2.1 Beliefs

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Introduction

We know that beliefs exist; our thoughts and actions are based on a system of beliefs and values that each of us hold.

It is important to understand that what we see is not reality itself, but rather an interpretation which depends on our system of beliefs. This can mean that we may miss information or we may not see things exactly as they occur.

Throughout the following text, we will explain what beliefs are, what role they play, and how we can work with them in different situations, with the objective of modifying and improving our relationship with our athletes and, in general, with our environment. In so doing, we will be able to optimize the personal and sporting performance of athletes and coaches.

> *If you believe you do not owe me anything, you do not owe me, because I respect all beliefs and because all beliefs are equal. They are all beliefs.*
> *Porchia, (1943), p. 21.*

2.1.1 Beliefs

Before we define the term belief, we would like to share some ideas that will help us approach and understand this concept.

Belief, while involving the intellect and feelings, is essentially related to activity and will (Bain, 1868). We can believe that the sun comes up each morning, and this indicates intellectual understanding, but no concrete belief accompanies it. If we add emotion or feelings to the equation—a sunny day is understood to be more beautiful than other days—is this a deeply rooted belief? No. We can agree that neither intellect nor feelings create the essence of that belief. On an everyday basis, people's beliefs are tested by their actions. Thus, if one acts in contrast to one's beliefs, one would be stripped of the belief in the doctrine (Bain, 1868). If a person claims to be a defender of animals but wears a mink coat, other people will not treat them as a coherent or sincere person.

There are times when, even understanding the premises discussed above, we act in a way that is contrary to the beliefs we hold. For example, we may hold the conviction that sleeping less than eight hours a day is detrimental to our health, but we still sleep less than we should. Sometimes, despite the fact that the belief encourages us to act, it is limited by a stronger motive. I may know that I need eight hours of sleep, but I want to finish that movie that I like so much. Beliefs are an active state, and they may be weaker or stronger, depending on whether they are surpassed, or not, by an impulse.

However, we can see that what leads us to act, surpassing small or large resistance, is a belief: I am going to bed because I know that I will appreciate it when I wake up tomorrow and I feel rested.

Beliefs determine how we perceive the world we see, since we perceive and interpret the things we experience in our life according to our beliefs. Furthermore, what we see is not actually what happens. Rather, it is an interpretation of the facts, since we interpret the world based on our system of beliefs.

Sometimes we make generalizations about the events that occur around us without considering that, depending on the culture in which we find ourselves, a single occurrence can have different meanings. Thus, an action

can lead to us thinking a certain way about a person, who is in fact acting in accordance to their beliefs. What do you think about people who burp at the table? For many Western cultures, a dinner guest who burps is seen as having bad manners and lacking respect. In India, burping is seen as mocking one's ancestors, while doing the same thing in China is a way to praise the cook. In Eskimo tribes living in the Siberian and American Arctic, it is a polite gesture, and in Saudi Arabia, it is synonymous with satisfaction and being full. Thus, according to the place of origin and the culture in which a person develops, they will hold different beliefs regarding what a person has done.

Understanding ourselves, and knowing the "lens" with which we view the world, and the "lens" through which we view the people closest to us, will help us better understand people and interpret their behaviors.

A story by Bucay, below, invites us to reflect on what was expressed in the previous paragraph.

> One afternoon, a very elegant woman arrives at a train station. At the ticket booth, the woman is informed that her train is delayed and it will be arriving at the station about an hour late.
> A little irritated, the woman goes to the newsstand and buys a magazine. Then, she passes the refreshment stand and buys a packet of cookies and a can of soda.
>
> Prepared for the unavoidable wait, she sits on a long bench on the platform. While she flips through the magazine, a young man sits down next to her and begins to read a newspaper. Unexpectedly, out of the corner of her eye, the woman sees the boy, without saying a word, stretch out his hand, take the packet of cookies, open it, and then take one out and casually eat it.
>
> The woman is angry. She does not want to be rude, but she cannot pretend that nothing happened either; so, with an inflated gesture, she picks up the packet, takes out a cookie in front of the young man, and eats it while staring at him.

In response, the young man smiles... and takes another cookie.

The woman groans a little, takes another cookie, and – with obvious annoyance – eats it, once again staring at the young man.

The dialogue of looks and smiles continues from cookie to cookie. The woman is getting increasingly irritated, the young man increasingly amused.

Finally, the woman realizes that there is only one cookie left in the packet. "He cannot be that shameless," she thinks, and she sits frozen, flicking her gaze between the young man and the cookies.

