explore a variety of diverse athletic and performance avenues to determine my greatest area of competency to best serve the populations who I am fortunate to support in the field of sport and performance psychology.

My understanding of diversity and inclusion issues in coaching and performance consulting:

In addition to gameplay, rules, and the functions for achieving optimal performance, when the practitioner understands the origins, variations, and sociological underpinnings of sport in play it provides the client with a supportive framework that allows for optimal performance (Coakley, 2016). Sports are gendered social worlds that were developed by males in the 19th century with the framework of dominant orthodox gender ideologies, which are the widely established beliefs and “truths” associated with the two-sex approach of males versus females that were based on proposed psychological and physiological differences (Coakley, 2016). The

dominant orthodox gender ideologies led people to view females and males as different and unequal (Coakley, 2016). As a result, males have greater access to power, privilege, and influence than females and sports remain male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified, such that competence and strength are associated with masculine traits and female traits are undervalued, under-represented, and viewed as inadequate (Coakely, 2016).

In the attempts to keep sports male-centered, male-dominated, and male-identified, males, particularly those in power, have discriminated against females, since the inception of sports (Coakley, 2016). Historically, women have suffered the following inequities: Access to facilities; quality of facilities (e.g., locker rooms, showers, weight training); quality of surfaces (e.g., the women's soccer team playing on artificial turf, compared to the men's team playing on preferred natural turf); availability of financial support (e.g., scholarships); program operating expenses; provision and maintenance of equipment; scheduling of games and practices; travel and per diem expenses; opportunity to receive academic tutoring; quality and number of coaches, trainers, and medical support; access to positions of power; and publicity and media coverage (Coakley, 2016; Das, 2019). Sports continue to remain a male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified social world where women continue to be disadvantaged, undervalued, underrepresented, and discriminated against, as men, particularly those in power, strive and continue to remain the benefactor of the prevailing inequities (Coakley, 2016; Das, 2019).

In addition to the preceding, the dichotomy of males versus females, there is little tolerance for gender identity diversity (i.e., any individuals who do not identify with the features that were prescribed to them as being male or female), resulting in exclusion, ridicule, and rejection of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community (Coakley, 2016; Williams, 2018). Individuals who do not identify with the "truths" prescribed by the dominant orthodox gender ideologies are

excluded through discrimination and homophobic slurs in the realm of sports (Williams, 2018; Coakley, 2016). As a practitioner it is integral that I remain cognizant and mindful of this unethical discrimination that is prevalent throughout sport, so that I may support various populations most efficaciously as well as advocate effectively to best support the individuals who are subjected to this type of discrimination.

Further, Racial ideologies have become deeply embedded into the sport culture and exert powerful influence on people's lives inside and outside of their sports (Coakley, 2016; Williams, 2018). These racial ideologies have been used for centuries to justify the oppression and exploitation of minority populations (Coakley, 2016). For example, the narrative prescribed for the same actions in sports by a Caucasian and an African American are vastly different, such that Caucasian individual's actions are described as heroic, whereas African American individual's actions are described as acting out of ignorance and desperation (Coakley, 2016). In addition, Women of Color experience an intersectionality of gender, class, and racial ideologies, such that they are subjected to discrimination based on their gender, social class, and race (Coakley, 2016). As a result, Women of Color are more likely to be patronized, lack access to power, and lack social support than Men of Color and other women (Coakley, 2016).

Sports in the United States have a long history of racial and ethnic exclusion, such that men and women in all ethnic minorities are underrepresented at all levels of competition and management (Coakley, 2016; Williams, 2018). Since sports inception, sports have remained white-centered, white-dominated, and white-identified, such that sports are oriented around the focus of white people; the characteristics of white people are the standards for measuring qualifications; and the privilege is given to white people (Coakley, 2016). Historically,

throughout much of the 20th century, white people in the United States excluded black people from participating in sports, through acts of discrimination, outright exclusion, as well as systemic racism (Coakley, 2016).

Systemic racism manifests in many ways, including through an individuals' privileges, opportunities, access to resources, and is often reflected in an individual's social class, such that individuals with greater access to resources and privileges generally reside in a higher social class (Coakley, 2016; Yancey-Bragg, 2021). Elite and powerful people have the greatest influence over how sports are organized, who gets to participate, and how they are played in the mainstream (Coakley, 2016). Individuals with the greatest access to resources, money, and power are White People and all minorities are left to abide by the rules prescribed to them by White people (Coakley, 2016). In all societies, social class and class relations influence who plays, watches, and what information is distributed (Coakley, 2016).

Who gets to play and participate in sport is also associated with the concepts of ableism and ageism, such that individuals who are considered abled body (i.e., do not have any disabilities or are capable of functioning as a younger individual) have the right to participate in sports, such that those who are not abled body and/or are too old, are excluded from sport participation (Coakley, 2016). There is a great necessity for sports to continue to become more inclusive and adaptive for individuals of all ages and abilities (2016). Being aware of the preceding, will allow me to navigate the field most efficaciously to best support the various populations who I am privileged to work with, as well as provide me with a framework of understanding as I advocate for the rights and well-being of all populations.

My background that shaped my Professional Philosophy

I come from a multicultural family, where love and compassion were our first languages, diversity and differences were embraced, recognition and empowerment were how we engaged with one another, humor and laughter were found through all experiences, and a desire to understand people and the intricacies of the world enriched our connections. I now lead with these same values. I embrace diversity and differences; I have a desire to maintain multiculturally competencies to better serve the populations with whom I work; I have compassion for all people; and I have a passion to understand people to help them to better understand themselves to empower them with their own values and unique qualities and strengths to reach their full potential and achieve performance excellence.

