

How to Guarantee a Great Smile on Camera (And Get Into the Mood for Peak Performance)

Description

Do you remember the episode of Friends, where [Chandler couldn't smile](#) for the camera?

That was me on Friday morning. I was getting some new pictures taken and struggling mightily to fake my most sincerest smile. It was rainy outside, my tummy was grumbling for chili cheese omelets and chocolate chip pancakes, and I really didn't feel like getting into a smiley mood.

And then, in an act of desperation, I tried something that optimized my mood for more smiles, and led to a complete transformation in my smiley-ness. In fact, I couldn't *stop* smiling, and there were some pictures in which I was smiling too much (I'll tell you what I did in a moment; it's one of those really simple things that's so obvious once you hear what it is).

What does this have to do with performance?

Researchers have found that one's mood, whether it's anger, confusion, depression, fatigue, tension, and vigor (those are the standard six that sport psychologists have tended to focus on), can enhance or impair performance, making the ability to self-regulate one's mood states an important skill for athletes (and musicians) to develop.

So how exactly do athletes get into the mood?

Mood control

Studies have found that athletes use a *range* of strategies to regulate mood, and that there isn't necessarily a single one-size-fits-all strategy that works in every situation for every athlete. For instance, the strategy that works best for managing anger may not work as effectively for managing fatigue.

Furthermore, while we naturally assume it's better to go from negative emotions to more positive emotions, it's not quite this simple. Some negative emotions, like anger, can facilitate performances for some. And there are some athletes who fail to perform their best when they feel too happy before a big event.

So over time, experienced athletes begin to develop greater self-awareness about which emotional states are most conducive to peak performances, and cultivate a "toolbox" of strategies that help them tweak their emotional state when necessary. Common strategies include:

- Controlling one's thoughts (like thinking about past successes)

- Listening to music (to get pumped up, or inspired, or calm down, etc.)
- Exercising (to increase energy level, reduce stress, manage anxieties)
- Taking a nap
- Changing one's physical location (i.e. getting away from a negative situation, or going to a more energizing or emotionally uplifting place)
- Taking a shower or splashing water on one's face
- Getting outside for some fresh air
- Using relaxation techniques
- Anticipating social situations or other fun plans in the future

Take action

Think of a strategy you could experiment with today to help you get into the mood to practice or perform more effectively. Try it out and see if your chosen strategy works. If so, how does it change your experience of practicing or performing?

Some students have found it helpful to listen to inspiring or relaxing music at various points before an audition or competition (more than one reported using the [Game of Thrones theme song](#)).

Some sales professionals recommend putting a picture of a loved one right above the phone, so that right before you answer the phone or make a phone call, it puts a smile on your face, which changes your phone manner, your tone of voice, and makes it more likely you'll make a good first impression.

Oh, and how did I get myself to smile for the camera? I fired up the YouTube app on my iPhone, cued up some videos of comedians I think are funny, and let it play from my back pocket. The only downside was that the photographer had moments where he was laughing so hard he couldn't keep the camera steady...but that was funny too and led to more smiles.

Question: What are *your* favorite strategies for regulating mood? Share below in the comments...

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Date Created

June 2013