Calmly, the young man reaches out his hand, takes the last cookie, and gently breaks it exactly in half. With his most affectionate smile, he offers half to the woman.

"Thank you!" says the woman, rudely taking the half cookie.

"You're welcome," replies the young man, smiling angelically while eating his half.

The train arrives.

Furious, the woman takes her things and gets on the train. As the train takes off, she sees the young man still sitting on the platform bench and thinks, "How disrespectful."

Her mouth feels dry with anger. She opens her purse to take out her can of soda and is surprised to find, closed, her packet of cookies... intact! (Bucay, 2012, p. 28).

Belief is defined in a multitude of ways in scientific literature. Definitions will commonly include the following: belief is the conviction that something is true; it is a thought ingrained in us that leads us to be certain; and beliefs are mental patterns through which we interpret our environment.

This system of beliefs shapes our lives, our way of being, acting, and relating with others. In other words, the beliefs that we have determine the meaning that we give to our life experiences. Therefore, it is important that we consider the impact of beliefs in our professional work with athletes. We must consider all the people that make up the player's environment – coaches, physical trainers, physicians, physiotherapists, psychologists, etc. This also extends to an athlete's private life: families, friends, school, and so on must all also be taken into account. All of these people are protagonists, role models, and instant transmitters of knowledge, values and beliefs. Beliefs become like a map branded into our system that guides, or rather, directs us in the world in order to meet our needs (Ramsey, 2005).

Thus, our aim is to get to know trainers and coaches, to delve into and understand the beliefs that each one possesses. Being aware of these beliefs means we can know how and from what perspective we interpret and understand our environment, as well as the people in our environment, who also condition how we relate to the world.

There are, of course, many different types of beliefs. For now, we will focus on two types of beliefs that directly cause the way we think and act in our daily life:

- Enabling beliefs: those that empower people and give them confidence and reinforcement in what they do. They cause behaviors that lead to the objective that has been set.
- Limiting beliefs: those thoughts that often obstruct personal development and the way people relate to the world and others.

We will focus on the second case, but do not worry – limiting beliefs can be modified and turn into beliefs that strengthen us.

In order to understand more about it, we will try to give concrete examples of one belief that can block or limit:

- Belief in one's lack of confidence: objectives are considered unattainable, regardless of your abilities. For example, "we are not prepared for the final"; "no matter how much we train, I will not be able to meet the team's objective"; "no matter what we do, we will lose."

- Sometimes it can also translate as unworthiness, believing that we do not deserve what we want because of something that has happened. "I don't deserve to go to the championship because we haven't trained hard enough"; "I don't deserve to be the head coach because I don't have as much experience as my peers."
- Belief in one's lack of ability: believing that you are not in good enough shape or have not done the necessary preparation to reach the set objective, even though it is attainable. For example, "we won't be able to beat this team, even though they have worse statistics than we do"; "I'm sure that they will win the title, not us."
- Belief in being exposed: being afraid of public exposure and what other people may think of us. For example, "what will they say if we lose?"; "I don't like press conferences because I feel like I'm being attacked."

There are matters that we must understand about our beliefs:

- They have been learned since childhood, so they are deeply ingrained in each individual.
- They are often subconscious, so we are unaware that they exist.
- They can be changed through conscious training or through new experiences.
- They contribute something positive, even the beliefs that are considered negative in another moment. For example, if I have the belief that I should not talk to strangers, what I now experience as 'limiting' was previously a way of obeying my parents' instructions.

In order to exchange one belief for another, the perception of reality must be modified, with beliefs as our starting point – seeking other alternatives and new perspectives.

We are going to look at how to identify limiting beliefs and how to work on modifying them.

The following is an exercise that can help us:

- Identify situations that you have experienced as stressful or difficult. Sometimes, we are not aware of our self-talk: "I can't do this"; "everything is hard for me"; "I can't achieve what I set out to do"; "every game goes badly for me." Select one of these.

- Identify what you are feeling in relation to what you think. This involves thinking to ourselves "what belief is behind this attitude?"
- For example, "I can't achieve what I set out to do." I feel weak, like others cannot trust me, insecure; I am disappointed, sad, unsuccessful.
- I ask myself if this belief is 100% true and if this is actually what occurs every time.
- For example, have I ever competed well, despite being nervous? Are there other times that I have faced a test, had this feeling, and been able to manage it?
- Reflect and answer these questions:
    - What is stopping me from reaching my objectives?
    - What positive thought could replace the negative thought?
    - If what I think were true – from the previous question – what action would I take to achieve my objectives?
- Modify your internal language to more positive language, keeping your answer to the previous questions in mind. Think of a clear affirmation that helps you reach the objective and that contradicts the initial belief.
- For example, I will learn how to compete. I am more than capable of overcoming this new challenge.
- Find situations that confirm this new belief.
- For example, in the match on Saturday, I played well; I am less nervous than on other occasions.

