

Mental strategies of elite Mount Everest climbers

Description

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Abstract: Elite athletes use mental strategies in a wide variety of sports to enhance performance (Cancio, 1993; Orlick & Partington, 1999; Schomer, 1987; Tammen, 1996). High-level athletes have been found to use mental strategies before, during, and after competition (Orlick, 2000). Little research has been conducted to explore the mental strategies used by high altitude climbers. Elite high altitude climbers are a special population of athletes who perform in extremely adverse situations. The question of how these climbers prepare for the climb and what types of mental strategies they use to overcome obstacles on the mountain has not been addressed in the literature. The objectives of this study on the use of mental strategies by elite Mount Everest climbers were twofold: (a) to explore how elite Mount Everest climbers mentally prepared for the climb and (b) to explore the mental strategies they utilized to overcome obstacles on the mountain to successfully reach the summit. The main areas addressed include detailed planning, mental toughness, imagery, focus, short-term goal setting, drawing on past experiences, feeling support from other climbers, belief in personal capacities, and connecting with one's body. There were commonalities among the participants in terms of the application of these strategies but also uniqueness in the way each participant described the various mental strategies. The findings of this study provide valuable information that could help future high altitude climbers reach their goals, as well as expedition leaders and sport psychologists to work more effectively with climbers to prepare them for the climb and the potential obstacles that can hinder success on the mountain.

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getting to a lower and safer altitude, which can be dangerous for tired climbers. On the south side, the ice-fall can crush climbers without notice. Everest is still somewhat of a mystery, even to the climbers. There is no way to make it safe. This study explored the mental strategies used by elite Mount Everest climbers to prepare for and overcome obstacles while climbing the mountain. Individual interviews were carried out with 10 elite climbers who successfully reached the summit of Mount Everest. High altitude climbing differs from many other pursuits because of the constant threat of danger and potential death.