

Job Title

Sports Psychologist

General Overview

Sports psychology focuses on two major areas, understanding the application of psychology to improving motivation and performance. As well as understanding the influence of sport on improving mental health (Cherry, 2014). The main goal is to apply psychology to help athletes reach peak performance on a consistent basis (Public description of sport psychology, 2014). These psychologists provide athletes with counselling to help over-come stress, anxiety or any other variables that are debilitating to performance (Cherry, 2014).

Job duties and responsibilities

Sports psychologists recognize athletes as individuals in need of unique treatment to best meet their specific needs. The enhancement of performance is the key responsibility of a sports psychologist. Performance enhancing strategies focusing on skills such as setting goals, enhancing mental performance and effective team work (Sports psychologist, 2014). Professional athletes are forced to deal with high-stress situations on a daily basis. It is the job of the sports psychologist to ensure that an athlete is adequately equipped to deal with these daily stressors (Sports psychologist job description, career as a sports psychologist, salary, employment – definition and nature of the work, education and training requirements, getting the job, 2014). The American Psychology Association identifies helping athletes cope with the pressures of competition, recover from injuries, and maintain an exercise program and a love for sport as the major responsibilities associated with sports psychology (Sport psychologists help professional and amateur athletes, 2014).

Many sports psychologists actively engage in researching the influence negative mental states or emotional situations has on athletic performance (Sports psychologist job description, career as a sports psychologist, salary, employment – definition and nature of the work, education and training requirements, getting the job, 2014).

Typical workday

Typical workdays vary within the field of sports psychology. The environment you work in impacts the workday. Many sport psychologists work for sports teams, whether it be high school, university or club. Government bodies provide sources of employment. Numerous sports psychologists are self-employed working in private practice (Sports psychologist job description, career as a sports psychologist, salary, employment – definition and nature of the work, education and training requirements, getting the job, 2014).

Generalizing a typical workday, sports psychologists will work closely with varying personnel. They often provide counselling to clients, assessing individual needs and creating performance strategies unique to the client (Sports and exercise psychologist, 2014). On any given day a sports psychologist might find themselves working with coaches, nutritionists or physiologists to provide athletes with the best possible care (Sports and exercise psychologist, 2014). Beyond counselling sports psychologists actively engage in workshops and seminars concerning topics such as optimal performance strategies and effective cognitive skills training therapies (Sports and exercise psychologist, 2014).

Educational requirements and other qualifications

To become a sports psychologist an individual needs to attain an undergraduate degree in psychology from an accredited university (Sports psychologist job description, career as a sports psychologist, salary, employment – definition and nature of the work, education and training requirements, getting the job , 2014). Beyond an undergraduate degree an individual needs to a master's degree in clinical or counselling psychology and a PhD in psychology (Sport psychologists help professional and amateur athletes, 2014). Achieving a PhD is not enough for an individual to be able to become a practicing sports psychologist. Individuals who wish to become practicing sports psychologist first need to become licensed by their governing body in control of psychology (Sport psychologists help professional and amateur athletes, 2014). For example, an individual residing in Ontario would need to become licensed under The College of Psychologists of Ontario (Resources, 2014). It is important to note that to practice and provide counselling as a sport psychologist you need to become licensed (Public description of sport psychology, 2014).

Practicing sports psychologists are often certified under a sports psychology board. For example, the AASP (Benefits of certification, 2014) allows certification. Becoming certified is advantageous as it adds credibility to your name leading to more jobs becoming available (Benefits of certification, 2014).

Related skills, interests and abilities

If you have a passion for sport, exercise and psychology then this job may be perfect for you. Coupled with a passion for helping others, advanced problem solving ability and being able to excel in group scenario's you can find success in sport psychology (Sports psychologist, 2014)

Specific skills needed for this job include an understanding of the social, historical, cultural and developmental basis of what sport psychology is. An understanding of the biological aspects of sport and exercise is a complimentary skill beneficial to this position (Public description of sport psychology, 2014). An ability to encourage active participation is useful when urging clients to engage performance strategies. An understanding and skill for counselling is a vitally important skill (Public description of sport psychology, 2014). Specific skills used by sports psychologists most important to this job are unique to psychology. These are the effective ability to apply cognitive and behavioural training strategies, counselling and clinical intervention methods and knowledge to be able to consult and train (Public description of sport psychology, 2014).

Relevance of a psychology undergraduate degree

Perhaps the most important contributing factor of an undergraduate degree in psychology is the foundation that it builds. It is what allows you to pursue post-graduate studies (Sports psychology career information and education requirements, n.d.). An undergraduate degree in psychology equips you with skills that you will continue to foster throughout graduate studies and throughout your career. The ability to analyse problems and use critical thinking is relevant skill acquired during your undergraduate career that proves useful. During your undergraduate career you begin to develop knowledge concerning the genetic, biological and social influence on behaviour (What can I do with my degree?, 2014). Creating a foundation is the most

influential factor in your future successes. Building a basic understanding of knowledge and creating a platform to reach the graduate level are the two most relevant contributions an undergraduate degree provides you with.

Salary Potential

The following statistics are representative of sports psychology in the United States. Currently available Canadian statistics do not provide specific salaries useful for informational purposes.

Sports psychologists working in applied settings (schools, for teams) have an average salary within the range of \$60, 000 - \$80, 000 per year. When considering those who practice in private settings salary potential varies as rates and charges are unique to the individual (Voelker, 2012)

Job Outlook

Increased demand for sports psychologist can be directly related to the increasing demands being placed on athletes. Athletes are under more pressure than ever to produce at consistently high levels. Growing trends have indicated that individuals are now looking beyond the physical components to athletic performance and placing an emphasis on developing the mental aspect of sports (Voelker, 2012).

Specific growth predictions could not be found unique to sports psychologist. Provided is a growth estimation for psychologists in general to provide some information about the field of psychology as a whole. It is estimated that there will be a combined 77, 000 jobs posting between 2011 and 2020 (Canada's best jobs 2014: psychologist, 2014).

To Apply

To apply for a position as a psychologist you first need to be accepted into the provincial body that governs psychology. To practice as a psychologist you must be licensed. Searching for psychology jobs is similar to many others as you need to seek out employment through various outlets. The CPA (Canadian Psychological Association) website offers various job postings for jobs within psychology. You can also look at the government of Canada job website for other opportunities (Psychology, n.d.).

To Know More

For more information regarding the field of sports psychology please visit:
<http://www.appliedsportpsych.org/>

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