The outline below suggests steps for modifying limiting beliefs.

Table 1: Modifying Limiting Beliefs

Modifying limiting beliefs
1. Think about and choose a situation that generates stressful emotions
2. Describe the objective facts that occurred at the moment the situation took place.
3. Write what you think about the stressful situation (predictions, concerns, assumptions, etc.).

4. Write what you think about the event specifically.
5. Reflect and modify what you described in point 3. Answer the following questions: Why do I have these thoughts? Is there objective evidence to maintain this belief? Is there evidence that demonstrates that I am wrong?
6. Change your internal language for more positive words.

Source: Davis, Mckaty & Eshelman, 2001, p. 174.

Let's look at how to do this through an example scenario:

1) In recent matches, I have not met my objectives, I have played poorly, and my feelings are inconsistent. I feel insecure and afraid that I am not as good as I should be or as people think; I am feeling sad.
2) In the last match, I felt weird, my legs were aching, and I was tired. It is true that in the last two weeks, we trained with more physical load than normal. Thinking that I was tired, my mind started to think negative thoughts, such as not being able to compete in the Olympics, and I felt increasingly tired and depressed.
3) I am afraid that these matches will not go well for me; they make me feel insecure because I have the pre-Olympics in three months, and I don't feel prepared; I have doubts, I feel insecure, and I am afraid of letting myself down if I don't qualify.
4) I am putting pressure on myself, I have no confidence, and I am more aware of others than of myself. I would like to be more isolated and focus on the day-to-day.
5) I reflect on what I am thinking and feeling. If I look at it objectively, these were only two matches out of many in this season. When I train, I feel comfortable and good; I see that I advance and reach the objectives that I have set for myself with my coach.
6) I have to be more careful with how I treat myself and trust the progress I have shown.
7) My messages to repeat will be "moment by moment," "I am capable of completing the things I set out to do," and "I trust in myself, in my body, and in my mind."

Remember that modifying a belief does not happen from one day to the next. Just as a belief takes time to develop, we will also need a period of practicing and integrating with the previous beliefs in order to change one belief and substitute it for another. Remember that only with practice will the new belief settle, becoming subconscious and automatic.

Sometimes, despite our efforts, we will not be aware of or understand limiting beliefs that have accompanied us from birth and throughout our lives. The Ellis Test is a tool that can be used to understand our limiting beliefs, enabling us to work on exchanging them for enabling beliefs.

This questionnaire can serve as a tool to "become aware" and understand why beliefs begin, in order to practice changing.

Table 2: Questionnaire

Instructions for completing the questionnaire
• There is no time limit for answering the questionnaire. • There are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire will be useful to the extent that you are honest in your responses. • Do not spend too much time thinking about each item. • If you more strongly agree than disagree with the item, mark the YES box. If, on the other hand, you disagree more than you agree, mark the NO box. • Be sure to answer with what you really think, not what you believe you should think. • Answer all of the items.

	Yes	No		P
1 The approval of others is important to me			A	
2 I hate making mistakes			A	
3 People who make mistakes get what they deserve			A	
4 I generally accept events philosophically			B	
5 If a person wants to, they can be happy in almost any circumstance			B	
6 I am afraid of things that I often worry about			A	
7 I normally put off important decisions			A	
8 Everyone needs someone to turn to for help and advice			A	
9 “A zebra can’t change its stripes”			A	
10 Above all, I prefer to spend my free time quietly			A	
11 I like it when people respect me, but I have no reason to respect anyone			B	
12 I avoid things that I cannot do well. A			A	
13 There are too many bad people who escape the punishment of hell			A	
14 Frustrations do not bother me			B	
15 People are not upset by events, but by how they perceive them			B	
16 I have minimal anxiety about anticipated dangers or future events			B	
17 I try to deal with tedious work and do it as soon as possible			B	
18 When making important decisions, I consult with an authority on the matter			A	
19 It is almost impossible to overcome the influence of the past			A	
20 I like having a lot of resources			B	
21 I want everyone to like me			A	
22 I do not like competing in activities in which everyone else is better than I am			B	
23 Those who make mistakes deserve to bear the blame			A	
24 Things should be different than they are			A	
25 I create my own bad mood			B	
26 Oftentimes, I cannot get a subject out of my head			A	
27 I avoid facing problems			A	
28 Everyone needs to have a source of energy outside of themselves			A	
29 Just because something affected my life significantly once, does not mean that it has to be the same in the future			B	
30 I feel more satisfied when I have a lot of things to do			B	
31 I can like myself even when others do not like me			B	
32 I would like to succeed in something, but I do not think I will be able to			B	

