

CRITIQUAL PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY EXPLAINED

What is happening to your body before it matters most, and what to actually do about it.



WHAT'S INSIDE

FIVE PARTS, ONE PAGE EACH

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The exact feelings, named, so you know you are not the only one.

02

Why Your Body Does This

The simple reason your body reacts this way, no science words needed.

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Why the Usual Advice Doesn't Work

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The Breathing Reset

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What to Do With Your Thinking

Where to point your mind when it starts spinning, and what to say to yourself.

05

This goes deeper into the same anxiety reframe from the free Mental Performance Workbook, written straight to you, not about you.

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU

Heart racing. Sweaty palms. Butterflies going off. A bit of sick in your stomach. Your head pounding. You freeze. You cannot move. You cannot think. You do not know what to do. And your thoughts start spinning into worry, one after another.

Heart racing

Sweaty palms

Butterflies

Feeling a bit sick

Head pounding

Frozen, can't move

Can't think straight

Worried thoughts, on repeat



This is what it looks like from the outside. Every one of these kids has felt exactly what's on the list above.

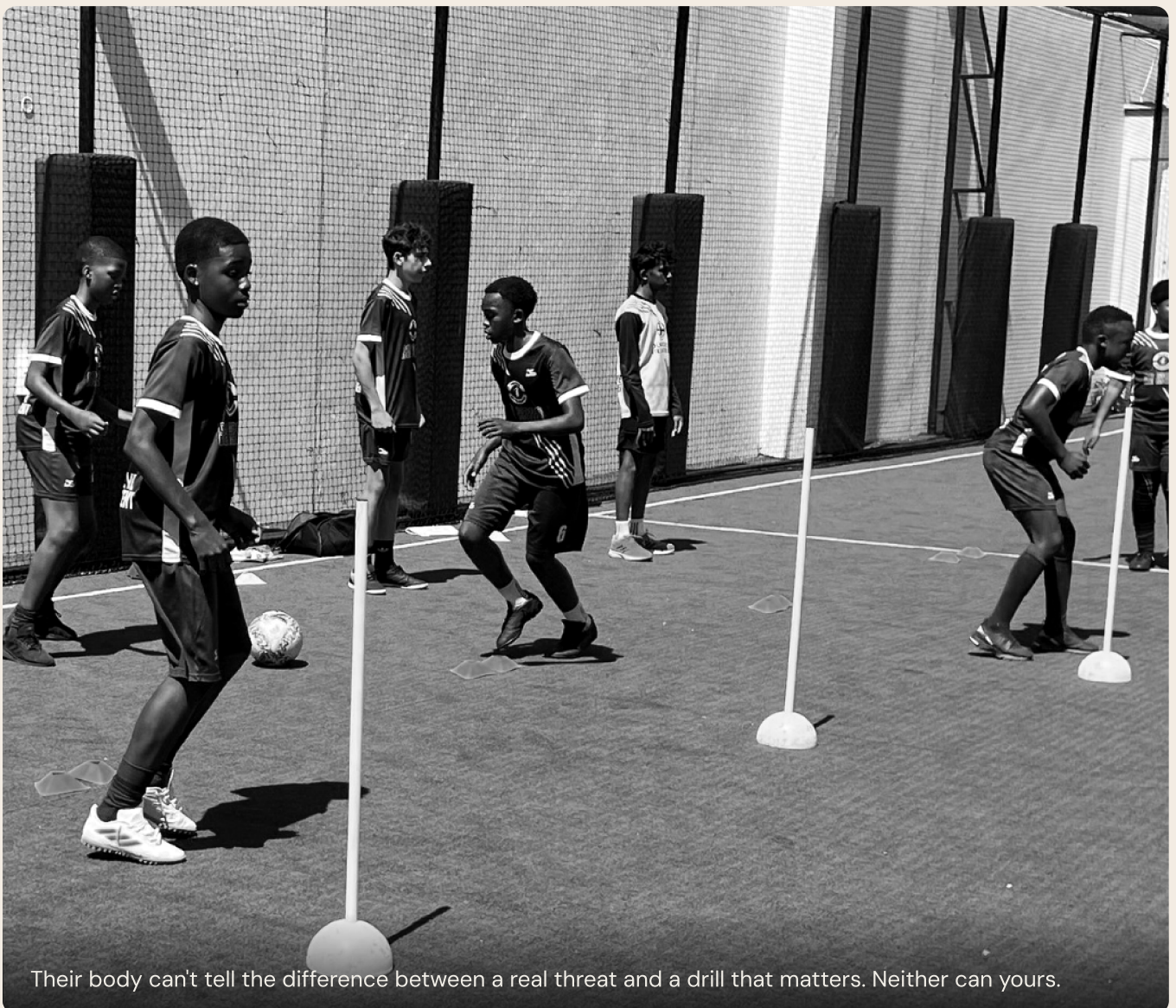
THAT HAS A NAME. IT IS PERFORMANCE ANXIETY. IT IS NOT SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU.

