

# Module 3. Psychology Applied to Sports Management



Welcome to the module on Psychology Applied to Sports Management.

As you know, your position, functions, and roles require a 360° perspective. For that reason, in this module, we will explore the psychological competencies you can work on, develop, and consider to achieve good performance in management. This applies both to yourself and to better understand others so you can apply it in your day-to-day work.


When working with people, whether in individual interactions or as a point of reference in a team, it is important to know how to lead, interact, understand, manage, and connect with them. Your functions also involve planning, decision-making, negotiation skills, and, above all, communication. You must keep updated, evolve constantly, and, of course, manage yourself in light of all these functions and many more. Therefore, the psychological variables we will work on are the following:

1. Attitude.
2. Time management.
3. Communication.
4. Leading people and teamwork.


5. Decision-making.
6. Self-confidence and trust in your team.
7. Pressure management.
8. Values.

Some points will be longer than others, depending on their content. Still, all of these are important. It is important to emphasise that, often, depending on our individual needs or challenges, there are topics that interest us more than others, and that is okay. What matters is to know, understand, learn, be aware, and then choose where you think you should focus your attention the most. Do not try to work on everything at once; that can be exhausting, overly ambitious, and frustrating. Take it step by step, and when you have worked sufficiently on one competence, then you can move on to the next.

You will see that within the points, you will find questions and exercises to reflect on and work on that competence. I encourage you to dedicate some time to them because, just as in sports, and especially in football, psychological variables can also be trained.

 **Unit 3.1 Attitude**

 **Unit 3.2 Time management**


 **Unit 3.3 Communication**

 **Unit 3.4 Leading people and teamwork**

 **Unit 3.5 Decision-making**

 **Unit 3.6 Self-confidence and trust in your team**

 **Unit 3.7 Pressure management**

 **Unit 3.8 Values**

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## Unit 3.1 Attitude

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To you, the sports manager, why are you here? What drives you? The engine that moves us as individuals is our sense of purpose, our intrinsic motivation. Having a "reason." So, to begin, I invite you to answer this question: What is the meaning of your work? Why do you enjoy it? What motivates you to get involved? Is it because you enjoy it? Is it because you excel at it? What are you good at? Take a few minutes to think about your "reason."

### **3.1.1 Flow - Enjoyment - Performance**

The state of flow in psychology refers to when we are engaged in a task or activity and become one with the moment. We immerse ourselves in what we are doing, focusing all five senses on that activity, even losing track of time.

There is a direct relationship between the state of flow and the enjoyment we experience in that state, as well as our ability to pay attention and focus on the present, which also impacts effectiveness, performance, and improvement of results. In other words, when we

enjoy and activate our talent—each one their own—we enter a state of flow. And as we know, everything we enjoy and are passionate about generates higher levels of performance.

The author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) studied the nine factors that influence and are involved in the flow state. These are:

- Having clear goals. Goals act as a compass. If we have not thought about or defined them, we do not know where we are going.
- A high level of concentration. When we focus on a task and feel concentrated, we achieve a good level of performance.
- The feeling of security. Insecurity is an enemy of the flow state. When we feel insecure, we cannot flow because the mind focuses more on thinking: “I do not know if I can do it, if I know how to do it, if I have enough resources.”
- Loss of the sense of time. When we do what we love, we become so absorbed that we lose track of time. This is a positive sign, meaning we are connecting with our strengths and talents.
- Receiving clear and immediate feedback. Knowing what we are good at reinforces our confidence. Therefore, this type of feedback helps us strengthen it.
- Balance between the level of personal abilities and the level of challenges to overcome. This point is important to consider

because if we feel capable but are overwhelmed by the level of challenges, or if we simply do not feel capable, this can lead to a state of block.

- Feeling in control of the activity. Feeling that we control the activity, not the activity controlling us.
- The activity should be rewarding, and we should feel absorbed by it. Being absorbed does not mean being overwhelmed by the task, but rather flowing with it.
- High degree of identification, not paying attention to anything unrelated to the activity. In line with concentration, this involves focusing on the task at hand.

### **Exercise**

Let's continue with the exercise presented at the beginning of this section. Reflect on this: What makes me feel good in my work? What part do I enjoy the most?

The goal of answering these questions and identifying your "reason" and the aspects you enjoy or excel at in your work is that, whether things are going well or not, you can remember why (related to enjoyment) you do this. It serves as a driving force when things are going well and as an anchor or guide when things are not as we would like, and we need a push.

## **The Psychological Triad**

Once we have seen the importance of identifying our sense of purpose, let's move on to a basic concept in psychology: the psychological triad. Understanding how we function as individuals will not only help us understand ourselves but also others.

What does the triad consist of? Thoughts (internal dialogue and self-instructions), emotions (the driving force), and behaviour (actions).

