EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

GRIT

SHARINGOALS

THE SYSTEMIC COACHING MANUAL
FOR FOOTBALL COACHES
AROUND THE WORLD

Table of **contents**

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND 3

1.1. Scientific research 3
1.2. Window of opportunities 9
1.3. Correlation with other skills and competencies 10
1.4. Key learnings 11
1.5. From science to practice 12

2. COACHES' BEHAVIOUR 13

2.1. Coaching style 13
2.2. Choice of words 15
2.3. Body language 16

3. TRAINING 17

3.1. Stage 1 (7-8 years) 18
Try again 19
3.2. Stage 2 (9-10 years) 20
pass again 21
3.3. Stage 3 (11-12 years) 22
Master of the feints 23
3.4. Stage 4 (13-14 Years) 24
Under pressure 25
3.5. Stage 5 (15-16 years) 26
Run & compete 27
3.6. Stage 6 (17-18 years) 28
Stay in the game 29

4. REFERENCES 30

Authors:
Sascha Bauer (Germany)

Version:
1.0 - November 2026

© 2026 Football for Worldwide Unity e.V.
Sharing Goals is free to download, print and share.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Scientific research

Grit is what keeps us moving forward when things get difficult. It is the perseverance and determination to maintain effort despite mistakes, failure, pressure, fatigue, or setbacks.

1.1.1. Definition

Perseverance

Perseverance, often intertwined with determination, plays a crucial role not only in personal achievement but also in fostering resilience in various contexts, including education and athletics. Research indicates that individuals who cultivate perseverance are more likely to overcome challenges, as it serves as a buffer against setbacks and enhances emotional control, leading to improved performance outcomes (Román & Revilla, 2021). Moreover, the educational implications of promoting perseverance in students underscore its significance; educators who encourage a growth mindset can help students develop a strong sense of self-efficacy, which is essential for academic success (Hernández et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding the mechanisms behind perseverance can inform strategies that empower individuals to pursue their long-term goals despite obstacles.

Determination

Furthermore, the cultivation of perseverance and determination can be significantly influenced by the surrounding environment, including familial and socio-economic factors. Research has shown that individuals from supportive backgrounds tend to develop a stronger grit, characterized by passion and perseverance for long-term goals, which is essential in navigating challenges effectively (Jandu & Pradhan, 2025). In educational settings, fostering a culture that values effort and resilience can lead to enhanced student motivation and engagement, as self-determined learners are more likely to persist in the face of difficulties (Hernández et al., 2020). This suggests that not only personal traits, but also external influences play a pivotal role in shaping one's ability to maintain focus on long-term objectives, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to developing perseverance across various domains of life.

For simplicity reasons in our competence overview we have decided to name the competence grit.

1.1.2. Scientific Research and Models

Perseverance and determination are fundamental traits that play a crucial role in sports, influencing athletes' ability to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Angela Duckworth's research on grit highlights that sustained effort and passion for long-term goals are essential for success in any field, including athletics (Duckworth et al., 2007). Athletes often encounter setbacks, such as injuries, defeats, or intense competition, and it is their grit that enables them to push through these hurdles and maintain focus on their objectives. Furthermore, the concept of a growth mindset, as developed by Carol Dweck, complements the idea of perseverance in sports.

A growth mindset supports perseverance by encouraging athletes to interpret mistakes and setbacks as opportunities for learning and improvement (Dweck, 2006). Dweck's research emphasises that individuals who believe their abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work are more likely to embrace challenges, learn from criticism, and persist in the face of setbacks (Dweck, 2006). This mindset fosters resilience, encouraging athletes to view failures as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles.

Research in football players shows a strong relationship between passion and grit, suggesting that passion directs athletes toward a meaningful goal while perseverance sustains effort toward that goal over time (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). In the competitive world of sports, the interplay between perseverance and a growth mindset can lead to remarkable achievements. Athletes who cultivate these traits not only enhance their performance but also inspire those around them, creating a culture of determination and support within their teams. Ultimately, the combination of grit and a growth-oriented perspective is vital for athletes striving to reach new heights in their sporting endeavors. This synergy between perseverance and a growth mindset not only benefits individual athletes but also strengthens team dynamics, fostering a collaborative environment that enhances overall performance and success in sports.

Perseverance in Mental Toughness Model

Perseverance in the context of mental toughness is crucial, as it encompasses the ability to maintain effort and commitment despite challenges, reflecting a core aspect of resilience and self-belief (Sorensen et al., 2016).

Moreover, studies indicate that mental toughness significantly correlates with behavioural perseverance, particularly in challenging situations, highlighting its importance in both sports and broader contexts (Gucciardi et al., 2016). Furthermore, understanding the interplay between perseverance and mental toughness can enhance training approaches, ultimately fostering greater resilience in athletes and individuals alike.

This relationship underscores the necessity for targeted interventions that cultivate both perseverance and mental toughness, ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes in various domains. Additionally, fostering a supportive environment that emphasises perseverance can significantly impact athletes' development, enhancing their ability to overcome obstacles and achieve long-term goals (Coutinho et al., 2025). This approach aligns with findings that emphasise the role of grit in sustaining engagement and effort over time, particularly in athletic contexts (Coutinho et al., 2025). Developing strategies that integrate parental support and effective coaching can further enhance perseverance among young athletes (Erina et al., 2023). Incorporating strategies that enhance grit, such as promoting a growth mindset and resilience, can significantly improve perseverance in both educational and athletic contexts (Hwang & Nam, 2021).

Determination in Mental Toughness Model

Determination plays a crucial role in the mental toughness model, serving as a key driver that empowers athletes to pursue their goals despite challenges. It embodies the firmness of purpose and the resolve to achieve specific objectives, making it an essential component of mental resilience. Determination reinforces an athlete's commitment to their goals. According to research by Gucciardi et al. (2015), mental toughness is characterized by a strong commitment to achieving goals, which is fundamentally rooted in determination. This commitment helps athletes maintain focus and direction, even when faced with obstacles.

Determination enables athletes to confront and overcome challenges. In a study by Jones et al. (2002), it was found that athletes with high levels of determination are more likely to persist in the face of adversity, showcasing that their resolve helps them navigate through difficulties that may otherwise derail their progress. Additionally, determination fuels the motivation necessary for athletes to push through tough training sessions and competitions.

According to Clough et al. (2002), mental toughness includes the ability to maintain motivation over prolonged periods, and determination is a key aspect of this sustained effort. Determination as well contributes to an athlete's resilience, allowing them to bounce back from setbacks. Research by Bull et al. (2005) indicates that determined athletes are more likely to exhibit resilience, as their strong sense of purpose helps them recover and refocus after experiencing failures. In summary, determination is fundamental to the mental toughness model as it provides the initial drive to pursue goals, helps athletes overcome challenges, fuels motivation, and fosters resilience. This synergy ultimately empowers athletes to remain focused and steadfast in their quest for excellence. This interconnectedness highlights the importance of cultivating both perseverance and determination in training programs, ensuring athletes are equipped to handle the pressures of competition effectively.

The Role of Perseverance and Determination in the Integrated Model of Talent Development

In the Integrated Model of Talent Development (IMTD), perseverance and self-determination are identified as crucial "development strengths" or psychological attributes that contribute significantly to an athlete's potential. These attributes are part of a broader set of internal qualities that interact with environmental factors to shape an athlete's journey towards elite performance.

