

State Setting



Visualisation

TIMING:	12-25 mins
WHAT:	Mindful Activity
WHEN:	After Training, Before Big Events
WHO:	Group, Individual

SET-UP AND GEAR

- A (relatively) quiet space where you and the team won't be disturbed.
- Can be done on the pitch (as long as it isn't too windy/cold/noisy) or in the changing room.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Players develop skills to help them manage their nerves or challenging emotions.
- Players build their emotional resilience, helping them thrive at big events and performances.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

The following activity is an introduction to state-setting. State-setting is a form of visualisation that can be really helpful for young players. The activity involves players focusing their attention on creating a desired state of mind such as calm, excited, or ready to play.

Activity Outline

2 mins
(set-up) Choose a comfortable space, where you won't be disturbed. Ask your players to sit (can also do it standing) in a relaxed position. Explain that the goal of this activity is to help them to create a positive mindset coming into a big game.

5-20 mins You can use the following as a script to guide the session, but feel free to make it your own, adding in what you think will be helpful.

1. Focus on the breath:

Begin by taking a few deep breaths to centre yourself. Pay attention to each inhale and exhale. Spend the next 60 seconds noticing how you are breathing, whether it's short and fast or long and slow. Work to slow down your breath and focus on this present moment. If you feel comfortable you can close your eyes; otherwise, pick a spot on the ground in front of you to centre your focus.

2. Set your state:

Once you feel nice and relaxed, I want you to think back to a time where you felt calm, confident and ready to play*. Trust whatever memory pops up and notice how it feels remembering that time you felt calm, confident, and ready to play*.

Activity Outline (CONTD.)

3. Body Scan:

Notice where in your body you feel that sense of calm, confident, and feeling ready to play*. Starting from your toes, gradually move your attention up through your body, releasing any tension you encounter, and imagine sending that sense of calm, confidence, and readiness to play* to every single part of your body.

4. Visualisation:

Imagine that calm, confident readiness* spreading out to your whole body, up and down your legs, through your shoulders and arms, and even out to your teammates around you. Grow that feeling and double it, maybe even triple it. Now you have this calm, confident, readiness with you whenever you need, and it'll be there for you to tap into when you need it.

5. Positive Affirmations:

You can say to yourself either out loud or inside your head, "I am calm, confident, and ready to play".

6. Back to the present:

Enjoy this feeling, knowing that you can come back to it at any time. Gradually bring your attention back to the room. The same way we started, take the next 60 seconds to take some long slow deep breaths, wiggle your fingers and toes, and slowly open your eyes.

3 mins

Take a few minutes to ask the team how they found the activities. Remind the players that it's okay if they didn't get it straight away; it usually takes a little getting used to.

Optional

You can change calm, confident, and ready to play, to whatever state you feel will help the team/player the most. You could ask your team to pick the words/how they would like to feel for the script.

Tips & Tricks

- Familiarity and practice will make this activity easier over time, so it might be a good idea to do it a number of times, 2-3 weeks out from a big game, event, or competition.
- Once your players get familiar with state-setting for big games and events, you can start using it in other areas too, such as players visualising themselves scoring a goal or winning a race, etc.

PILLAR INSIGHTS

State-setting and visualisation are important tools for players as they enhance mental readiness, focus and motivation. It also gives a sense of control, so if a player is nervous, they know there is something they can do to help.



BIOLOGICAL

Calming the mind through state-setting and slow breathing has a positive physical impact on young players. It can break through the nervous feedback loop that can often crop up before big events and allows them to play to the best of their ability.



PSYCHOLOGICAL

Having a technique where players are able to focus on something positive and influence the narrative around their experience is extremely helpful. This is a transferable skill that can be used outside of sports and performance, i.e. changing schools, exams, etc.