(FC BARCELONA INNOVATION HUB TEAM, PLEASE DRAW A TRIANGLE IF POSSIBLE TO MAKE IT MORE VISUAL, LABELLING EACH VERTEX WITH ONE OF THE PARTS).

What we tell ourselves conditions how we feel, which in turn affects our energy levels and behaviour. This can happen for better or worse. Each part influences the others. In other words, whether you intervene in thoughts, change behaviour, or experience a shift in mood, it will impact the rest of the parts. For example, if you detect that you are having a negative internal dialogue that is causing insecurity and indecision, trying to modify it will increase your confidence, leading you to make decisions. Thus, by changing your thoughts, you also end up modifying your emotions and behaviour. Another example: if you are having a bad day, feeling sad, and stuck in your office with negative thoughts on repeat, if you choose to go

out and exercise because it benefits you, that action will make you feel better and help you break the cycle. In this case, by changing your behaviour, you have also managed to modify your emotions and thoughts.

Why is it important to work on the psychological triad? Let's look at some examples of how when starting from the same base situation reality can change depending on how our triad is set.

Situation: You have to meet with the board of directors to manage a problem that has arisen, and you are nervous about how to approach it.



Example:

T (internal dialogue): I am prepared; I have handled similar situations well before; let's do this. —> E: feeling more confident, energised, connected to my strengths. —> B: I will trust myself more, act from my strengths, remember what I have done well in similar situations, and focus on solutions.



Example:

T: I am not going to measure up; I will not manage this well; I will lose credibility. —> E: feeling insecure, fearful, anxious, shrinking, doubting myself. —> B: I will not dare to contribute out of fear of failing or making mistakes; I will not concentrate; I will doubt myself, focus on deficiencies, and will not present good ideas that have worked for me before. Under pressure, I will crumble and let it define me.

Your reality changes based on how you frame it. Do you agree?

When we work on the thought part in both situations, we are not talking about positive or negative thinking, or pleasant or unpleasant thoughts, but rather useful or useless thinking. That is the appropriate classification when distinguishing them. Because an unpleasant thought can be useful, and a pleasant one can be useless. For example, if you are struggling to tackle a task and your thought says, "It does not matter; do not do it," it may seem pleasant at first because you avoid the discomfort of facing it, but it is actually not helping you accomplish what you need to do. Thus, to differentiate between a useful thought and a useless one, ask yourself: Is it useful for me? Does it help me move forward? Or does it hinder me?

Very important: **Managing mistakes and difficulties.** We often assume that if we fail, we should beat ourselves up. We think this is a "responsible" response, but in fact, we are not helping ourselves.

When we criticise ourselves harshly, we inhibit the brain's area responsible for learning and evolving. Moreover, it makes us feel very bad about ourselves. Therefore, treat yourself as you would treat someone you care about.

Ask yourself: Would I say this to someone I appreciate if they were in my situation? What effect might my words have on them? If the answer is that you would not treat them that way, reflect: What would I say to them? And apply that to yourself. The brain can be trained. If you are used to beating yourself up, you have the challenge of starting to treat yourself more fairly. Ultimately, it is about moving forward, right?

Just as psychological work is done with football players to apply on the field, you should also train yourself in useful self-instructions to apply in your day-to-day life. And repeat them as many times as necessary. Eventually, a day will come when it will start to come naturally to you.

### **Exercise**

Think and identify a situation where you believe you had good performance or effective management, and also consider one where you think you had poor management or performance.

Once you have identified them, note:

What kind of thoughts did I have in the first situation? What were my internal dialogue and self-instructions? What about the other situation? How did I feel in each of the situations? How did I act respectively?

To help you with the exercise, you can take the examples we provided above as models.

### **Important Points for a Positive Attitude**

- Focus on the process, not the outcome. Yes, we all want good results, but there are things beyond our control. Focus on what depends on you, what you can influence, and what you can manage. Adjust and review your own expectations and those of the team.
- Feel conviction. If we do not believe in what we are doing, we might unintentionally sabotage it or not be as involved.
- Have commitment. Make an effort and give your best.
- Maintain good self-confidence. And if you do not have it, it can be worked on.
- Embrace freedom. Act autonomously where possible, understanding that we learn from failure and this is part of life. Accepting responsibility means making mistakes. These help us mature and grow. Allow them and trust your intuition.

- Remember where you are going, where you are now, and what you need to do. Help your mind focus on that.
- Be a model of the attitude you want to achieve.
- When planning team sessions, ensure they present challenges, learning opportunities, interest, and variety.
- Appreciate and reinforce commitment, attention, decision-making, and resilience.
- Know how to manage adversities. Create an environment of psychological safety.
- Focus on what adds value. Orient yourself towards the reasons and motivations for success, not for failure. The brain focuses on and finds what it is looking for. Make a realistic yet optimistic interpretation of difficulties.

