



PÉCSI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM  
ÁLTALÁNOS ORVOSTUDOMÁNYI KAR

# Practice-oriented Sports Medicine- Sport Psychology

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Pécs, February 2026



**What does a sports  
psychologist do?**



# Sport psychology...

- **psychology and sport science field**
- applied science
- perspective:

**sport and personality**- physical and mental well-being, health

**performance optimisation**- achieving high-level performance

- **specifics:** positive approach, time: sensitive factor (e.g. competition vs preparation period), more flexible structure (session length, frequency, relationship, location and circumstances)



# Competencies:

- integrates advanced psychological and sport-science knowledge to **support performance and well-being**
- **conducts assessments, consultation** and **mental skills training** across **individual and team settings**
- **identifies performance-related psychological difficulties** and **refers to clinical specialists if needed**
- works **collaboratively** with **coaches, medical staff and families** within an **interdisciplinary approach**
- applies **ethical principles, clear competence boundaries** and **athlete-centred practice**
- promotes **sustainable development, resilience** and **healthy functioning** throughout the sporting pathway

“Graduates of the programme carry out sport psychology tasks within a range of settings, including sports clubs, student sport associations, national sport federations and national teams.

With the expansion of leisure and recreational sport, their role is also increasing in providing sport psychology services within organisations that offer recreational sporting activities.

The training focuses on typical life situations arising in sporting contexts, which individuals may struggle with on a personal, family, group or organisational level.

**The sport psychology specialist supports individuals in managing the additional stress that emerges in sport, helping them transform it into performance and personal development. Through this process, the specialist contributes to maintaining physical and mental balance, promoting well-being and improving mental health.”**

(ELTE PPK)

**individual session / consultation**



**consultation: staff, coach, and other professionals**

**research**



**education and prevention**



**group sessions**



**rehabilitation**



# Sport psychological preparation

- mental preparation and state are just **as important as physical readiness**
- competition preparation: **to optimise performance, develop mental skills, support athletes and coaches, and develop effective communication**
- main directions include:  
**self-regulation, focus/concentration development, reduction of performance anxiety**

(beyond this: personal life difficulties – competence boundaries: clinical psychologist/psychiatrist for instance, eating disorders, anxiety or mood disorders, PTSD, trauma)

- main areas:  
**attention/concentration, confidence, performance anxiety, stress management, motivation/goals, mental resilience, injury rehabilitation support, relationship and communication within the environment** (club, coach, team)
- managing life events – timing and careful consideration



# Sport psychological assessment

- voluntary application or referral (by a sports federation, coach, sports medicine team)
- assessment parameters:

**cross-sectional psychological status; current mental state; personality functioning; cognitive abilities (e.g. attention, concentration); coping mechanisms**  
**team sports: team dynamics (communication, conflict management, rivalry), roles, cohesion, relationship with the coach**

- *Question: Can the coach be informed about the athlete's results?*
- informed consent, protection of personal rights, adherence to professional and ethical guidelines



# Process of sport psychological work (individual)



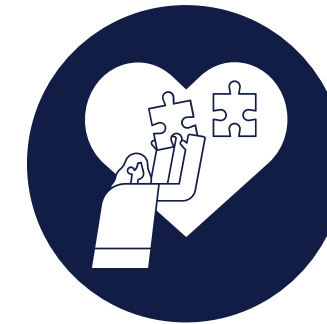
## Application

- voluntary or referred – motivation?



## Assessment

- initial interview, anamnesis (hypothesis)
- selecting relevant psychological assessments (e.g., questionnaires) – one test is never enough
- feedback, goal-setting



## Counselling

- collaborative work between athlete and psychologist
- possible consultation with others
- closure, follow-up

# Sport psychology work with teams or for specific purposes

- indicators: signals from individual work, coach, staff, club
- **group sessions with specific goals and structure** (team dynamics, cohesion, conflict management)
- **prevention, education**- e.g. stress management, burnout, body perception (for athletes/parents/coaches)
- **rehabilitation**- e.g. support injured athlete (processing the psychological experience of injury, supporting during recovery)

*commonly mentioned issues:*

“lack of motivation” (symptom), performance decline, concentration difficulties, team conflict (e.g. rivalry, roles), anxiety, confidence

- **collaboration with other professionals**



# Motivation

- initiating and sustaining behaviour towards a direction
- influences persistence, attention, activation → performance
- hierarchical structure
- extrinsic: driven by external sources (reward, control, expectations from others)
- intrinsic: internal source, activity itself is rewarding
- Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan): autonomy, competence, relatedness
- motivation lies on a continuum – goal is internalisation of external motivation.