WHY YOUR BODY DOES THIS

Your body has an alarm system. It is there to protect you from real danger, like a car pulling out in front of you. The problem is, it cannot tell the difference between real danger and a penalty kick, a free throw, or an exam.

So when the moment matters, the alarm goes off anyway. Your heart speeds up to get you ready to move fast. Your body sends blood to your arms and legs, and pulls it away from the part of your brain that helps you think clearly and remember things. That is why you go blank. That is why you freeze.

All of that happens in under a second, before you even decide anything. It is not you being weak. It is an alarm going off at the wrong time, because nobody has shown it what to actually do instead.



Their body can't tell the difference between a real threat and a drill that matters. Neither can yours.

FREEZING IS NOT WEAKNESS. IT IS AN ALARM THAT WAS NEVER TRAINED.

WHY THE USUAL ADVICE DOESN'T WORK

People mean well. Most of what they say does not actually help in the moment.

01 **"Don't think about it."** Try not thinking about something big. You cannot. The more you try, the more it sticks in your head.

02 **"You've practiced, you'll be fine."** That asks you to trust something you cannot control yet. Under pressure, that is hard to believe.

03 **"Just take a deep breath."** True, but too vague. Breathe how? For how long? Then what? Without the details, it does not work.

FEELINGS DO NOT RESPOND TO ADVICE. THEY RESPOND TO SOMETHING SPECIFIC YOU HAVE PRACTICED.

THE BREATHING RESET

This is the fastest thing that actually works. A slow breath out tells your body the danger has passed, and your heart rate starts to drop. It is not a chill-out tip. It is a reset button for your body.

THE COUNT



Do it right before the moment. Do it again if you freeze halfway through.

One athlete I coach practiced this every day for three weeks. He told me he felt calmer, not just in competition, but at home too. That is not luck. That is training.

NOT A CHILL-OUT TIP. A RESET BUTTON FOR YOUR BODY.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR THINKING

Where to look: when you freeze, your mind jumps straight to the worst thing that could happen. Do not fight that thought. Point your focus somewhere smaller instead: the very next thing in front of you. The next question. The next breath. The next step. Not the result. Just the next thing.

What to say to yourself: the voice in your head during a freeze is often harsh. "I'm going to mess this up." "I'm not good enough." That voice is not just noise, your body listens to it. Swap it for something true instead: "I have done this before." "I am ready for this." "The next one is the one that counts."



This is the exact tool I walk athletes through in session, redirecting attention first, then correcting the voice underneath it.

WHATEVER YOU TELL YOURSELF, YOUR BODY TRIES TO MAKE TRUE.

WHAT COMES NEXT

ONE FREEZE IS NOT A PATTERN. FEELING THIS OFTEN IS.

Everyone freezes sometimes. That is normal. But if this keeps happening, again and again, when it matters most, that is a sign your alarm system needs proper training, not another pep talk.

Critiqua! Performance works with teens, young athletes, and students in Johannesburg, in person and virtually, to build the exact response that holds up when the pressure is real.

I RESPOND PERSONALLY. ALWAYS.

– RISHAAN

