

# APLICACIÓN DEL MÉTODO DE LAS PALABRAS CLAVE COMO HERRAMIENTA ATENCIONAL

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## APPLICATION OF CUE WORDS METHOD AS A FOCUSING TOOL

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Applied Sport Psychologists have the necessity to modify athlete's thinking and concentration patterns when they suffer any alteration or any lack of performance.

Many of these troubles are caused by negative thoughts or by not to be rightly focused.

Both facts can be corrected in a short term by Cue Words Method. This method is based on the effects of self talk to control the concentration. Using Cue Words make athletes focus on the right stimulus to perform as best as possible, and avoid to focus on bad or negative thoughts that can provoke negative effects like stress, depression, frustration and rage.

Differences between Cue Words and Self Instructions are that Cue Words are used to get conscience about specific technical or tactical aspects of the task, "just in time", just to make athletes focus on them when they need it, in order to perform well in any situation.

To apply correctly the Cue Words Method, Sport Psychologists must have a great knowledge of sport, because all words used make reference to techniques (mechanism of internal perception and execution) or tactics (mechanism of external perception and decisions), depending on athlete's demand or depending on the problematic situation (in practice or in competition).

### 2. FUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS

#### Self talk

Personal thoughts became conscious, but thoughts can be as positive as negative, oriented to the task or not.

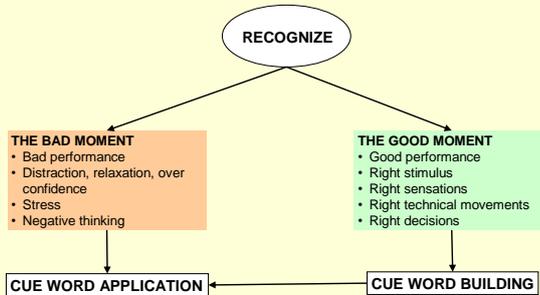
#### Self instruction

Thought about action, task or activity, but instructions can be as general as specific.

#### Cue word

Self instruction (self talked) about the most important (or useful) aspect (technical or tactical) of action, task or activity, to be rightly concentrated, to perform the best possible.

### 3. HOW TO CREATE CUE WORDS



**CUE WORDS CONDITIONS**

- Proposed by oneself
- Short, one or two words
- Positive
- Related on the stimulus that athletes need to focus on
- Not contradictory with the action
- Can be a sound or onomatopoeia

#### DIALOGUE BETWEEN ATHLETE AND PSYCHOLOGIST TO CREATE CUE WORDS

A: When I have to shot (basket), I think I'll fail.  
 P: When you shot, do you want to fail?  
 A: Oh, no! I want to put in, but I always think on the error  
 P: OK. You must change your negative thoughts to positive ones  
 A: Yes, but when I try, when I think "I must score", it doesn't work.  
 P: It's normal, because you are thinking on "what represents for you to score", instead thinking on "how to shot".  
 A: I understand... but how I can do this?  
 P: Well. You know well how you have to shot well. What does your coach tell you about?  
 A: He tells me that I have to flex my knees to do a good jump and at the same time to stretch my arms.  
 P: OK. Tell me now a word that let you remember this.  
 A: I don't understand.  
 P: You have to think on a word that helps you to perform like your coach says.  
 A: A word...  
 P: Yes, a word, a sound... something that if you repeat yourself, it helps you to focus on you have to do.  
 A: Let me think... Maybe... "Spring"?  
 P: A spring is a good idea, because it makes you think on how to flex to jump before. You can use this word or the onomatopoeia...  
 A: What do you mean?  
 P: What sound does a spring...  
 A: Boing!  
 P: Perfect. What do you prefer: "spring" or "boing"?  
 A: I think "Boing" will help me more. Yes: **BOING**.

### 4. CUE WORDS ACTION

When there's danger that athletes think negatively, became distracted or stressed, Cue Words achieve refocus athletes to positive and useful aspects of present action

Self talk	Dangers	Consequences
<b>Kind of thinking:</b> "What represents that is happening"	Relaxation Over confidence Distracted	Low performance by distracting errors
<b>Moment:</b> Past (lamentation) or future (negative prediction)	Stress Blocked	Low performance by precipitation errors
<b>Concentration:</b> Broad Internal (Analysis)	Negative thinking	Low performance by low confidence

### CUE WORDS APPLICATION

Self talk	Consequences
<b>Kind of thinking:</b> "How to do it"	High performance by right concentration
<b>Moment:</b> Present (action)	
<b>Concentration:</b> External Broad (tactical evaluation) External Narrow (execution) Internal Narrow (technical preparation)	

### 5. TRAINING AND APPLICATION PROCESS

- Recognize moments when the combination between the situation and the self talk used provokes bad performance
- Recognize moments of good performance and analysis how athlete is concentrated
- Establish Cue Word based on attentional information of moments of good performance (observing the Cue Words conditions)
- Fix Cue Word to the moments selected, practicing technically (alone or with coach)
- Use of Cue Words in tactical practice with teammates.
- Use of Cue Words during competition simulation.
- Use of Cue Words during low challenge competition.
- Use of Cue Word during medium challenge competition.
- Use of Cue Words during high challenge competition.

#### COMPETITION APPLICATION PROCESS

- It's necessary to have practiced before the use of Cue Words in technical movements and tactical situations
- Analyze competitive situation (by video, observation, scouting, etc.)
- Choose and fix the Cue Words to use in selected moments
- Practice the application of Cue Words during preparation practice or warm up (by simulation or by visualization)

### 6. TESTIMONIES

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Cue Word	Result
TENNIS Kirsty fails his best shot (backhand) a lot in practice	"Can I do this?"	Frustration Angry	"Snap" (Technical)	A great insight when she discovers this resource to refocus
BOXING Guzman is preparing Semi-finals of Spanish Championship	"I must demonstrate that I'm worthy of the classification to European Championship	Nervous	"Provoke - Distance - Break" (Tactical)	Gold Medal and Classified to the European's
CANOING Guillermo, after a good 1 <sup>st</sup> race of World Cup Semi-finals	"I can not fail now" "2 <sup>nd</sup> race must be as the 1 <sup>st</sup> "	False and dogmatic security	One for every door (Technical / Tactical)	Classified to the Final
TENNIS Josh has a poor percentage of his 1 <sup>st</sup> service	"I can not use my serve as I would"	Insecurity Frustration	One for every step: "Grip", "Foot", "Bounce", "Look", "Toss", "Hit" (technical)	Percentage increased Confidence recovered
BASKETBALL Carlos is selected to participate at Spanish Championship with his regional team	"When I have to shot, I think I'll fail"	Insecurity Lack of confidence	"Boing" (Technical)	Best scorer in the Final (19 points)

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