

EMOTION REGULATION IN SPORT

We surveyed competitive youth athletes to study how their emotion regulation influences their sport experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Athletes experience both good and bad emotions during sport (e.g., happiness, excitement, anxiety, anger). Therefore, athletes' ability to control their emotions is important.

People commonly use these two strategies to manage their emotions:

1. **Cognitive reappraisal:** Changing the way you are thinking about the emotional situation (e.g., an athlete who is feeling anxious about the competition is trying to view it as a fun challenge)
2. **Expressive suppression:** Trying not to express emotions (e.g., an athlete feeling angry is trying not to show the anger)

OBJECTIVE

We aimed to study how youth athletes' use of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression relate to their sport experience.

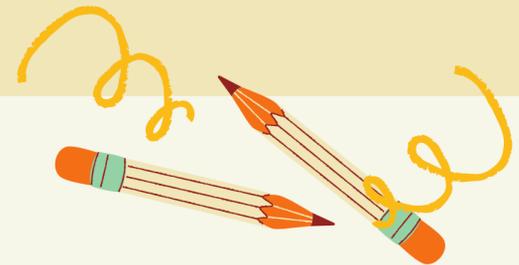
METHODOLOGY

Participants were 449 competitive youth athletes from various sports (e.g., golf, soccer, badminton, baseball, gymnastics, lacrosse, swimming, water polo, etc.). 179 were female, 244 were male, and 2 were non-binary/no-label. We used an online survey that asked about how much they use cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, and about their sport experience (e.g., enjoyment, confidence, whether they want to play next year).

RESULTS 1

Athletes who often tried to think differently about negative situations (using **cognitive appraisal**) had better sport experience (e.g., higher enjoyment, higher confidence).

Athletes who often tried to hide their feelings (using **expressive suppression**) had less positive sport experience (e.g., lower enjoyment, lower confidence).



RESULTS 2

There were **no gender differences** in the results. Male and female athletes were similar in the ways they tried to manage their emotions.

Older athletes, compared to younger athletes, tried harder to hide their emotions.



MAIN TAKEAWAYS

When feeling negative, try to think about the positive aspects of the situation. For example, if you feel nervous, you can think, "I am feeling nervous because my body is getting excited for this game."

Try to express your emotions instead of hiding them. Remember to do this carefully. For example, when you are feeling very strong emotions (e.g., you feel really angry), try to express the emotions by calmly talking to your teammates, coaches, or parents, instead of yelling or being aggressive.

If you are interested in this and other work, try visiting our lab website at: <https://kpe.utoronto.ca/laboratory/sport-performance-psychology-laboratory>. We encourage you to contact us about this study and/or future studies, or to discuss this topic more generally. Once again, we would like to thank you for the time that you spent to help us!