### **Exercise**

What do I want to improve in my attitude? Score by priorities and choose one.

What will I gain from that change? Connect with the benefits of changing that aspect.

What is limiting me? Identify the aspects that are hindering you.

What can I do to improve? Ask yourself how, when, where, who with, and break it down into small objectives.

What resources will help me (solutions)? For example, look for a phrase that you can remind yourself of when you notice you are not focusing on the change, so you can redirect your focus.

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## Unit 3.2 Time management

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When you hold a position of responsibility, you have several functions and roles to perform. Learning to manage your time and plan effectively is key to feeling that you are efficient in your role.

Points to consider for effective time management:

- Before you start: make a list of the tasks you have, prioritise them (first the urgent, then the important, and finally the rest), and make a realistic estimate of the time you think you will need to invest in each activity. If necessary, make an observation beforehand to ensure that the estimate is appropriate. Also, write down the tasks you can delegate and to whom you will delegate each one.
- Have an agenda to plan in advance. This step is important, so besides making an annual plan, you can save at least a moment each week to carefully plan your days week by week. Also, take into account your personal life and "downtime"; for example, if you are travelling that day, ensure your schedule is realistic. From

the task list you have made, mark what you absolutely need to accomplish each day. Keep in mind the estimate you made earlier to adjust times properly when assigning your schedule.

- Less is more. Try to do one thing at a time whenever possible. Do not be ambitious and try to cover everything. Multitasking, i.e., trying to do several tasks at once, reduces your performance. It makes you less efficient, fatigues your mind, deteriorates cognitive functions, trains your brain for distraction, leads to loss of concentration, wastes time, and slows down the process.
- Make a list of pending tasks and set time limits. There may be tasks or responsibilities that do not need to be done on a specific day but are still on your mind. To organise yourself better, set a date and time so that nothing is left until the last minute.
- Limit distractions and time thieves. Interruptions reduce your focus. Time thieves, such as your phone, also affect you. Make it easy for yourself, and whenever possible, try to remove any elements that may interrupt you while performing tasks that require concentration.
- Practice mindfulness. You can start practising it with meditation or through simple daily activities. If there are elements that help you concentrate, such as music, use them. If you get distracted or lose focus, instead of criticising yourself, remind yourself of an anchor phrase that helps you refocus on the task. For example: "here and now, I return."

- Lower your level of perfectionism. Which tasks do you think you are spending more time on than they actually require? Limit your perfectionism by setting reasonable deadlines, but without aiming for harmful perfectionism.
- Account for the unexpected. Do not fill your agenda to the limit; leave some space for unforeseen events that you may need to manage or attend to.
- Do not forget to leave time for yourself and your personal well-being. If we do not recharge our batteries, they will eventually run out.

### **Exercise**

What aspect of my time management do I want to improve? Set priorities and choose one.

What is limiting me?

What solutions can I apply?

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## Unit 3.3 Communication

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Communication is the foundation of any type of bond or relationship. Communication is not simply about sending a message, but about truly reaching people. Good communication is directly related to success factors, whereas neglecting this psychological aspect is linked to poorer results and performance.

Training this skill is essential to efficiently manage tasks that involve leading or interacting with people. Having good communication is fundamental when it comes to persuading, negotiating, mediating, and leading.

How do you think your communication is? First of all, it is important to be aware of how we communicate because through it, we influence others. Similarly, we must also keep in mind that when interacting with another person, they have their own motives and perspectives, which do not necessarily align with ours. And most importantly, one thing is very clear: it is impossible not to communicate. Even silence conveys a message. When used wisely, it can be a powerful tool to

highlight a message. A brief pause invites the listener to pay closer attention to what you are about to say.

Even if you hold a managerial position, communication is not just about giving orders. You need to know how to connect and how to convey your message. Let's look at the different forms communication should take:

- Self-instructions. It is crucial to train your inner voice with discipline because, as we have seen in the psychological triad, it influences how we act and feel.
- Verbal language. This refers to what we say, but also how we say it. The "how" can affect how the "what" is received. Therefore, we need to focus on saying things correctly, knowing how to behave, and modulating our tone of voice.
- Active listening. For others to want to communicate with us, we must create a trusting environment. This involves showing closeness, maintaining eye contact, listening attentively, showing interest in their needs, not assuming anything, asking questions, clarifying, and verifying.
- Connection. Show empathy towards others, understand how they feel (even if you do not), and build relationships and bonds that create team chemistry.

- Body language. It is not just what we say, but also how we express it with our posture or gestures. If there is no coherence between what we say and how we present ourselves, communication interference occurs, and we convey ambivalence and insecurity.

One thing is what I want to say, another is what I know how to say, and another is what I end up saying. Similarly, one thing is what is heard, another is what is listened to, and another is what is interpreted. Now, let's look at the principles of good communication. Some of them have already been mentioned earlier.