The IMTD elucidates the interplay between environmental and psychological factors in the effective development of athletic potential. It introduces core components, including "development strengths" such as perseverance and self-determination (Mills et al., 2022). These are considered essential psychological attributes that, when activated, positively influence optimal performance and adaptive development (Mills et al., 2022). These development strengths are among the 20 attributes (coalesced into five domains) that provide the building blocks for shaping athletes who exhibit the requisite resilience, intelligence, self-management, drive, and fortitude to realize their potential (Mills et al., 2022).

The model emphasises that psychosocial architecture, which is the psychological and social scaffolding around the developing athlete, plays a critical role. This architecture can exert either a positive or negative influence on the development process. Environments that fail to foster positive coach relationships or provide sufficient growth opportunities can undermine an athlete's confidence, passion, and perseverance (Mills et al., 2022).

1.1.3. Impact on performance

Research has shown that both perseverance and determination are vital components in enhancing athletic performance, as they enable athletes to push through challenges and maintain focus on their objectives. Moreover, the integration of perseverance and determination into training regimens can lead to more effective athlete development, fostering a mindset that embraces challenges and promotes long-term success in sports.

Moreover, the role of mental resilience in sports psychology cannot be overstated, as it serves as a crucial foundation for both perseverance and determination. Athletes equipped with strong mental resilience are better able to adapt to the pressures of competition and the emotional challenges that accompany setbacks, thereby enhancing their overall performance (The Key To Sports Psychology: Mental Toughness, 2023). Research in football populations supports the relationship between perseverance-related traits and performance.

Elite football players tend to demonstrate higher levels of grit than younger players, and coaches' evaluations of player competence show moderate associations with players' passion and perseverance (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). This adaptability not only fosters a growth mindset, where challenges are viewed as opportunities for learning, but also reinforces the importance of self-efficacy in achieving long-term goals (Brady & Alleyne, 2017). As such, integrating psychological skill training focused on resilience into athletic programs can significantly bolster an athlete's ability to maintain their determination and perseverance, ultimately leading to sustained success in their sports careers and beyond.

This holistic approach to athlete development emphasises the importance of nurturing mental resilience alongside physical training, ensuring athletes are well-prepared to face both competitive and personal challenges. Therefore, prioritizing the cultivation of mental resilience alongside physical skills is crucial for athletes aiming to achieve their highest potential in competitive environments. This integration of mental resilience training is essential for developing athletes who can effectively manage stress and maintain performance under pressure, ultimately leading to improved outcomes in sports (Sehrawat et al., 2024).

In addition to perseverance and determination, the role of mindset in athletic performance cannot be overstated, as it serves as the foundation upon which these qualities are built.

A growth mindset, characterized by the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, fosters resilience and encourages athletes to view setbacks as opportunities for learning rather than insurmountable obstacles (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). This perspective not only enhances perseverance but also reinforces determination, as athletes with a growth mindset are more likely to remain committed to their goals despite difficulties. Furthermore, the integration of mental skills training that emphasises mindset development can lead to improved coping strategies and emotional regulation, essential components for success in high-pressure situations (The Key To Sports Psychology: Mental Toughness, 2023). By cultivating a supportive environment that nurtures a growth mindset, coaches and parents can significantly influence an athlete's journey, ultimately enhancing their perseverance and determination on the path to excellence.

This highlights the importance of cultivating these psychological traits in athletes to optimize their performance and resilience in competitive environments. This focus on mindset, perseverance, and determination aligns with the growing recognition of psychological factors as critical components of athletic success, underscoring the need for comprehensive training approaches.

A higher CI grit score correlates with better performance, indicating that grittier youth players accumulate more beneficial types of practice (Larkin et al., 2022).

The findings suggest a strong connection between perseverance and determination, often encapsulated in the concept of "grit," and athletic performance. Sustained participation in sports during both childhood and adulthood fosters greater grit, which is essential for success and resilience in athletes (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Perseverance, a key component of grit, refers to the sustained effort and commitment towards long-term goals, while determination reflects the resolve to overcome challenges. Both qualities are crucial for athletes as they navigate the increasing demands of high-level sports (Cobas Román & Bestard, 2021).

The development of volitional qualities - such as perseverance and determination - enables athletes to maintain focus and motivation, particularly when faced with obstacles. The research highlights the necessity of setting clear training objectives to enhance motivation, as a lack of clarity can lead to disengagement (Cobas Román & Bestard, 2021). Moreover, measuring and understanding the constructs of grit, particularly

the components of Consistency of Interest (CI) and Perseverance of Effort (PE), can provide insights into how these traits impact athletic performance (Cazayoux & DeBeliso, 2019). Athletes with higher grit scores tend to engage in more effective practice, leading to improved performance outcomes (Larkin et al., 2022).

Additionally, fostering a supportive training environment that encourages the development of psychological traits, including resilience, can enhance athletes' natural abilities and performance (Humińska-Lisowska, 2024). Psychological interventions, such as mindfulness and cognitive-behavioural strategies, can also optimize athletes' mental states, reinforcing their perseverance and determination during competitions (Humińska-Lisowska, 2024).

In summary, the interplay between perseverance, determination, and performance is evident. Enhancing these traits through targeted training and psychological support can lead to improved athletic outcomes, emphasizing the importance of grit in achieving success in sports.

Other research indicates that grit, encompassing both perseverance and determination, is a critical predictor of athletic success, as it enables athletes to maintain focus and resilience throughout their competitive journeys (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). This underscores the need for coaches and sports psychologists to implement strategies that foster grit, ultimately enhancing athletes' performance and well-being in competitive environments.

1.1.4. Impact on social cohesion

The interplay between individual perseverance and team cohesion is paramount in optimizing athletic performance. Research consistently indicates that athletes who embody personal determination and a strong sense of belonging within their teams are better equipped to face challenges collectively. This synergy fosters an environment of mutual support and resilience, which not only enhances individual performance but also cultivates a culture of perseverance that permeates the team dynamic.

A holistic mindset, as advocated by Sproule et al. (2011), plays a crucial role in this context. By prioritizing both personal growth and collective development, organizations can promote greater social cohesion among athletes. This holistic approach aligns with the understanding that perseverance and determination are not solely individual traits but are significantly influenced by the team environment.

Moreover, Tóth et al. (2024) highlight that different sports yield distinct motivational patterns, with team athletes often driven by competition and social connections. Recognising these motivational drivers allows for tailored programs that enhance social cohesion, which in turn reinforces the determination of each athlete. Community-building initiatives further enhance this dynamic by fostering social recognition and a sense of belonging, thereby strengthening the ties within teams and the broader community.

The development of psychological collectivism, where team members support one another in overcoming obstacles, significantly improves coping abilities and overall performance. Programs designed to cultivate essential qualities such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience - emphasised by Morgan et al. (2019) - are crucial for promoting social inclusion and cohesion. These traits are vital not only for individual success but also for fostering a collective resilience that drives teams forward. Furthermore, understanding personality traits, as suggested by Piepiora (2020), can inform team dynamics and athlete development. By leveraging individual strengths and addressing potential conflicts, teams can enhance their collective performance and social bonds, reinforcing the perseverance and determination necessary for success.

Lastly, the role of leadership within a team context cannot be overlooked. Effective coaching that promotes open communication, trust, and shared goals is pivotal in fostering both individual and collective resilience. Coaches who adopt transformational leadership styles can significantly enhance team cohesion, reinforcing each athlete's commitment to perseverance and determination. In summary, the integration of a holistic approach, tailored motivational strategies, community-building initiatives, and a deep understanding of personality traits creates an environment where perseverance and determination thrive.

By emphasizing these elements, organizations can cultivate a more resilient and cohesive athletic unit, ultimately driving success in competitive sports. This interconnectedness between individual traits and team dynamics highlights the importance of fostering a supportive environment that nurtures perseverance and determination in athletes, ultimately enhancing overall performance.