33 Immorality should be punished severely			A	
34 I often feel upset by situations that I do not like			A	
35 Unhappy people normally owe their unhappiness to themselves			B	
30 I do not worry about being unable to prevent something from happening			B	
37 Normally, I make decisions as quickly as possible			B	
38 There are certain people on whom I depend a lot			A	
39 People overestimate the influence of the past			B	
40 I have the most fun when I do a creative project			B	
41 If other people do not like me, it is their problem, not mine			B	
42 For me, it is very important to achieve success in everything I do			A	
43 I rarely blame people for their mistakes			B	
44 I normally accept things as they are, even when I do not like them			B	
45 No one is angry for long, unless they want to be			B	
46 I cannot stand taking risks			A	
47 Life is too short to spend it doing things you do not enjoy			A	
48 I like to fend for myself			B	
49 If I had gone through different experiences, I could be more like I would like to be			A	
50 I would like to retire and get away from work completely			A	
51 I think it is hard to go against what everyone else thinks			A	
52 I enjoy activities independent from the good/bad in them			B	
53 The fear of punishment is what makes people be good			A	
54 If something annoys me, I choose to ignore it			B	
55 The more problems a person has, the less happy they are			A	
56 I rarely feel anxious when I think about the future			B	
57 I rarely put things off			B	
58 I am the only one who can really understand and solve my problems			B	
59 Normally, I do not think that my past experiences affect me in the present			B	
60 Having too much free time makes me bored			B	
61 I like receiving the approval of others, but I have no real need for it			B	
62 It bothers me that others are better than I am at something			A	
63 Everyone is essentially good			A	
64 I do everything I can to get what I want and once I get it, I stop worrying about it			B	
65 Nothing is intrinsically disturbing; if it is, it is because of the way we interpret it			B	
66 I worry a lot about certain things in the future			A	
67 It is difficult for me to do unpleasant tasks			A	
68 I dislike that other people make decisions for me			B	
69 We are slaves to our past			A	
70 Sometimes, I would like to go to a tropical island, stretch out on the beach, and do nothing else			A	
71 I often worry whether people approve of me and accept me			A	
72 Making mistakes upsets me			A	
73 It is not fair that "it rains the same on the just and the unjust"			A	
74 I honestly enjoy life			B	
75 More people should face the unpleasantness of life			A	
76 Sometimes it is impossible for me to rid my mind of the fear of something			A	
77 An easy life is very rarely well-compensated			B	

78 I think it is easy to seek help			A	
79 Once something affects your life significantly, it will always continue to do so			A	
80 I love to be lying down			A	
81 I worry considerably about what people think about me			A	
82 I often get extremely angry about pointless things			A	
83 I usually give a second chance to someone who makes a mistake			B	
84 People are happier when they have goals and problems to resolve			A	
85 There is never a reason to stay sad for long			B	
86 I rarely think about things like death or nuclear war			B	
87 I do not like responsibilities			B	
88 I do not like to depend on others			B	
89 People never really change			A	
90 Most people work too much and do not rest enough			A	
91 Being criticized is annoying, but not disturbing			B	
92 I don't like doing things that I don't do really well			B	
93 Nobody is bad, even if their actions are			B	
94 I rarely take advantage of the mistakes others make			B	
95 People build their own inner hell			B	
96 Sometimes I surprise myself planning what I would do if I encountered certain dangerous situations			A	
97 If I have something to do, I do it even if it is not pleasant			B	
98 I have learned not to be concerned with anything that is not related to my own well-being			B	
99 I do not look back with resentment			B	
100 I do not really feel happy until I am relaxed and doing nothing			A	

1. If the item has the letter A and you have answered "YES," put an X in column P.
2. If the item has the letter B and you answered "NO," put an X in column P.
3. Copy the X's in the corresponding space in the following table and add the number of X's that appear in each column.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10
1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
11		12		13		14		15		16		17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24		25		26		27		28		29		30	
31		32		33		34		35		36		37		38		39		40	
41		42		43		44		45		46		47		48		49		50	
51		52		53		54		55		56		57		58		59		60	
61		62		63		64		65		66		67		68		69		70	
71		72		73		74		75		76		77		78		79		80	
81		82		83		84		85		86		87		88		89		90	
91		92		93		94		95		96		97		98		99		100	