### **Communication Facilitators**

- Plan and think first about what you want to say, what your message is, and prepare it.
- Know and use the person's name. Know and consider their interests. When we feel a personalised approach, we pay more attention.
- Look them in the eye and establish eye contact. Remove distractions.
- Listen carefully. Respect speaking turns, identify the other person's or the team's needs, and create a trusting environment.

- Show open, receptive, and positive body language. Be accessible, approachable, and available. Facilitate contact. Ensure coherence with verbal language.
- Remember that the goal is to connect, not to come out on top.
- Have empathy and show it, taking into account the other person's perspective. Validate their emotions, do not question them.
- Adapt your style to the person in front of you, using the same verbal code. It is important to know who you are dealing with and be on the same communication level, having parallel communication, not from a position of superiority or inferiority. What matters is mutual understanding.
- Have self-control and poise.
- Know how to recognise and reinforce progress, strengths, and so on, so that the other person feels acknowledged.
- When in doubt, ask questions; do not jump to conclusions or make assumptions.
- Allow the recipient to ask questions. Let them contribute, respect silences, and ask for their opinion.
- Highlight key messages.
- If possible, use the powerful tool of humour to connect.
- Consider personality and cultural differences.

One characteristic of teams with negative dynamics, poor results, and declining performance is the decrease in the quantity and quality of communication. Therefore, it is important to preserve this aspect and schedule regular meetings —not only when things go wrong but consistently, as a habit. Care for communication, schedule and plan team or individual meetings and talks. The more feedback and fluency, the better. Additionally, it serves as a constant evaluation tool, essential for knowing where we are, how things are progressing, and reminding ourselves of the purpose—the "reason." Value and recognise strengths, progress, and what works well. Create space to establish relationships based on trust. And be dynamic, monotony is boring. If you plan group sessions, activities, or meetings, ensure they are inspiring, useful, encourage participation, and present achievable challenges. You are there not only to manage and lead but also to facilitate.

We have discussed communication facilitators; now, let's look at the elements that disrupt or break it. By identifying them, we can become more aware, consider them, and try to avoid them.

### **Barriers to Communication**

- Invalidating the other person's emotions and rejecting them.
- Disqualifying or judging the other person's opinion and viewpoint.

- Offering advice nobody requested or doing so when the other person is not ready to receive it.
- Not listening, paying attention to other things while speaking, not maintaining eye contact, interrupting, or changing the topic in the mid of the conversation.
- Labelling negatively, accusing before asking, or interrogating aggressively.
- Assuming the other person already knows what you expect from them, what you want, or has the same level of information and knowledge as you do.
- Disrespect.
- Perceived injustices that have not been discussed, clarified, or resolved.
- Turning communication into a competition of "who's better."
- Personality clashes. Everyone is who they are, and we will not always agree with everyone. It is normal. But when we cannot differentiate this and let it affect us, leading to personal problems in the workplace, it becomes a barrier.
- Differences of opinion that you cannot focus on resolving or finding common ground.
- Role conflicts. When there is uncertainty or lack of clarity in role definitions.

- Misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Not being informed about or unfamiliar with different cultures can lead to misinterpretations and communication conflicts.
- Power struggles. Or, in other words, ego battles.

Another important factor that, if not properly managed, can become a communication barrier is when we have to give someone criticism or negative feedback. Let's keep in mind the important elements for managing such situations in the best possible way.

### **Guidelines for Giving Criticism**

- Try to give it in private. People do not like feeling humiliated in public.
- Choose the right moment. When we feel out of control, whether it is us or others, things will not go well, as we are not in the right frame of mind to talk and reason. Wait for the emotional intensity to subside.
- Start on a positive note, highlighting good things the other person has done, so they feel acknowledged and do not immediately go on the defensive. If you criticise directly, the person may feel attacked and shut down.
- Talk about behaviours, not the person. Labelling someone limits growth and progress. However, understanding that we are not

defined by our behaviours allows for evolution and change without feeling like our identity is threatened.

- Clearly and specifically express the criticism or issue.
- Explain what you expect from the other person, the change you are asking for.
- Ask for the other person's perspective—how they see or experience the situation. Also, check if they understand you and are willing to work on it.
- Work together to establish how that change can be achieved.
- Show empathy and understanding toward the other person.

### **Exercise**

What aspect of my communication do I want to improve? Create a list of specific situations or areas where you struggle to communicate effectively. Set priorities and focus on one at a time.

Create an action plan to work on that aspect. Think about how you want to implement it, in what context, who with, what is limiting you and what resources are important to remember and consider to facilitate the change.