1.1.5. Correlations with private and family life, academic and work career

The impact of various psychological qualities such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience, and grit on private and family life, as well as academic and work careers, is significant and multifaceted, particularly in fostering perseverance and determination.

In the realm of private and family life, cultivating qualities like self-efficacy and resilience enhances interpersonal relationships and family dynamics, which in turn fosters a supportive environment that encourages perseverance. Programs designed to develop these traits contribute to social inclusion and empower families, especially marginalized youth, to overcome challenges and maintain determination in the face of adversity (Morgan et al., 2019). For instance, sports-based interventions not only enhance employability skills but also promote holistic development, improving resilience and increasing the chances for success across various life domains (Morgan et al., 2019).

In academic settings, structured programs that increase exercise participation among adolescents have been shown to positively impact grit and life satisfaction, both of which are essential for perseverance (Bae et al., 2024). This is particularly vital for addressing the declining life satisfaction among Korean adolescents, who can benefit from targeted support systems that reinforce determination (Bae et al., 2024). The integration of grit into physical activity interventions can enhance student engagement and academic success, suggesting a long-term perspective in teaching practices that encourages perseverance (Rutberg et al., 2020; Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020).

Teachers are encouraged to improve their skills in providing autonomy support, particularly for students with lower resilience, fostering a more conducive learning environment that nurtures determination (Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020).

Moreover, understanding how parental motivational climates influence young athletes' grit can enhance perseverance and long-term engagement in both sports and academics (Coutinho et al., 2025). This underscores the importance of tailored parental involvement, which can significantly impact children's motivation and determination in educational settings.

Gender differences also play a role in the interplay between passion, grit, and mindset, with findings indicating that females exhibit a stronger correlation among these traits compared to males (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). This suggests that educational environments should be adapted to cater to individual interests and strengths to optimize outcomes for all students, thereby reinforcing their perseverance and determination (Sigmundsson et al., 2020).

In the context of work careers, the cultivation of grit and resilience leads to improved employability and career success. The study highlights a moderate significant correlation between grit, mindset, and passion, which can inform interventions aimed at enhancing both academic and professional performance (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). By understanding these relationships, educators and employers can implement strategies that not only support academic achievement but also prepare individuals to demonstrate perseverance and determination in the workforce. Furthermore, research indicates that psychological resilience not only aids in personal growth but also contributes to a greater sense of social connectedness, reinforcing the idea that fostering these traits can lead to healthier, more supportive communities overall (Khan, 2025). This interconnectedness highlights the necessity of fostering perseverance and determination within community support systems, ultimately contributing to enhanced well-being and resilience among individuals and groups alike.

In conclusion, the integration of psychological qualities such as self-efficacy, resilience, grit, and an understanding of gender differences significantly impacts private and family life, as well as academic and work careers. Tailored interventions that address these aspects are essential for fostering success, perseverance, and well-being across various life domains. This interconnectedness highlights the necessity of fostering perseverance and determination within educational, familial, and professional environments to enhance overall well-being and success in various life domains.

1.1.6. Development of grit

Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals and reflects the ability to maintain effort and interest over extended periods despite setbacks or slow progress (Duckworth et al., 2007). Expert performance in sports requires long-term deliberate practice supported by sustained effort and motivation (Ericsson & Pool, 2016).

Regular participation in sports during adulthood is linked to higher levels of grit, suggesting that grit is not a static trait but can evolve (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Research in youth football suggests that players with higher grit levels tend to accumulate more beneficial practice experiences, which contributes to improved skill development (Larkin et al., 2022).

To develop perseverance and determination, particularly in the context of sports and athletic participation, several key conclusions and recommendations emerge from recent research. First, with the right support and adaptive cognitions, athletes are more likely to identify and persistently pursue long-term goals in their sport. This sustained effort towards objectives is a core component of grit (Cormier et al., 2024). Sport participation significantly contributes to the development of grit across the life course, underscoring its importance for individuals of all ages (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022).

Early experiences in organised youth sports can enhance grit, while dropping out can diminish it (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to make positive sport participation experiences more accessible to foster grit development, alongside social and health benefits (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Furthermore, organised youth sport participation serves as a vital pathway to developing grit, suggesting that access to such programs should be increased for individuals of all ages and backgrounds to foster resilience and success (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Special attention should be given to providing targeted support for Black and Hispanic/Latinx individuals, who have reported more positive effects from athletic experiences, indicating that these groups should have enhanced access to organised sports (Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022). Adopting a challenge-based approach can also foster a growth mindset among learners, encouraging them to embrace learning opportunities and persist through setbacks (Sproule et al., 2011).

Importantly, motivational factors for sport persistence do not significantly differ across genders, challenging previous studies that suggested gender-specific motivations (Tóth et al., 2024). This insight implies that training methods and motivational strategies should be designed based on the diverse factors influencing athletes' motivations, including personal development and social experiences (Tóth et al., 2024). Coaches and trainers are encouraged to integrate moral and psychological training into their programs to cultivate well-rounded athletes (Turdimurodov, 2022).

Additionally, understanding the relationship between personality and sports participation can inform strategies for coping with stress in competitive environments, benefiting athletes' mental health (Piepiora, 2020). Schools should empower and engage students in their learning processes to foster long-term interest and promote grit (Rutberg et al., 2020).

Addressing motivational aspects such as self-efficacy and grit is crucial for increasing children's active transportation throughout the year, especially in the face of climatic barriers (Rutberg et al., 2020). Integrating mental training techniques, such as functional imagery training, could help increase youth players' motivation and grit, potentially improving their long-term performance (Mähliß, 2022). Lastly, incorporating the personality trait of grit into training programs could enhance skill development among youth athletes, as grittier players tend to engage in more beneficial practice activities (Larkin et al., 2022).

In summary, fostering perseverance and determination in athletes requires a multifaceted approach that includes increased access to organised sports, psychological and moral training, and tailored motivational strategies, all aimed at developing grit and resilience. This multifaceted approach emphasises the importance of integrating psychological training and supportive environments to cultivate perseverance and determination among athletes, ultimately enhancing their overall performance and resilience in sports.

1.2. Window of opportunities

Unlike some physical abilities that develop within narrow biological sensitive periods, perseverance and determination develop through broader psychological phases linked to cognitive development, motivation, and identity formation. Research shows that persistence grows through repeated experiences of effort, challenge, and recovery from setbacks. Sport provides a particularly powerful environment for this development because young athletes regularly encounter difficult tasks, competition, and long-term improvement processes (Duckworth et al., 2007; Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022).

Developmental psychology suggests that several phases during childhood and adolescence create particularly favourable conditions for strengthening perseverance and determination.

During the early school years, at approximately six to nine, children begin to understand that effort can influence outcomes. Experiences of trying again after mistakes help develop basic persistence and frustration tolerance. At this stage, perseverance grows mainly through repetition, encouragement, and positive feedback for effort. Research on growth mindset shows that when children learn that abilities can improve through practice, they become more willing to persist after setbacks (Dweck, 2006). Supportive environments that reward effort rather than only success can therefore strengthen perseverance during this early developmental phase.

In middle childhood, at approximately nine to twelve, children increasingly recognise the relationship between practice and skill development. They become more capable of sustained effort and begin to compare their abilities with peers. Developmental research suggests that this phase is particularly important for forming beliefs about competence and improvement, which strongly influence long-term perseverance. When young athletes experience that persistence leads to progress, their willingness to continue working toward goals increases significantly (Sigmundsson et al., 2020; Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020).