Interpretation The higher the score received, the more you conform to the irrational idea explained below:		
		P
1	For an adult, it is absolutely necessary to have the affection and approval of their neighbors, family and friends.	
2	You must be completely competent and almost perfect at everything you undertake.	
3	Certain people are bad, vile, and perverse and should be punished.	
4	It is horrible when things do not go the way one wants.	
5	External events are the cause of most of humanity's unhappiness; people simply react according to how events affect their emotions.	
6	You should feel fear and anxiety when facing any unknown, uncertain, or potentially dangerous thing.	
7	It is easier to avoid life's problems and responsibilities than confronting them.	
8	You must rely on something bigger and stronger than yourself.	
9	The past has more influence on determining the present.	
10	Happiness increases with inactivity, passivity, and indefinite leisure.	

Source: Cuartero Requejo, 2018, pp. 26-31

When working on understanding limiting beliefs, it is important that we create space for personal reflection, We must think about and delve into our beliefs and their consequences, in order to be able to work on modifying them. Change is a process that will take time. You must pay attention to change that occurs, and value such change, in order to truly embed new beliefs.

To conclude, understanding what we think and how we act in relation to ourselves and our environment will prepare us for working with our athletes in the same way. By paying to attention to how athletes understand and relate to their environment, we will be better able to optimize their personal development and professional performance.

Sometimes we spend hours, days, and weeks working with athletes on their techniques, tactics, psychological tools, etc. and we forget about their beliefs.

Take the example of a match: we consider that the athlete's emotions are an obstacle to competing well, and we forget to pay attention to their beliefs. "I train very well, but nothing works for me in competition."

Let's look at how to work with this athlete.

We can ask the athlete to describe what they focus on in competition and in training in order to understand if there is a difference between the two situations. When training, the athlete meets their marks, follows the correct rhythm, refines their technique, etc. In competition however, they focus on the opposition, and feel alarmed by signs of fatigue. Be careful! Attention has a different focus in competition versus in training, indicating that there is a difference that needs to be corrected. If, during training, I direct my attention to technique, during competition I should do the same thing. As the match progresses, I can direct my attention to the opponent to adapt decisions to choose the most appropriate tactic.

Remember that in situations where we feel stressed and in trouble, we put our limiting beliefs into action.

We recommend working on beliefs from the beginning of the season, creating a work plan both in training and competition (outline objectives, concrete actions to achieve changes, note stressful situations, and evaluate beliefs).
We propose that athletes record (in a journal, on a cell phone, etc.) different aspects that will help them understand what happens in situations that they find difficult.

Table 3: Example daily journal for athletes

Situation: **Date:** April 12 "I feel blocked when the coach corrects me in trainings or matches."
Thoughts: "He's not going to include me in the next match"; "he doesn't like me"; "I am always doing things wrong."
Physical sensations: "I feel like my heart is going a thousand beats a minute"; "my head spins if I see him get angry"; "my legs lock up."
Emotion: "I feel irritated for not knowing how to do better, and also sad because I'm failing him, my family, and myself."
After the emotion experienced: "I'm not telling anyone what I think because otherwise they will think I am weak." "I act like everything is fine, but I am distracted."
Action plan: "Next time that happens to me, I will tell a teammate how I feel to see if they can help me." "I will talk to my coach when I feel more confident about what to tell him."
Conclusions: "When I share what I feel with someone, I feel more relaxed"; "If I think about what it is that I have to do next, and not focus on the mistake, I feel more confident."
Review: Set aside time periodically to review the journal and add those thoughts or actions that you have incorporated into training and put into practice from your journal.

Source: Prepared by the author.

While building new beliefs, actions, and verbalizations related to this, you can test them in less important competitions until they settle in and become established.

A piece of advice: we do not judge beliefs, we simply analyze them in order to modify them and make them more adaptive.

2.2 Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

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Introduction

Self-fulfilling prophecies are plentiful in our daily lives. We have all thought about things we were sure would happen, which did in fact end up happening. We subconsciously mold reality so that it comes to pass.

This effect occurs across all domains of our life (academic, social, professional), but it is particularly impactful for children and young people, who are going through significant developmental stages. In certain aspects, this depends on the expectations of the people surrounding them.