I have been surrounded by diversity since childhood with family members who identify with different sexual orientations, life philosophies and practices, religious orientations, and various cultural backgrounds. I was raised exposed to and educated about the hardships and microaggressions that confront various populations, including what I can do to make a difference, such as actively leading with compassion, seeking understanding, and advocating to make change for equality. I come from an open-minded, accepting family, where seeking understanding is our mode of operation and differences are embraced and viewed as opportunities to expand our understanding of the human experience and the world around us.

I stand strongly in my values of love and compassion for people, and I will continue to develop myself and grow as a person to best support the people who I am fortunate to work with in this field. I will maintain my development in culturally relative processes for respective cultures; developing culturally transferrable skills to effectively support individuals from various cultures; developing the understandings to culturally adapt to each respective culture that I am fortunate to work with in the field; increasing my awareness of microaggressions that I may be

unaware of currently; and ensuring that I develop the knowledge base to competently support LGBTQ+ populations. My experience at University of Western States has provided me with the competence to establish effective advocacy plans to advocate for individuals in sport and performance as well as ethical models for efficaciously navigating ethical issues and dilemmas, supporting ethical and safe practices for all individuals.

My background, experiences, credentials, and certifications has allowed me to clearly define my Theoretical Orientation to Performance Excellence (TOPE) (i.e., the understanding of the contributing factors of human performance, psychological facilitators and inhibitors of performance, and the mechanisms of performance excellence) (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). My TOPE serves as a guide for systematic and effective practice, allowing me to proactively approach diverse clients with methodologies for achieving performance excellence, applying effective interventions with a clear understanding of pre-existing theories and mechanisms of optimal human functioning, as opposed to reacting to issues with no systematic process (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

There are several components that support my coaching philosophy. The first component is having self-awareness (i.e., being knowledgeable about my feelings, motives, and personal characteristics in different contexts) and understanding how my values, personal experiences, and thoughts, on how to achieve performance excellence, influence my TOPE and coaching philosophy) (Henson & Rossouw, 2013). My values (i.e., acting from a place of honesty, compassion, and desire to make a difference for others), personal experiences and thoughts on performance excellence, allow me to act from an authentic and decisive place as I apply various interventions from a theoretically and experientially informed position (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

Second, I have a clear understanding of the theoretical orientation to human behavior that most aligns with me (i.e., considering the whole person, how I believe challenges develop, and what psychological paradigm facilitates change and the achievement of performance excellence) (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). I believe that our thinking patterns and beliefs influence our behaviors and actions, therefore, the psychological paradigm and theoretical orientation of human behavior that I align with most is that of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Aligning with CBT allows me to approach diverse clients effectively and consistently with a systematic, yet individualized framework to efficaciously empower them to develop more constructive thought patterns that support the achievement of performance excellence, as well as over-all well-being (Aoyagi, et al. 2017).

My coaching philosophy also aligns with the principles of Mindfulness, such that all humans have the power to observe their thoughts and experiences as transient phenomena that passes through them with the ability to develop the capacity to choose what thoughts and experiences that they give power to, ultimately becoming unaffected by negative experiences and empowered by positive experiences (Cotterill, et al., 2017). I also approach individuals with the principles of positive psychology and a strength-based approach, operationalizing my own strengths (e.g., honesty, love of learning, love, creativity, and humor), as well as recognizing and exploiting individuals' unique strengths and qualities, ultimately allowing them to step into their highest realms of potential where they can consistently and effectively achieve performance excellence (Biswas-Diener, 2010; Seligman, 2004). Connecting my theoretical orientation to human behaviors to my TOPE and coaching philosophy, allows me to provide consistency and congruency in my framework for achieving performance excellence, as well as allows for the

functions for achieving performance excellence to transfer to other areas of the individuals' life, ultimately supporting overall well-being (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

A third component that is integral to my TOPE and coaching philosophy is immersing myself in the current sport and performance psychology (SPP) literature, allowing me to be well-grounded in my approach, as well as providing me with a broad knowledge regarding the most recent practices and understandings in the field (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). A fourth component that is integral to the development of my TOPE and coaching philosophy is maintaining a clear understanding of the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST), such that all events in an environment are interrelated and any actions that occur in the environment will alter the entire environment (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

My clear understanding of DST allows me to effectively apply mental skills training, as I continue to develop and apply interdisciplinary knowledge (e.g., motor skills learning), with consideration of the complexities of the human experience within the complex, ever changing performance environment (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Understanding the role each SPP intervention plays in the achievement of performance excellence within the understandings of my theoretical paradigm and with interdisciplinary knowledge with respect to DST, allows me to be decisive with each SPP application supporting not only performance excellence, but over-all well-being (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

A fifth component that is important to my TOPE and coaching philosophy is maintaining a growth mindset with respect to continuously evolving and adapting to the ever-changing field, as new evidence is discovered, and through the application of reflective practices, as I continue to refine my approach to best support everyone that I am fortunate to work with in the field

(Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Applying reflective practices, allows me to effectively learn from my experiences and more readily recognize which interventions would be most beneficial to utilize and when with each new client (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Developing my TOPE and coaching philosophy will remain on-going, as I continue to refine my process to best support clients in achieving performance excellence (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

A sixth component that is integral to my TOPE and coaching philosophy is maintaining a great cohort of colleagues and peers in the field to support one another in best guiding our clients with achieving performance excellence (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Maintaining a network with colleagues provides us with a space to practice critical reflection to best support our clients (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). A seventh component that is important to my TOPE and coaching philosophy is maintaining regular mentorship to support my effective practice (Aoyagi, et al., 2017). Mentors have a wealth of knowledge that I can continue to learn from, as they provide me with guidance, perspective, and emotional support as I work with individuals in the complex sport and performance environments (Aoyagi, et al., 2017).

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