# Attention/Concentration

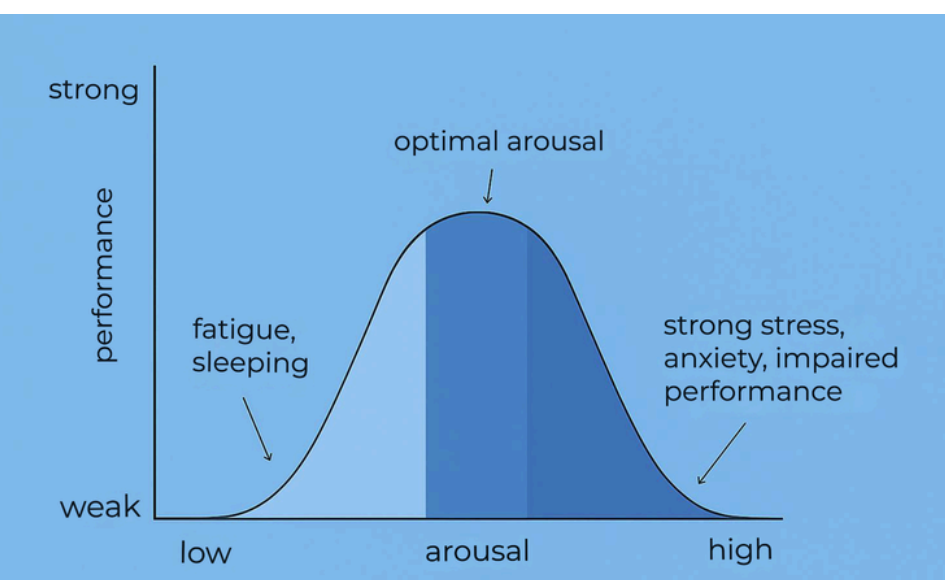
- directing, maintaining and shifting attention
- selecting relevant cues ✓, filtering out distractions ✗
- attention testing methods (e.g. Piéron attention test)
- attentional width: broad / narrow ; direction: internal/ external

# Arousal

- physiological activation level (arousal) ≠ anxiety
- “optimal zone” varies individually
- anxiety: negative emotional state triggered by perceived threat
- cognitive (thoughts) and somatic (physical) symptoms
- state vs trait anxiety

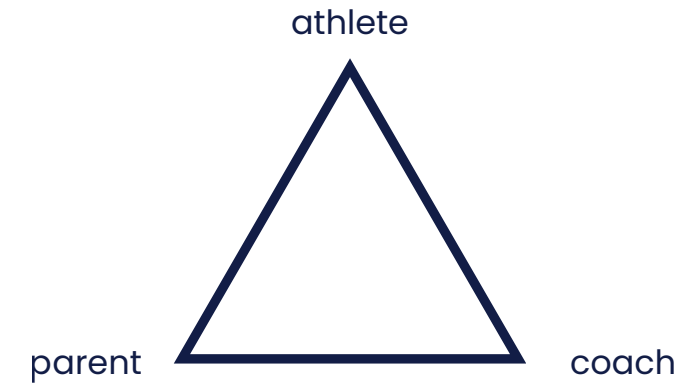
# Confidence

- belief in oneself and one’s abilities
  - relationship to mistakes and setbacks
  - previous experiences
  - underlying beliefs
- influence on mental state, motivation, performance