Every day, we are exposed – consciously or subconsciously – to the expectations of the people who surround us: family, friends, teammates, coaches, bosses, etc. We observe how when someone gives us their trust and support, we act in a way that reflects how that person sees us, and at other times, we give up on trying something because of a fear of failure that has overwhelmed us. In this reading we will explain self-fulfilling prophecy and how it can be a positive addition to our daily lives.

2.2.1 Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

We begin this unit with a story by García Márquez:

> Imagine a very small town where there is an old woman who has two children, a 17-year-old son and a 14-year-old daughter. She is making breakfast and looks worried. Her children ask her what is wrong and she responds,

"I don't know, but I woke up with the feeling that something terrible is going to happen to this town."

They laugh at their mother. They say that those are the premonitions of an old woman, a normal occurrence. The son goes to play billiards, and as soon as he goes to shoot an easy shot, the other player says,

"I'll bet you a peso that you don't make it."

They all laugh. He laughs. He shoots the ball and misses. He pays his peso and they all ask what happened, since it was an easy shot. He answers,

"That's true, but I have been worried about something my mother told me this morning, that something terrible is going to happen to this town."

They all laugh at him, and the player who won the peso goes home, where he lives with his mother, or a granddaughter, or, in short, one relative or another. Happy with his peso, he says,

"I won this peso from Dámaso so easily because he's an idiot."
"And why is he an idiot?"
"Man, because he couldn't make a really easy shot because his mother woke up today with the idea that something terrible is going to happen in this town."

Then his mother says,
"Don't mock the premonitions of the old because they sometimes come true."

The relative hears this and goes to buy meat. She says to the butcher,

"Sell me a pound of meat." And while he is cutting it, she adds. "You better sell me two, because they are saying that

something terrible is going to happen, and it's best to be prepared."

The butcher gives her the meat, and when another woman comes to buy a pound of meat, he tells her,

"Take two because people around here are saying that something terrible is going to happen, and they are preparing and buying things."

The old woman responds,

"I have several children; you better give me four pounds."

She takes the four pounds, and, to cut a long story short, I will say that the butcher goes through all the meat in a half hour, kills another cow and sells it all, and continues spreading the rumor. The time comes that everyone in the town is waiting for something to happen. All activity stops and suddenly, at two in the afternoon, it is hot, just like always. Someone says,

"Have you noticed how hot it is?"
"But it's always hot in this town!"
(So hot is this town that the musician mended his instruments with tar and always played in the shade, because if he played in the sun, they would fall apart).
"But," says one person, "it's never this hot at this time."
"But two o'clock in the afternoon is the hottest time."
"Yes, but not as hot as it is now."

In the deserted town, in the deserted square, a little bird suddenly lands and the word spreads:

"There is a bird in the square."

And everyone comes, terrified, to see the little bird.

"But people, birds have always landed here."
"Yes, but never at this time."

It comes to such a tense moment for the residents of the town that they all feel desperate to leave and do not have the courage to do so.

"I for one am man enough," shouts one. "I am leaving."

He grabs his things, his children, his animals, puts them in a wagon, and crosses the main road where the rest of the poor town is watching him. Until the moment when they say,

"If he dares to leave, then we can go, too."

And they literally begin to dismantle the town. They take their things, their animals, everything.
And one of the last people to leave the town says,

"Let not misfortune fall on what is left of our house." And then he lights his house on fire, and others light their houses on fire, too.
They leave in an awful and true panic, like an exodus from war. And in the middle of them is the woman who had the omen claiming,

"I said something terrible was going to happen, and they told me I was crazy." (García Marquez, u.d.) http://www.fadu.uba.ar/post/405-171-algo-muy-grave-va-a-suceder-en-este-pueblo-gabriel-garca-marquez.

We know that beliefs exist, and that there are some that have a more adaptive role and others that are more limiting. Both types of beliefs, together with our expectations and the expectations that others have about us, determine the way we behave in the world and with others.

Self-fulfilling prophecy was defined by Rovira (2006) as a psychological phenomenon in which a subjects' expectations and beliefs about something or someone lead to the expected result. Beliefs affects behavior in such a way that they tend to confirm the result.

In the words of the sociologist Robert K. Merton (1948): "Self-fulfilling prophecy starts out with a false definition of a situation, which triggers a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true" (p. 197).

The author discovered that this belief, although it began without basis, has a decisive influence on behavior, which makes the inaccurate truth perpetuate the error and leads a person's behaviors to fulfill the belief they hold. If we are convinced that we will not be successful in an activity, it is very possible that our actions will be erroneous, which leads our belief to modify our behavior until it confirms the expected result of failure.