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## Unit 3.4 Leading people and teamwork

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Leading people is a great responsibility that not everyone is equipped for. So, if you are here, it is because you have that talent. People are complex; we have our own sense, emotions, thoughts, dreams, motivations, goals, problems, and difficulties. Leading involves taking all these aspects into account and managing them.

A leader must be someone who generates trust, a credible reference to listen to and follow. Let's look at the general characteristics that are important to consider and work on to be a good leader.

### **Characteristics of a Good Leader**

- They lead by example. They show consistency between what they say, ask for, and do. Good leaders are people of values, living and working in accordance with them. People respect them because they see dedication and effort.
- They are intelligent. But not only in the parameters of intelligence that we commonly know. They are also emotionally and socially

intelligent, which are key in managing people.

- They care about getting to know others, understanding who they are interacting with. They know their interests, characteristics, conditions, motivations, fears, concerns, strengths, weaknesses, factors that help them, and factors that block them. To negotiate, persuade, promote, mediate, and lead, one must first be interested and well-informed about the individuals involved.
- They know how to adapt their leadership style according to the person or people they have to manage, their capabilities, and the moment they are in. They can bring out the best in others.
- Showing interest in others increases and reinforces their commitment, involvement, and satisfaction.
- They exhibit self-control and they are predictors of success in life. They know when to intervene and when not to, what to say, what will help, and what will block progress. They are clear and can be approached with confidence, without needing to interpret their intentions, as they strive for clear communication.
- They are optimistic. They focus on solutions, possibilities, analysing problems, and being resolute.
- They are responsible. Not only with the tasks they need to perform but because they have an internal locus of control. What does that mean? It means they ask themselves what their share of responsibility is in various situations, both in successes and

failures. They do not just shift the blame; they seek those internal factors, both personal and team-related, to assess their responsibility and continue evolving. It is not about being self-critical or critical of others without compassion, as that can block progress, but rather about asking oneself what they did to achieve that success or failure and focusing on what they can control. This applies to reinforcing and solidifying what works and recognising the aspects that need to change. There are many variables beyond our control, and focusing on them is a drain of energy, as we cannot intervene or act on them, no matter how much we might want to. Blaming others weakens and does not help us plan better. Taking responsibility, on the other hand, brings us closer to what we want to achieve.

### **Leadership Styles**

Primarily, we recognise three leadership styles. Depending on who you are as a person, you might feel more comfortable with one than the others. That is okay; it is valid. Knowing oneself includes understanding this type of information. However, when managing people, it is not just about you. It is true that you need to feel comfortable with yourself, but to lead effectively, you need to look beyond that and have the capacity to adapt your leadership style to the individual or group of people in front of you.

That is why it is so important to know people, as we have mentioned at the beginning of this section. Some people thrive under pressure while others freeze and sink. Wasting time trying to change something that does not depend on you is absurd. Therefore, the area where you can intervene is in knowing and adapting, within reasonable limits. How do we get to know people? To begin with, inform yourself and observe. In your role, that observational component is important because the more you fine-tune it, the more information you will obtain. This, in turn, will allow you to create better communication channels.

Next, another method to get to know others, which is simpler, is to ask questions. Take an interest in learning about their motivations, what pressures them, what frustrates and blocks them, and especially which leadership style makes them feel most comfortable and allows for better performance. There are no right or wrong options; there is simply diversity. That is why it is crucial to know how to adapt and choose.

Let's look at the three types of leadership:

- **Authoritarian Style**

In this style, the leader is the one who makes the decisions and does so with little regard for the

opinions of others. They choose the objectives and take on a hierarchically superior role compared to the rest. Others must comply, with little room for autonomy.

In this style, there is a higher tendency for a hostile environment to develop, as it sometimes involves raising one's voice, gesturing more aggressively, or even publicly ridiculing people's mistakes.

An authoritarian style can be useful in situations where decisions do not need to be debated, though it depends on who you are dealing with, as it can create a backlash effect. You need to know when to apply it and who with. Used with the wrong person, it could harm their motivation.

It can also be useful when the person you are leading lacks autonomy and motivation, so you need to set the path, direct, and closely supervise. Or, with people who thrive under this style and find it helps them bring out their best.

- ***Laissez-Faire Style***

Now we move to the other extreme. Laissez-faire means "let do." This is the freest, least structured style. It is a style where people generally manage

themselves. The leader is still a point of reference, but it is the group or team that makes decisions and offers proposals. In this case, the leader plays a secondary role, more of an observer, intervening only occasionally to give their opinion. This style can only be applied when the people you are leading are ready to self-manage; otherwise, it could be harmful, as the group may feel lost, without direction, and with high levels of insecurity and uncertainty.

It can be useful when you have a high level of trust with the people you are leading, people you have already worked with and perhaps even delegated tasks to. In general, it is a good idea to apply this style with autonomous and motivated people, as they are self-driven and do not need the leader's figure as much.