During early and mid-adolescence, at approximately twelve to sixteen, perseverance becomes increasingly connected to personal motivation and long-term goals. Young people begin to develop stronger personal interests, ambitions, and future aspirations. Their persistence is influenced not only by external encouragement but also by internal motivation and goal commitment.

Studies on grit and academic persistence show that adolescents who develop clear goals and sustained motivation are more likely to maintain effort despite difficulties (Credé et al., 2017; Duckworth et al., 2007).

In late adolescence, at approximately sixteen to eighteen, perseverance becomes closely linked to personal identity and long-term aspirations. Young people become more capable of maintaining effort toward challenging goals despite setbacks, slow progress, or performance pressure. Cognitive development during this stage supports improved self-regulation, planning, and delayed gratification. As a result, perseverance increasingly reflects a stable personal characteristic shaped by previous experiences with challenge and persistence (Duckworth et al., 2007; Nothnagle & Knoester, 2022).

Taken together, this is a long developmental slope rather than a narrow window: each phase builds what the next one depends on.



1.3. Correlation with other skills and competencies



Correlation with Emotional Competencies
Perseverance is closely tied to the other emotional competencies. Motivation decides whether a player returns to a difficult task at all, while goal setting gives effort a reason to continue when the task is unrewarding. Self-confidence lets players keep working at what they believe they can eventually do, and coping with emotions stops frustration after a failure from ending the effort.

Correlation with Physical Skills
Endurance improves only through work a player would rather stop, so persistence and conditioning develop together. Strength gains depend on the final repetitions nobody enjoys. Players who keep working through them build strength that holds up in the last minutes of a match.

Correlation with Technical Abilities
Dribbling and feinting are learned through many failed attempts before the one that works, so each new move depends on continuing after mistakes. Shooting improves through many repetitions, and a player who keeps shooting after practice will improve.

Correlation with Social Competencies
A player who keeps going when the team is behind leads without saying anything. Trust grows when teammates can rely on someone whose effort does not follow the scoreline. Communication also carries perseverance: encouraging a struggling teammate keeps the whole group working when the task gets hard.

Correlation with Cognitive Skills
Persistence creates more solutions, strengthening problem solving. Critical thinking shows when to adapt rather than persist blindly. Decision making under fatigue requires the same balance: staying effective when effort becomes costly.

Correlation with Tactical Principles
Mobility depends on continuing to move and offer when the ball is elsewhere, which is invisible and easy to give up. Defensive unity depends on holding shape when tired, which is where determination becomes tactical. Concentration keeps defenders tracking runners and space for the full game, not only the first half.

1.4. Key learnings

- Perseverance and determination describe the ability to maintain effort and commitment despite mistakes, repeated failure, pressure, fatigue or setbacks.
- Research on grit shows that sustained effort toward long-term goals is a strong predictor of improvement and success in sports, education and other life domains.
- Perseverance is closely connected to a growth mindset. Athletes who believe that abilities can improve through effort are more likely to continue working after mistakes or setbacks.
- Perseverance is not a fixed personality trait. It develops through repeated experiences of effort, challenge and recovery from setbacks.
- Sport provides a powerful environment for developing perseverance because players frequently encounter difficult tasks, competition and long-term improvement processes.
- Experiences where effort leads to visible improvement strengthen athletes' belief that persistence is worthwhile and increase their willingness to continue trying.
- Coaches, parents and teammates strongly influence how players react to mistakes and adversity. Supportive environments that emphasise effort and learning encourage perseverance.
- Training activities that include repeated attempts, difficult tasks and realistic game pressure allow players to practice maintaining effort in challenging situations.
- Positive feedback that recognises effort, persistence and improvement helps players develop confidence in their ability to overcome difficulties.
- Developing perseverance and determination not only supports athletic performance but also prepares young people to face challenges in education, work and personal life.

The research findings on perseverance and determination highlight that persistence develops gradually through repeated experiences of effort, challenge and recovery from setbacks. Football training provides many opportunities to practice these experiences in an age-appropriate way. The following developmental stages translate these scientific insights into practical training activities that help players strengthen perseverance and determination throughout childhood and adolescence.



1.5. From science to practice

Stage 1
7-8 years



Effort and persistence foundations

At this age children begin to understand that effort can influence outcomes, but often react emotionally to mistakes. Losing the ball, missing a shot or making an inaccurate pass may lead to frustration or withdrawal.

Training should help players recognise that mistakes are a natural part of learning and improvement often requires several attempts. Coaches can support this by emphasising effort, encouraging players to try again and creating a positive environment where mistakes are accepted.

Stage 2
9-10 years



Persistence through repetition

Children in this stage begin to understand that improvement requires repeated practice. They are increasingly capable of remaining engaged even when success does not occur immediately.

Football training provides situations where players repeat actions such as passing, dribbling or shooting. These attempts help players experience that persistence can lead to improvement. Coaches should encourage players to continue after unsuccessful attempts and reinforce that sustained effort supports skill development.

Stage 3
11-12 years



Perseverance in skill development

As players become more self-aware, they begin to recognise the connection between effort, practice and improvement. Learning complex football techniques requires patience and repeated attempts and can lead to frustration when progress is slow.

Training can include technical challenges that require persistence and concentration. Coaches can support this by encouraging reflection on progress and highlighting how continued effort and repeated practice lead to improvement despite setbacks.

Stage 4
13-14 years



Determination under pressure

During early adolescence players experience stronger reactions to success and failure and become more aware of expectations.

Training and games increasingly involve pressure, competition and demanding moments, providing opportunities to develop perseverance. Players learn to remain focused and maintain effort when outcomes are uncertain or difficult. Coaches can support this by creating game scenarios that simulate pressure and encouraging players to stay committed and support teammates.

Stage 5
15-16 years



Perseverance despite fatigue

At this stage football becomes more physically and mentally demanding. Players regularly encounter fatigue during intensive training and competitive matches. Maintaining concentration and effort despite exhaustion becomes an important aspect of perseverance.

Training can develop this competence through demanding activities requiring sustained effort. Coaches should help players recognise fatigue and encourage them to continue applying effort while supporting teammates during challenging situations.

Stage 6
17–18 years



Resilience during setbacks

Older adolescents develop a deeper understanding of perseverance and its importance for long-term success. They recognise that setbacks, mistakes and losing situations are inevitable parts of competitive sport.

Players learn to maintain determination when results are unfavourable or progress is slow and take responsibility for encouraging perseverance within the team. Coaches can create match situations requiring constructive responses to setbacks and reinforce resilience and commitment.

2. COACHES' BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Coaching style

2.1.1. Scientific grounding

The development of perseverance and determination in athletes is influenced by several psychological, relational, and environmental factors that shape how individuals respond to challenge, failure, pressure, and long-term effort. Research on grit highlights that sustained commitment toward long-term goals is a key predictor of success in demanding domains such as sport, education, and professional development (Duckworth et al., 2007). In football and other performance environments, perseverance is strengthened when athletes repeatedly experience situations that require effort beyond immediate success, such as technical mastery, tactical pressure, competitive adversity, and fatigue during training and competition.

A first important principle is the recognition of individual differences among athletes. Players differ in their motivations, emotional responses, confidence, and persistence when facing challenge. Coaches who recognise these differences are better able to adapt their support and expectations, thereby strengthening athletes' engagement and willingness to persist in difficult situations (Coutinho et al., 2025; Tóth et al., 2024). This is particularly important in youth development, where perseverance does not emerge in the same way or at the same pace for every player.