It must be noted that we cannot speak of self-fulfilling prophecy unless behavior is affected by expectations (Sánchez Gómez, 2014). It is also not a prophecy if the expectation is based on objective facts, that is, if an athlete predicts that they will be slow in a race, and they expect this because they know that their times tend to be longer over longer distances. This is not a self-fulfilling prophecy; instead, the facts match reality. We could help this same athlete create a new expectation: to be quicker in the 400m dash. With this, we will increase the likelihood that this athlete will perform better than before.

> *"Watch your thoughts, for they will become your words.*
> *Watch your words, for they will become your actions.*
> *Watch your actions, for they will become your habits.*
> *Watch your habits, for they will become your destiny."*
> *(Gandhi, 1964, p. 87)*

A little Greek mythology can help to explain the origins of the term **Pygmalion effect**, a concept directly related to self-fulfilling prophecy. Ovid **(I a. C**) describes a sculptor named Pygmalion who lived on a Greek island and fell in love with one of the statues he created, Galatea. He was so infatuated that he prayed to the gods to make Galatea a flesh and blood woman. The goddess Aphrodite granted Pygmalion's desire and he then married Galatea; their daughter Paphos was born as a result of their love.

This effect has been studied in numerous environments:

- In childhood (Brophy & Good, 1990; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).
- In school-age or university years.
- In military environments.
- In sports.

The importance of self-fulfilling prophecy, in the case of young athletes, goes back to the fact that the expectations of the sports professionals who work with them are crucial for and in their development. They must be careful not to label or categorize athletes, since each label carries expectations and beliefs that influence the development of self-concept and self-esteem based on what the adult sees in the young athlete. If we have a player whom we have labeled as "absent-minded," their performance is much more likely to be poor and more erratic.

Changing and modifying prophecies about others is complicated but not impossible. We must be careful what expectations we have about others that may alter their life trajectory and learn to break away from beliefs that limit their behavior and performance, finding other beliefs that favor learning and achievement.

Have you ever not chosen a subject because, since you were young, you heard your parents say that they were not good at it? How many of you have practiced a new sport with the idea that "I am not good at aquatic sports?" Think for a moment: is there anything you did not do because you thought you were not good enough? Where did this belief come from?

> "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right" (Ford, H. u.d, p. 72).

Let's continue learning facts about the Pygmalion effect:

In the 1970s, researchers Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) carried out an experiment in an academic environment, where they were able to

demonstrate how **self-fulfilling prophecy** exerts its influence, due to the expectations that teachers project onto the performance of their students.

The study consisted of the researchers giving teachers information about the intelligence level of the students in their classes (the teachers did not know that this information was false). They told some teachers that their students had a low IQ, and others that the students were brilliant.

The results they found were as follows: in the case of the high IQ group, the teachers acted with initiative. Their activities were varied and challenging; they encouraged students to find the correct answer. Thus, the teachers' expectations of the students were met and performance was high. The same thing occurred in the case of the class with the low IQ, but it confirmed the expectation of failure. The teachers did not spend as much time developing interesting classes. They did not find new alternatives for learning. They did not encourage the students. Thus, the students' results decreased.

The intention of the experiment was to provide falsified information to the teachers, creating certain expectations about higher scoring children to see if the teachers' view of the students would influence how they behaved towards them. This "false" difference between the children, which at first only existed for the teachers, became a reality, since the teachers dedicated more time and resources to the "good students", helping to improve their academic performance. On the other hand, teachers did not promote or encourage the "bad students."

In the example of the Rosenthal and Jacobson experiment, the Pygmalion effect occurs for both negative and positive expectations. Therefore, using self-fulfilling prophecy to open up a world of possibilities and challenges for our athletes is an essential part of our practice.

> "Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."
> (Covey. 2003, p. 184)

The Pygmalion effect in sport

This effect has been studied in terms of its relationship to athletic motivation and performance. Let's summarize the sequences produced by this effect (Brophy, 1983 and Horn, 1985):

1) 1.- Trainers generate a series of expectations and beliefs about athletes based on age, constitution, gender, race, past performance, trajectory, category, etc. (Brophy, 1983 in Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010). Example: "Pedro, at 1.85m in height and age 13, has enormous capabilities; this season, he will be one of the best on the team."

2) 2.- The trainer modifies his behavior toward the athlete according to the expectation that he has generated regarding the player (Muniain, u.d.). Example: the coach constantly applauds Pedro's good work; he encourages him when he makes a mistake and gives him instructions on how to fix it.