- **Democratic Style**

Lastly, we reach the midpoint of leadership: the democratic style. A participative, dynamic, and respectful style that fosters cohesion. In this case, the group or people you are leading take responsibility, share their opinions, and make proposals. It allows them to feel valued, as everyone's input is considered. The ultimate responsibility for making and executing decisions still

lies with the leader, but it is done after a group consensus process.

This style is useful when the leader's role needs to be clearly defined, but at the same time, the involvement of others is encouraged and valued to increase their level of commitment and engagement and to strengthen the sense of belonging.

It can also be used in situations where people are autonomous but not fully motivated, or vice versa: they are highly motivated, but lack the knowledge, practice, or training to be fully autonomous. It is a good way to strengthen their motivation and autonomy.

When you hold a leadership position, your role implicitly places you above others. You are responsible and hierarchically an important reference point. But leading is not synonymous with commanding and imposing from a superior position; you can lead and organise while being open to the help, information, and resources others can offer. This will enrich and complement your learning experience. All it takes is an attitude of openness, listening, and respect.

## **Exercises**

In this section, we are going to do two exercises.

First, find a leadership style that fits you.

Ask yourself: Which leaders are role models for me? Which ones have impacted me throughout my professional or personal life?

Once you have identified them, think about: How did that person behave? How did they express themselves? What values accompanied and were conveyed by them?

Finally, using those leaders as a reference and considering the points we have discussed in this section, think about which aspects of your leadership you would like to improve and, as we did in previous exercises, create an action plan to implement them.

Second, think about what style the people you lead need.

Use the clues we have seen earlier to ask yourself questions and try to get to know those individuals. Remember, managing people involves knowing them well. Make a list of those you interact with most frequently and rate their level of autonomy and motivation from 0 to 10. This will give you information on which leadership style might be most useful to apply with them.

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## Unit 3.5 Decision-making

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In any leadership position, training in decision-making is essential, as it is a competency inherent to the role. Some decisions will be easy for you to make, while others may be more challenging, even keeping you awake at night on occasion.

Let's consider some points about decision-making:

- In both work and life, it is important not to be reckless. Therefore, applying self-control and reflection, and steering clear of impulsivity, are crucial elements to consider when making decisions. However, if you swing to the other extreme, you might suffer from paralysis due to excessive analysis, which can lead to feeling blocked.
- Excessive demands and focusing more on withdrawals and losses rather than gains can also cause a block.
- Emotions influence our decisions. Feeling happy, being carried away by anger or rage, feeling powerful, or experiencing a lack of sleep can lead to underestimating risks.

- The context surrounding the decision can push us toward one choice or another.
- The more options we have, the harder it is to make a decision.
- Cognitive biases interfere with decision-making. Thus, if we attribute a positive characteristic to a person, it will condition us to view them positively in general: what they do, what they say, what they propose. The same goes for the reverse. We also assign greater value and prestige to products that are more expensive.
- People who are optimistic and focused on seeking solutions are more objective when evaluating data and information and making decisions.

### **Points that Help in Decision-Making**

- Write down all the alternatives and options that come to mind.
- Create a list with an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, both in the short-med term and in the long term.
- Set deadlines. Otherwise, you will postpone that decision. Not deciding is already a decision.
- Remind yourself that every decision involves gains, as well as withdrawals and losses. There is no other way to do it.

- Adjust your expectations and do not wait to feel complete certainty before making the decision. That moment may never come. Without being reckless, there is always a part of risk in decision-making. It is normal to feel insecurity; it is the emotion that helps us remain calm and avoid impulsive decisions.
- Normalise the possibility of making mistakes as part of the decision-making process. You are a person, not a robot. You do not have a crystal ball for the future. Only those who do not decide do not make mistakes.
- Connect with your self-confidence; remember good decisions you have made in the past and also listen to your intuition.

In your role, you also face problems that need to be resolved. In previous sections on communication and leadership, we have covered the aspects related to managing people to apply them to any issues that may arise with them. Now, let's look at a framework with points that can help you mentally structure yourself and proceed to the general problem-solving process.

### **Problem Solving**

- First, identify and define the problem. What is happening, where, when, who is involved, and what hypotheses you have about why you think it is happening. If there are multiple problems, establish a priority order.

- Second, gather as much information and data as possible to help you understand and analyse the problem. If it is a conflict between people involving several parties, consider listening to all versions to better understand what is happening and reach a resolution.
- Third, brainstorm possible solutions. Think and write down all the possible alternatives you can contemplate. Analyse them and, if the situation allows, consult those you trust who can provide an external perspective. Also, utilise learnings from previous situations or similar conflicts.
- Fourth, choose the decision and establish the action plan. It is important to consider the risks and have previously conducted a good analysis and diagnosis of the problem. Divide the action plan into realistic objectives and gather possible solutions that can help resolve the problem. If the decision is not urgent, take your time to avoid rushing.
- Fifth, it is time to implement it. Put into practice the planned action. Apply flexibility if necessary and it can contribute.
- Finally, sixth, perform a control and evaluate the situation. Make an assessment and determine whether the problem has been resolved.