A second key factor is autonomy support. Research suggests that when athletes feel that they have some influence over their learning process, their commitment and ownership increase. Encouraging autonomy in training, allowing athletes to express preferences, reflect on their progress, and contribute to aspects of the learning process, can strengthen engagement and persistence over time (Raven & Pels, 2021). From a self-determination perspective, autonomy, competence, and relatedness together support the sustained motivation needed for perseverance and determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In addition, the integration of psychological training into coaching practice is highly relevant. Coaches who understand the mental dimensions of performance can create environments that strengthen grit, resilience, and determination in athletes (Orosz & Mezo, 2015; Sapayev, 2022). This includes helping players interpret setbacks constructively, regulate frustration, and remain focused on effort during demanding moments. Related to this, growth mindset research shows that athletes are more likely to persist when they believe their abilities can improve through practice and learning rather than being fixed from the start (Dweck, 2006). When mistakes are framed as part of development rather than as signs of failure, persistence is more likely to be maintained.

The quality of relationships surrounding the athlete also plays a major role. Supportive relationships between coaches, athletes, parents, and other significant adults help young people develop adaptive beliefs about success, failure, and effort, which are foundational to perseverance (Braun et al., 2024). Research on talent development and youth sport also underlines the importance of psychosocial support and growth opportunities in shaping long-term commitment and resilience. Environments that communicate trust, encouragement, and constructive challenge are more likely to foster determination than environments that emphasise judgment, fear of failure, or immediate results only.

Another important principle concerns long-term orientation and consistency of effort. Perseverance is not simply about trying hard in one moment; it involves maintaining effort and commitment across time. Research suggests that working toward meaningful long-term goals supports sustained engagement, while consistency of interest and effort contributes to continued development despite plateaus or setbacks (Braun et al., 2024; Martínez-Moreno et al., 2021). In football, this long-term perspective is essential because improvement is rarely linear, and athletes regularly encounter moments where progress is slow, difficult, or not immediately visible.

Research also points to the importance of the coach's own effectiveness and development. Intervention programmes aimed at improving coach performance and coaching quality have been shown to strengthen athletes' commitment to sport and to support talent development pathways (Notario-Alonso et al., 2023). This suggests that perseverance is not only an athlete attribute, but also something shaped by the quality of the coaching process. Coaches who are able to create structured, challenging, and supportive environments contribute directly to athletes' willingness to continue investing effort.

Finally, measuring and reflecting on progress is an important aspect of perseverance development. Coaches should pay attention to the dynamic relationship between grit, practice, and skill acquisition, and regularly help athletes reflect on how effort, repetition, and persistence contribute to improvement (Larkin et al., 2022). Such reflection helps players connect everyday struggle with long-term growth and strengthens the understanding that sustained effort is meaningful. In this sense, perseverance and determination are not simply personal traits, but competences that can be intentionally developed through appropriate coaching, training design, and social support.

2.1.2. Practical implications

Practically, this means that a coach deliberately creates an environment in which effort, persistence, and learning from challenges are consistently valued. Perseverance develops not primarily through instruction, but through repeated experiences in which players face difficulty, recover from mistakes, and continue working toward improvement. The coach plays a central role in shaping how athletes interpret these situations. When coaches frame challenges constructively and support players during difficult moments, athletes are more likely to remain engaged and develop determination.

A coach who strengthens perseverance and determination:

- Recognises individual differences in motivation and persistence and adapts support accordingly
- Encourages players to take responsibility for their development and reflect on their progress
- Frames mistakes, setbacks, and unsuccessful attempts as opportunities for learning
- Designs training activities that require repeated attempts and sustained effort
- Helps players connect daily training tasks with long-term development goals
- Supports athletes emotionally during moments of frustration, fatigue, or pressure
- Encourages athletes to remain engaged even when progress is slow or difficult
- Reinforces persistence and effort through consistent feedback and encouragement
- Promotes supportive relationships among players that help maintain motivation during challenges
- Reflects with players on how effort, practice, and perseverance contribute to improvement

Especially in demanding situations—such as difficult training tasks, competitive pressure, repeated failure, or physically challenging moments—the coach's reactions shape how athletes respond. If the coach responds with frustration or disappointment, players may interpret difficulty as failure. If the coach responds with patience, encouragement, and clear guidance, players learn that persistence is expected and meaningful.

When coaches consistently model and reinforce perseverance, players develop stronger resilience, maintain focus during challenging situations, and remain committed to long-term improvement. This not only strengthens individual player development but also contributes to team cohesion and collective performance, as athletes learn to support one another in overcoming setbacks and continuing their effort together.



2.2. Choice of words

Research on motivation, growth mindset, and perseverance shows that coach language influences how athletes interpret mistakes, setbacks, and difficult situations. Words can shape whether players perceive challenges as threats or as natural parts of learning. Coaches can develop perseverance by framing effort, persistence, and improvement as expected aspects of development.

Effective coaching communication combines technical clarity with motivational support. Football-specific instruction remains essential, while language emphasising effort, learning, and continued engagement helps athletes maintain motivation. Focusing on the next action, learning process, and sustained effort encourages commitment when success is not immediate.

Growth-oriented language helps athletes interpret mistakes and setbacks as opportunities for development rather than personal failure (Dweck, 2006). Acknowledging effort and reinforcing persistence helps athletes remain engaged in demanding situations and contributes to grit and determination (Duckworth et al., 2007).

As athletes mature, coach language can shift from encouragement toward responsibility and leadership. Younger players benefit from short, concrete phrases encouraging them to try again, while older players can view perseverance as a responsibility toward their development and team. Language therefore shapes how athletes respond to challenges throughout their development.

Stage 1
7-8 years



Language should encourage children to try again after mistakes and understand that errors are part of learning.

Example tone:

- *"Try again."*
- *"Next action."*
- *"Keep going."*
- *"You're learning."*

Words remain simple, positive, and action-oriented.

Stage 2
9-10 years



Language introduces the idea that improvement requires repeated attempts.

Example tone:

- *"Let's try that again."*
- *"Practice helps you improve."*
- *"Stay with it."*
- *"You're getting closer."*

The coach reinforces persistence and patience.

Stage 3
11-12 years



Language connects perseverance to skill development and practice.

Example tone:

- *"Improvement takes repetition."*
- *"Stay patient and focus on the technique."*
- *"Keep practising — it will come."*
- *"Progress happens step by step."*

Players begin to understand the relationship between effort and improvement.

Stage 4
13-14 years



Language supports determination under pressure.

Example tone:

- *"Stay focused."*
- *"Reset and go again."*
- *"Keep working together."*
- *"Respond to the challenge."*

The coach reinforces composure and persistence during demanding situations.

Stage 5
15-16 years



Language promotes perseverance despite fatigue or difficulty.

Example tone:

- *"Push through the moment."*
- *"Stay committed."*
- *"Finish what you started."*
- *"Effort matters now."*

Athletes are encouraged to maintain effort during physically and mentally demanding moments.

Stage 6
17–18 years



Language emphasises determination and leadership during setbacks.

