



Coaching Para-Sport Athletes

Mental skills that coaches can incorporate with their athletes.

Imagery



Impairment Type + Adaptation

- **Physical:** Match the image to how the athlete performs the sport.
- **Visual:** Most athletes with visual impairments are able to create visual images using their other senses.
- **Intellectual:** Combine imagery with physical practice.

Impairment Type + Adaptation

Physical: Provide longer time to complete pre-competition and pre-performance routines. Account extra time for:

- Transportation
- Accessibility issues
- Equipment organization

Routines



Impairment Type + Adaptation

Physical (Amputee): This can include the whole body or just sections. Let the athlete choose their relaxation script.

Physical (Cerebral Palsy): Only do the relaxation phase. Other relaxation techniques that may be used instead include deep breathing and imagery.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Visual: Prior to progressive muscle relaxation, the athlete can listen to relaxing music, have a poem read to them, or another

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Continued...

Interpersonal Styles



Impairment Type + Adaptation

All: Involvement and supporting independence are crucial for the athletes.

Intellectual: Provide structure and routine, this will help the athletes be comfortable and thriving.

Impairment Type + Adaptation

Physical (e.g. spinal lesion): Adjust yourself to the athlete's level (i.e. sitting or crouching).

Physical (e.g. cerebral palsy): Keep eye contact with the athlete and be patient.

Visual: Determine what methods of communication work best for the athlete

Intellectual: Have the athlete physically demonstrate understanding and repeat instructions back to you, avoid yes and no questions.

Other tips:

- Allow extra time for instructions (repetition, reinforcement)
- Use drawings rather than literacy (e.g. goals)
- Audio record imagery scripts so athletes can use play back

Communication



To Learn More Visit: [Sport Psychology for Coaches](https://sportpsychologyforcoaches.ca)
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