3) 3.- When the expectation has modified the coach's actual behavior, this may also impact the athlete's performance. Example: Pedro is motivated by his progress. He sees that his coach trusts him and that he gives him confidence and security. Thus, he makes decisions in matches and takes risks with his actions. When he makes a mistake, he tries again without a fear of failure.

4) 4.- The expectation of the coach is confirmed by the athlete's execution. Example: Pedro is the best scorer on the team.

We can classify the Pygmalion effect into two categories:

- Positive Pygmalion: this positively impacts the behavior of the person for whom the positive expectation is generated. For example, the coach that instills the confidence he has that the athlete will successfully perform a jump, one which the athlete practiced extensively and successfully in training.

  Sometimes an athlete does not trust in their chances or preparation, whether due to previous experience, the demands they place on themselves, etc. The fact that there is someone who encourages them or communicates that they can do it or that they have faith in them – in their potential – opens up an avenue for the athlete to feel safe.

People who have positive expectations about other people generate a favorable socio-emotional atmosphere in the group they interact with. They are characterized as giving more information, quality feedback, and offering new opportunities (Merton, R. 1995). Individuals feel that they are in an atmosphere of trust and security and demonstrate a higher level of self-esteem.

- Negative Pygmalion, also known as the **Golem effect**, has the opposite effect from positive Pygmalion effect. If a coach projects a low expectation for an athlete, it leads to a decrease in performance (Babad, Inbar, & Rosenthal, 1982). When this occurs, the ability to improve decreases, fear of failure increases, and self-esteem levels decrease, which causes athletes to avoid decision-making situations. Initiative and creativity also decline, which then impact athletes' motivation and the their likelihood of giving up.

> *Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.*
> *(Einstein, A., u.d.).*

The Golem effect has been studied in less depth given the ethical and social implications that could result from implementing this type of experiment, due to the potential for negative behavior. This leads us to reflect on the importance of working with coaches on preventing and avoiding negative expectations for their athletes (Eden, 2003). It would be interesting to work on forming new expectations that would allow athletes to generate new self-fulfilling prophecies from a positive point of view (Wilkins,1976; Hawes, 2005; Wilkins, 1976; Stroh et al, 2008, in Castillo Echeverria, 2014).

We want to emphasize that having a certain expectation will not always significantly affect an athlete's performance, since two variables must be considered: the Pygmalion expectation (which is the person generating the expectation); and secondly, the athlete's expectations.

In relation to the expectations of the subject himself, there is another effect: the Galatea effect – remember that Galatea was the sculpture that Pygmalion created and fell in love with, who was transformed into a flesh-and-blood woman and who married Pygmalion (David & Eden, 2000). This effect is a self-fulfilling prophecy in itself, in which the subject has his own expectations about his performance. Thus, self-fulfilling prophecy and the Galatea effect are differentiated by who is creating the expectations. In the first case it is Pygmalion, and in the second, it is the subject herself. Neither are exclusive; rather, it could be said that the personal expectations of the subject may favor the expectations that the other person places on them.

If a player shows and expresses confidence and security when shooting a penalty, the coach can foster this security by projecting expectations of success on the player.
In order to have a stimulating effect, both expectations must be aligned, since if they were different, they would be in conflict.

In conclusion, there are a number of recommendations for coaches to keep in mind.

- Avoid limiting beliefs about the athletes with whom we work.
- Generate an environment of trust, provide an ideal atmosphere for learning, in addition to strengthening the commitment to the practice of sports.
- By motivating and trusting in the athletes we train, performance is more likely to improve. It has been demonstrated that the trust that others have in us will generate confidence and strength and make athletes feel more capable of reaching their objectives. However, athletes must also have confidence in themselves and have expectations of success for their performance.
- In order for the projected expectations to be attainable, they must be realistic and possible.
- Opportunity for response: the more positive expectations there are toward athletes, the more this will encourage possibilities for action on their part.
- Reinforce the performance of the athletes (correct errors and praise good tendencies and attitudes). (Crowe, 1977; Rothbard, Dalfen, & Barrett, 1971; Willis, 1972, Martinek & Johnson, 1979).
- Non-verbal communication: we are often unaware of how and what we communicate, so we have to take care to ensure our body language

does not contradict what we are trying to express (asking players to be "calm" when we are yelling and motioning from the sidelines; saying "nothing is wrong with failing," when your brow is furrowed and you have an irritated look on your face). Therefore, it is not just our instructions, emotions, opinions, etc. that are communicated to our athletes; we also demonstrate our expectations through our non-verbal communication.

- Take time and have patience for changes to occur.

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