Example tone:

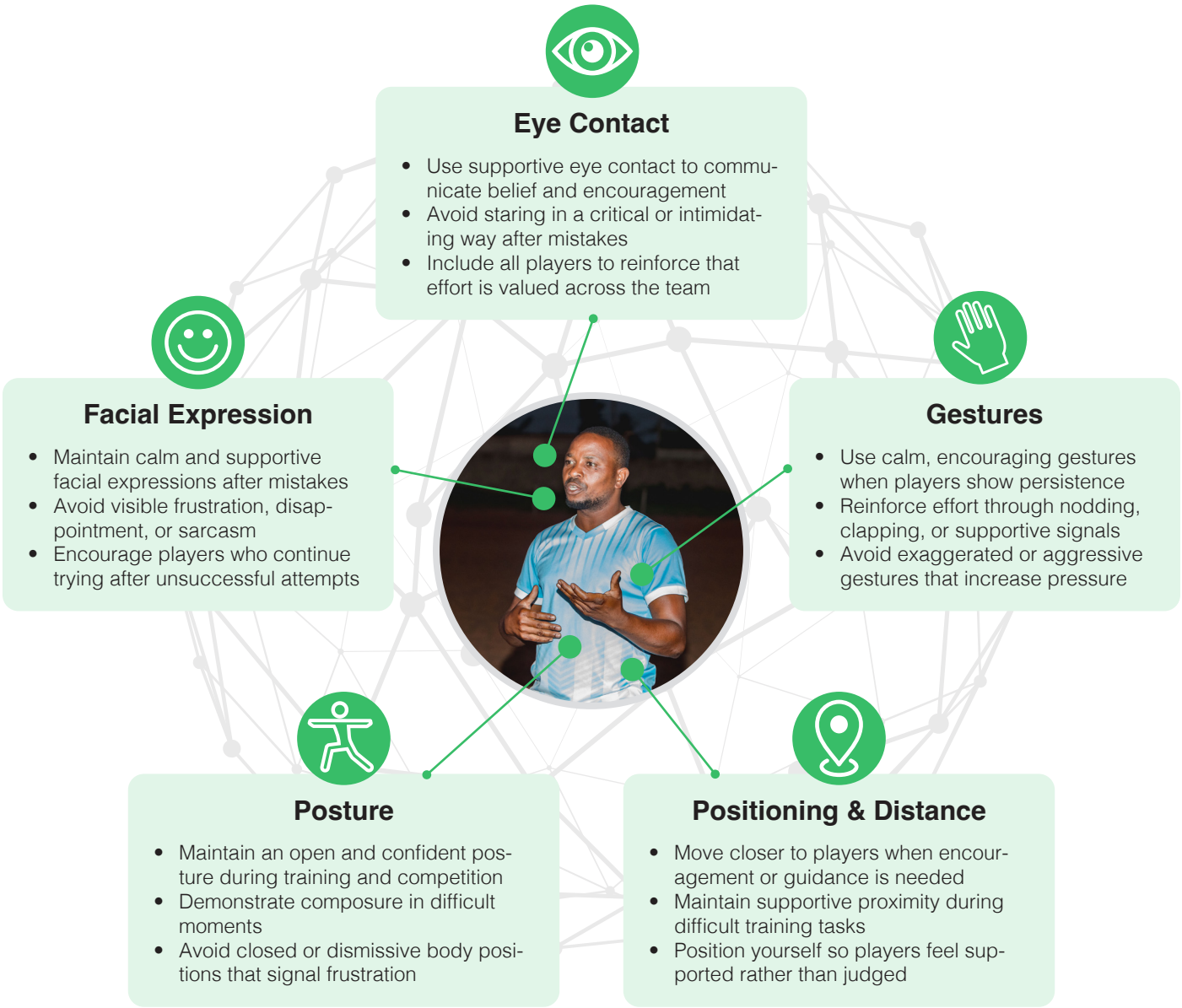
- *"Lead through effort."*
- *"Respond to adversity."*
- *"Stay committed to the team."*
- *"Determination defines the moment."*

The coach encourages players to model perseverance for others.

2.3. Body language

A coach's body language communicates expectations about effort, resilience, and reactions to difficulty. Non-verbal behaviour often influences athletes more strongly than spoken words, especially in moments of mistakes, pressure, or fatigue. Players continuously observe how coaches react to setbacks, unsuccessful attempts, and challenging situations. When coaches demonstrate calmness, confidence, and encouragement through their body language, athletes are more likely to remain engaged and persistent.

Consistent and composed body language signals that mistakes and difficulties are part of the learning process rather than reasons for frustration or criticism. When coaches visibly support effort and determination, players feel psychologically safe to continue trying even after setbacks.



When a coach's body language consistently communicates patience, confidence, and encouragement, players are more likely to remain engaged during challenging situations. This strengthens perseverance within the team and supports collective resilience, allowing players to maintain effort and focus during demanding moments in training and competition.

3. TRAINING

THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

of grit from foundation to maturity:



7-8 years

1. Notice when a mistake has happened, without being told.
2. Try again after losing the ball or making a mistake.
3. Say something to a teammate who has just failed at something.



9-10 years

1. Keep taking part after several attempts have not worked.
2. Say that getting better sometimes takes several attempts.
3. Encourage a teammate at the specific thing they are finding difficult.



11-12 years

1. Keep making an effort at a difficult skill after the interesting part has ended.
2. Say how repeated practice has improved your performance, and what produced it.
3. Keep attempting a difficult task in front of teammates.



13-14 years

1. Name the situations in training and games that create pressure for you.
2. Keep your effort and concentration while the situation is still difficult.
3. Encourage teammates during the difficulty rather than afterwards.



15-16 years

1. Notice fatigue or frustration building before your performance drops.
2. Apply effort at the same standard in the last part of a demanding session.
3. Change what the group does in the hardest part of the session.



17-18 years

1. Recognise a setback and stay with the goal.
2. Change your approach when persistence alone is not working.
3. Keep your effort at the end of a losing game at the level of the beginning.

Training

7-8 years



3.1. Stage 1 (7-8 years)

3.1.1. Stage characteristics

Children at this age are still developing basic emotional regulation and may become discouraged quickly when something does not work immediately. Their attention span is relatively short, and they often interpret mistakes as failure rather than part of the learning process. At the same time, children begin to understand that effort can lead to improvement when they receive encouragement and positive feedback. In football activities, players frequently experience small mistakes such as losing the ball or missing a shot.

These situations provide valuable opportunities for learning perseverance. At this stage, children benefit from a supportive environment where coaches emphasise that mistakes are normal and encourage players to try again after unsuccessful attempts.

3.1.2. Specific learning objectives

At this age children often react strongly to mistakes and may stop trying when something does not work immediately. They are still learning how to deal with frustration and disappointment during play. Football activities provide many opportunities where children experience small failures, such as losing the ball or missing a shot.

These situations can become valuable learning moments when children are encouraged to continue trying. At this stage the focus is on helping players understand that mistakes are a natural part of learning and that effort and persistence help them improve.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

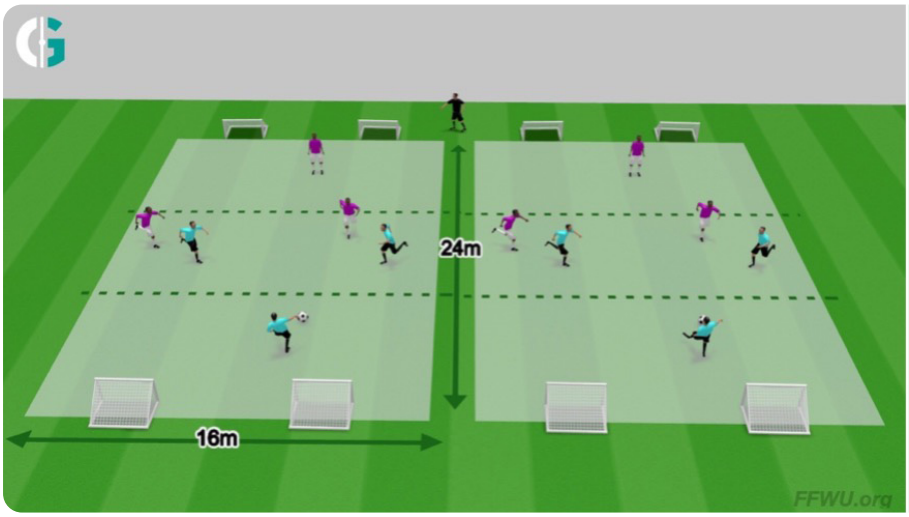
1. Notice when a mistake has happened, without being told.
2. Try again after losing the ball or making a mistake.
3. Say something to a teammate who has just failed at something.