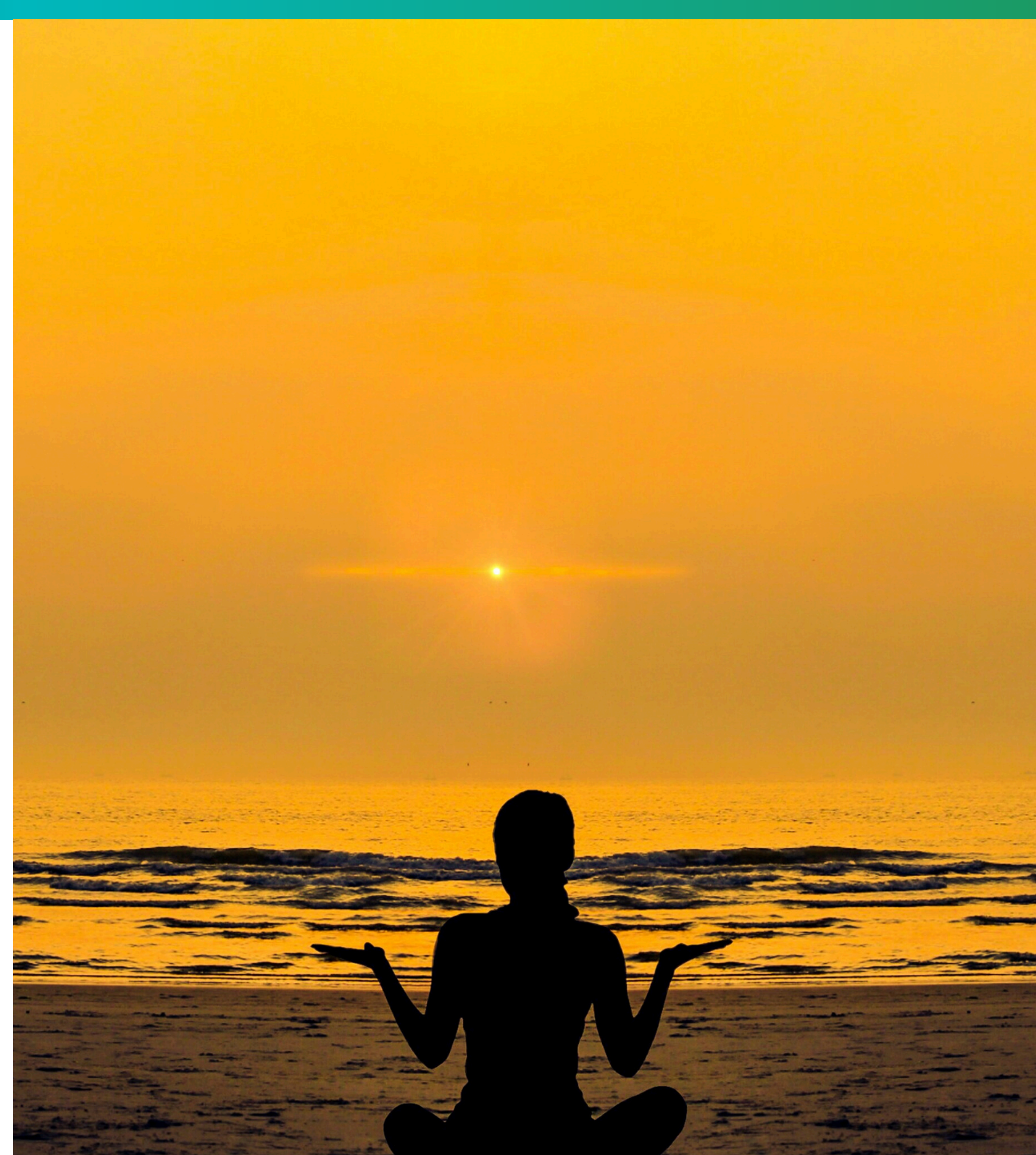
# Children in Sport



- early entry into sport/sporting environments → **increased physical & psychological load**
- multiple sources of pressure and expectations (school, training, competition) → **heightened vulnerability during critical developmental stages**
- **primary motivation: fun, enjoyment, social connection**
- positive feedback & realistic, developmentally appropriate goals
- **REST and recovery are essential**
- increased responsibility for parents, coaches and staff
- safe, supportive environment for healthy development
- psychological screening and prevention

# Frequently used methods include:

- Relaxation techniques (autogenic training, progressive relaxation)
- Breathing techniques
- Mindfulness
- Self-suggestion
- Visualisation, imagery techniques
- CBT techniques (identifying cognitive distortions, reframing)
- Positive self-talk
- Thought-stopping
- Goal-setting





# Thank you for your attention!



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