Just as we have seen in the time management section, planning is also important in decision-making. Therefore, as a preventive

measure, I suggest you anticipate possible problems that you know may arise based on your experience and think in advance of possible solutions. This way, if they arise, you will have “your toolkit” of resources and solutions handy, helping you avoid excessive stress and potential blocks.

### **Exercise**

What aspect of my decision-making do I want to improve? Set priorities and choose one.

What aspects are more difficult to me and are limiting me?

What solutions can I apply?

**CONTINUE**

## Unit 3.6 Self-confidence and trust in your team

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Self-Confidence is the ability to believe in yourself and overcome challenges. It also functions similarly when applied to believing in others.

Are you born confident, or do you become confident? Many people believe that confidence is an innate trait, but that is not the case. Like other psychological traits, it can be trained. Various environmental and personal factors can threaten self-confidence. Knowing these can help us prevent and understand what others may be going through. Some of these factors include: making mistakes, injuries, not being selected (in the case of athletes), personal or family issues, unhealthy lifestyle habits, team crises, pressure from fans and the media.

So, how can we work on self-confidence? Because it can be developed. Below, we list different ways to work on it. Though we speak in individual terms, these strategies can also be applied to others, allowing you to build confidence within a team.

## **Points to Work on Self-Confidence**

- Pay attention to labels. It is not 'I am,' it is 'I have.' Labels shape our perceptions, and if they are negative, they hinder personal growth and improvement. Some people may resist change if they feel their identity is threatened, confusing behaviour with who they are. We are open to changing behaviours, not our essence.
- You might not feel confident, but you can act as you do. This can trick your brain. Think of someone you believe has good self-confidence. Ask yourself what they do, how they show confidence, and what you imagine their internal dialogue to be like. Imitate them. This sends signals to your brain and begins to foster confidence.
- Along with the previous point, using body language that expresses security can send messages to your brain that you are more confident than you feel. Stand up straight, maintain eye contact, do not hide your hands, and use a firm tone of voice. And, of course, speak to yourself in terms of solutions.
- The self-knowledge of both your strengths and weaknesses can help you ask yourself important questions. Strengths: What am I good at? What do I like about myself? What do I find easy? Weaknesses: What do I find more challenging? What would I like to improve? Do I know how to improve it? Knowing ourselves means recognising both our strengths and weaknesses, not just

the latter, as we tend to be self-critical. Understanding our strengths is not arrogance; it boosts our self-esteem. Sometimes we do not make changes because we do not know how, not because we do not want to. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses makes you stronger. In teams, sharing these strengths and weaknesses with colleagues enhances group performance. It helps everyone understand where strengths lie, where the weak points are, and how to support one another. It improves cohesion!

- Perform an internal interpretation of achievements. Ask yourself: What have I done to achieve this? What part of it depended on me? What talents and strengths have I used to accomplish it? These are ways to connect with your strengths and the personal contributions you have made to achieve that success. External, uncontrollable factors may have played a role, but do not forget to recognise your own efforts.
- Normalise mistakes If you accept that mistakes are a part of life, you will not fear them as much. Failing means you are trying. Do not focus solely on your mistakes, they do not define you. Pay attention to how you interpret your errors and do not give up just because you failed. If the great inventors of the world had quit at their first failure, how different would our lives be today?
- Perform a positive reinterpretation of matches. When you have played well and won: Celebrate, enjoy, and focus on everything

that worked. When you have played well but lost: Acknowledge that you do not like the result but reinforce that you performed well. Focus on and recognise the positive aspects. When you have played poorly but won: Enjoy the victory but focus on what needs improvement. When you have played poorly and lost: Maintain unity and work together to improve and evolve.

- Ensure consistency between your message, attitude, and actions.
- Be clear about where you are, where you are heading, and what needs to be done to get there. Break it down into small, achievable goals.
- Criticism should be constructive; otherwise, it undermines self-esteem instead of strengthening it.
- Respect other people. In secure relationships, we trust more and allow ourselves to grow more as well.

## **Exercises**

In this section, we are going to do two exercises.

### **First:**

What do I want to improve in my confidence? Score by priorities.

What will I gain from that change?

What is limiting me?

What can I do to improve?

Resources that will help me (solutions).

**Second:**

Let's create a "success journal" Make a list of all the successes you consider you have had in your life (they do not necessarily have to be related to achievements or trophies; they can be anything you personally consider a success. For example, the day you made a decision about a signing after much deliberation and it turned out to be the right choice.)