3.1.3. Coach insight

Children at this age give up quickly, and the moment that decides everything is the one immediately after the mistake. If the next action follows straight away the mistake stays small; if play stops for a correction it becomes the thing the child remembers. What gets praised here is the return, not the outcome.

EXERCISE

TRY AGAIN



Players	6+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	24 x 16 m
Equipment	1 ball per field, 9 bibs, 4 mini-goals, 8 cones
Duration	total: 20 min play: 5 x 3 min breaks: 1 min
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Small-sided game 3v3 (organize more fields if you have more players)
- During the game, players are encouraged to react immediately after mistakes with a specific action depending on the situation.
- If a player loses the ball while dribbling, they immediately try to win the ball back.
- If a player makes an unsuccessful pass, they also try to recover the ball quickly.
- If a player misses a shot, teammates are encouraged to give positive encouragement and support.
- The coach reminds players that mistakes are normal in football and encourages them to focus on the next action instead of stopping or reacting negatively.

Coaching Tips

1. Reinforce **positive reactions after mistakes** and highlight moments when players immediately try again.
2. Encourage teammates to **support each other** after missed actions such as shots or passes.
3. Avoid stopping the game too often; **recognise perseverance** during play and **praise effort** as it happens.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players notice when they have lost the ball, without waiting to be told.	○ *When did you lose the ball during the game?* ○ *Did you notice it yourself, or did someone tell you?* ○ *How soon did you know?*
2	Players try to win the ball back immediately after losing it.	○ *What did you do right after losing the ball?* ○ *When did something not work the way you wanted?* ○ *How many times did you win it straight back?*
3	Players say something to a teammate who has just lost the ball.	○ *When did a teammate make a mistake during the game?* ○ *What could you say to a teammate in that moment?* ○ *What did you hear from others when it was you?*

Training

9-10 years



3.2. Stage 2 (9-10 years)

3.2.1. Stage characteristics

Children in this stage develop greater patience and can stay engaged in activities for longer periods of time. They begin to understand that improvement often requires several attempts and that learning new skills involves repeated practice. Social interactions become increasingly important, and encouragement from teammates can strongly influence how players react to difficulties.

When children experience repeated mistakes during football activities, they may feel frustrated but are increasingly capable of continuing with encouragement. At this stage, players can begin to learn that persistence and effort are important parts of improving their skills and overcoming challenges.

3.2.2. Specific learning objectives

Children at this stage begin to understand that improvement often requires several attempts. They are increasingly able to stay engaged in activities for longer periods of time and can start to accept that mistakes are part of the learning process. At the same time, frustration may still occur when something does not work immediately.

Football activities frequently require repeated attempts, such as passing combinations or shooting tasks. These situations help players learn that persistence and continued effort are important for improving their performance.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

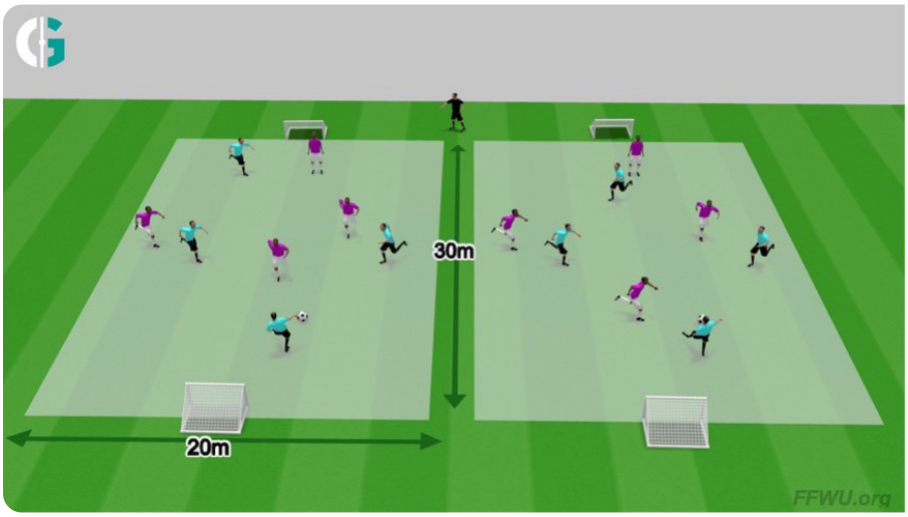
1. Keep taking part after several attempts have not worked.
2. Say that getting better sometimes takes several attempts.
3. Encourage a teammate at the specific thing they are finding difficult.

3.2.3. Coach insight

Players are beginning to grasp that a skill takes more than one attempt, but the understanding is fragile and disappears the moment a task feels impossible. Activities that allow several tries in quick succession make the point better than any explanation, because a player who improves visibly within one session will believe it next time.

EXERCISE

PASS AGAIN



Players	16+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	30 x20 m
Equipment	2 fields, 2 balls, 4 mini-goals, 16 cones, 8 bibs
Duration	total: 25 min play: 4 x 4 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Divide the players into four teams and set up two small playing fields, playing 4v4.
- The objective for each team is to complete five consecutive passes without losing the ball. If the ball is intercepted, goes out of play, or a pass is unsuccessful, the team must start counting again from zero.
- Teams immediately restart and try again. This rule creates repeated situations where the task fails immediately and requires several attempts.
- Players should communicate, stay focused and continue trying even when they must restart.
- Variations:
  - Increase the challenge by requiring seven consecutive passes

Coaching Tips

1. Explain clearly that restarting the passing sequence may require **several attempts**.
2. Encourage teams to **stay positive and keep trying** after mistakes, especially when possession is lost.
3. Recognise moments when players **stay persistent despite repeated restarts**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players keep playing after the pass count is reset several times.	○ *When did your team have to restart the passing sequence?* ○ *How did you react when the team had to start again?* ○ *Which restart was hardest to take?*
2	Players say how many attempts their team needed before reaching five consecutive passes.	○ *How many times did your team try before succeeding?* ○ *What helped you continue trying after several restarts?* ○ *What changed from the first attempt to the successful one?*
3	Players encourage the teammate whose pass broke the sequence.	○ *When did a teammate struggle with a particular pass?* ○ *What could you say about that specific difficulty?* ○ *How did the team react to the interception?*

Training

11-12 years



3.3. Stage 3 (11-12 years)

3.3.1. Stage characteristics

At this age players develop stronger self-awareness and become more capable of reflecting on their own performance. They start to recognise that mastering football techniques requires consistent practice and repeated effort over time. Players are also increasingly able to manage frustration when things do not work immediately.

In training sessions, they may face technical challenges such as learning new skills or improving complex movements. These experiences help them understand that perseverance is necessary for skill development. Coaches can support this learning by emphasising that improvement comes through continued effort and by encouraging players to remain patient when practising difficult skills.

3.3.2. Specific learning objectives

At this age players develop greater self-awareness and become more capable of reflecting on their own performance. They begin to recognise that improving football skills requires patience, repetition and consistent effort. Players may experience frustration when learning more complex techniques or when improvement takes longer than expected.