Once you have them, think about what you did to achieve those successes. This way, you can attribute them to your internal values and relate them to your strengths.

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## Unit 3.7 Pressure management

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Pressure turns into demands when it requires a person to deliver results that do not always depend on them. When we find ourselves without the necessary resources to meet a demand, the brain can interpret it as a threat, leading to mental blocks, anxiety, and high levels of discomfort.

Additionally, it is important to differentiate between the implicit pressure that comes with high-performance sports and its management at all levels, from the unnecessary pressure we put on ourselves, which becomes a barrier.

Pressure can arise from various sources, but primarily from the perception and interpretation of the inherent demands in your position, the club's expectations, external pressure (including fans and media), and results. When things go wrong, you might experience the fear of not measuring up, losing your job, being negatively evaluated, and receiving criticism. You might even doubt your worth as a person if your self-confidence is not well developed.

Let's learn to identify some of the different causes that can generate pressure:

- Having unrealistic expectations and demanding too much from yourself. Irrational beliefs and ideas about yourself. Prejudices and trying to avoid making mistakes.
- Basing your self-worth and confidence on outcomes.
- Taking responsibility for things that do not depend on you, blaming yourself, and feeling constantly frustrated.
- Unrealistic demands or expectations of pace and timing.
- Being addressed aggressively in communication.
- Feeling that the tasks you need to perform require more resources than you currently feel you have.
- Stress, lack of sleep, and being in a constant state of apathy.
- External pressures from the environment (club, family, fans, media, etc.).

### **A Powerful Tool: The Force of Expectations**

As the philosopher Goethe once said (1785): "Treat a person as they are, and they will remain what they are. Treat them as they could be, and they will become what they should be."

This aligns with the Pygmalion effect in psychology: What we expect from others, whether positive or negative, influences how we treat them. If you expect good things, the person will feel that you trust them, which increases the likelihood they will strive to achieve the good things you expect. The same applies to negative expectations.

Another important psychological phenomenon is the self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you are not capable, you will act accordingly, putting in less effort, missing opportunities, and ultimately reinforcing the initial belief of "I am not capable." But it does not confirm an absolute truth—it is the belief that sabotages you, making the prophecy come true. We must be mindful, as unchecked fears can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies.

Now that we understand the power of expectations, it is important not to go to the opposite extreme. Extremely high expectations or the ones perceived unreachable create pressure, cause blocks, and can have a detrimental effect.

High expectations that do not depend solely on the individual can cause more pressure than enjoyment. It is essential to find balance between visualising and dreaming, without applying unnecessary pressure.

## **How to Manage Pressure**

- Adjust expectations, goals, and times so they motivate rather than overwhelm you.
- Focus on what depends on you; the rest is out of your control and should be set aside.
- Value your progress, the process, and the things you enjoy.
- Train yourself to engage in helpful self-talk, focus on solutions, and avoid self-criticism.
- Pay attention to your emotions; they warn you when there is too much pressure.
- Reduce overactivation with breathing exercises, relaxation, visualisation, or activities that help you regulate yourself.
- Ask yourself if you are acting in line with your values.
- Remember: you are human above all else. While it may be a privilege to hold your position, that does not take away your right to feel bad sometimes. Do not pressure yourself into thinking that because you enjoy your profession or earn a good living, you are not entitled to bad days. Emotions do not understand professions. Allow yourself to be human.

### **Exercise**

What pressures, blocks, or lowers your performance? Identify the possible causes.

What would help you manage that pressure better? Provide solutions and resources that can help you work through it.

**CONTINUE**

## Unit 3.8 Values

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Finally, in this psychology module, though not the least important, let's focus on values. At a personal level, values are our identity. At a professional level, values are our guide, our philosophy, and our focus.

To perform optimally in your role as a manager, it is essential that you understand, connect with, and embody the values of your club. You are one of the key figures responsible for conveying these values.

Moreover, you work with talented individuals, and talent must be nurtured. For it to be a mutual commitment, think about and list the factors that could strengthen the athlete's commitment to the club. Coordinate and work together as a team to achieve the goals you set.

Lastly, beyond the club's values, there are personal values that should always accompany you in your professional role:

- Lead by example. There is nothing more powerful for gaining respect than that.

- Respect. In interactions, communication, and leadership, what you give, comes back.
- Effort, sacrifice, and hard work. The more you invest, the more you will reap.
- Tolerate frustration and embrace mistakes. Only then will you grow and evolve.
- Set your own limits. Beyond the profession, the person you must not fail is yourself.
- Enjoy and do not forget to connect with the purpose that gives meaning to what you do. Reconnecting with your "reason" is reconnecting with yourself.

### **Exercise**

Besides the proposed and established ones, think about your own values and write them down so they can serve as a compass in your journey.

**CONTINUE**

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