These learning situations provide important opportunities to strengthen perseverance. Players can start to understand that progress often comes through continued practice and persistence.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

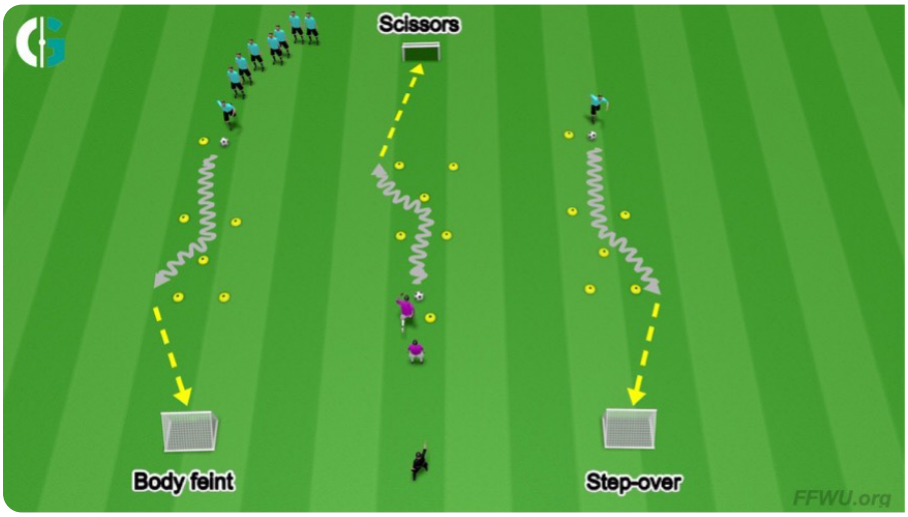
1. Keep making an effort at a difficult skill after the interesting part has ended.
2. Say how repeated practice has improved your performance, and what produced it.
3. Keep attempting a difficult task in front of teammates.

3.3.3. Coach insight

At this stage players can see the connection between effort and improvement, which means it can be shown to them rather than explained. Progress on a difficult skill is small and gradual, and a player who expects it to be immediate reads slow improvement as failure. Naming the small gains is what keeps them going.

EXERCISE

MASTER OF THE FEINTS



Players	16+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	40 x 30 m
Equipment	3 balls, 3 mini-goals, 18 cones
Duration	total: 30 min play: 3 x 10 min breaks: -
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Divide players into three groups
- Set up three practice areas with a dribbling gate and a small goal.
- Players practice three different feinting techniques:
  1. Body Feint (Shoulder Drop), 2. Step Over, 3. Scissors
- Players begin with the Body Feint. To complete the sequence, they must:
  1. Dribble through a cone gate, 2. Perform the assigned feinting move, 3. Score a goal
- Only if all three steps are successful can the player move on to the next feinting technique.
- If the player loses control of the ball, performs the feint unsuccessfully, or misses the shot, they restart and try again with the same feint.
- Players continue practising until they complete the sequence successfully before progressing to the next feint. Teammates waiting in line observe and encourage the player performing the challenge.

Coaching Tips

1. Explain that learning new skills requires **patience and repeated attempts**.
2. Encourage players to focus on **improving their technique** rather than becoming frustrated after unsuccessful attempts.
3. Recognise players who **stay positive after a failed attempt,** a lost ball or a missed shot.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players keep practising the feint after the group has moved on to the next one.	○ *Which part of the sequence was most difficult for you?* ○ *What did you do when the action did not work the first time?* ○ *Which feint did you want to keep working on?*
2	Players say how many attempts it took before the feint worked, and what changed.	○ *How many attempts did it take before you could move to the next feint?* ○ *What changed between your first attempt and your last?*
3	Players keep attempting the feint they are worst at in front of the group.	○ *Was it harder to keep trying with other players watching?* ○ *What helped you stay patient while practising in front of the group?*

Training

13-14 years



3.4. Stage 4 (13-14 Years)

3.4.1. Stage characteristics

During early adolescence players experience stronger emotional reactions to success and failure, and they become more aware of expectations from teammates, coaches and themselves. Training and games may create situations of pressure, competition and challenging moments. At the same time adolescents develop increasing cognitive abilities that allow them to reflect on their behaviour and regulate their reactions.

This stage provides important opportunities to learn how to remain focused and determined when facing pressure or adversity during football activities. Players can begin to recognise difficult moments and learn strategies to stay committed and continue giving effort despite challenging circumstances.

3.4.2. Specific learning objectives

During early adolescence players become more aware of expectations from teammates, coaches and themselves. Training sessions and games may create situations that involve pressure, competition and challenging moments.

Players may react emotionally to mistakes or difficult situations during play. At the same time they develop increasing cognitive abilities that allow them to reflect on their reactions and behaviour. These experiences create opportunities to learn how to remain focused and determined when facing adversity.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

1. Name the situations in training and games that create pressure for you.
2. Keep your effort and concentration while the situation is still difficult.
3. Encourage teammates during the difficulty rather than afterwards.

3.4.3. Coach insight

Early adolescents feel pressure sharply and react to it emotionally before they can think about it. Perseverance at this stage is less about effort than about staying in the situation while it feels uncomfortable. Difficulty has to be built into training deliberately, because a player who never meets adversity has no chance to practise it.

EXERCISE

UNDER PRESSURE



Players	18+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	50 x30 m
Equipment	1 ball, 8 cones, 14 bibs
Duration	total: 30 min play: 3 x 7 min breaks: 3 min
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Divide players into three teams.
- Two teams play a 7v7 game while the third team performs a juggling challenge.
- Two teams play with 2 touches only
- Team three aims at the highest possible number of consecutive touches while juggling together in a circle. If the ball drops, the team immediately restarts and counts again.
- The playing time for each round is 7 minutes.
- After the round, teams rotate so that each team experiences both the game & juggling.
- Players are encouraged to remain focused and continue trying even when mistakes occur.
- Variations:
  - Adapt field sizes
  - Add different situations where empathy is needed (e.g. referee decisions)

Coaching Tips

1. Explain that both the game and the juggling task **require concentration and persistence**.
2. Encourage players to **restart immediately and keep trying** when the ball drops during the juggling challenge.
3. Recognise players and teams who **remain determined and supportive** during difficult moments.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players name the moments in the two-touch game that created the most pressure for them.	○ *When did the game feel most difficult for you?* ○ *Which situations create the most pressure for you?* ○ *What made two touches harder than free play?*
2	Players keep their effort and concentration while the juggling count keeps dropping.	○ *How often did your team have to restart the challenge?* ○ *How did you react while the challenge was still going wrong? What kept the group counting?*
3	Players encourage teammates during the juggling attempt rather than after it.	○ *When did a teammate struggle during the activity?* ○ *Did you say something at the time, or afterwards?* ○ *What helped the group keep going?*

Training

15-16 years



3.5. Stage 5 (15-16 years)

3.5.1. Stage characteristics

Players in this stage experience higher physical and psychological demands in both training and competition. Activities become more intensive and players increasingly encounter situations involving fatigue, frustration and demanding expectations. At the same time adolescents develop stronger self-regulation and a greater capacity to manage their emotions.

These developmental changes allow players to learn how to push through difficult moments and maintain effort even when activities become physically or mentally demanding. Football environments provide frequent opportunities to practice this competence, especially during challenging drills, demanding matches or periods of fatigue.

3.5.2. Specific learning objectives

Players at this stage experience increasing physical and psychological demands in both training and competition. Activities become more intensive and players frequently encounter situations involving fatigue, frustration and demanding expectations. At the same time adolescents develop stronger self-regulation and greater awareness of their own effort and behaviour.

These developmental changes allow players to better manage difficult moments during training or games. Learning to persist despite fatigue and frustration becomes an important part of their development.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

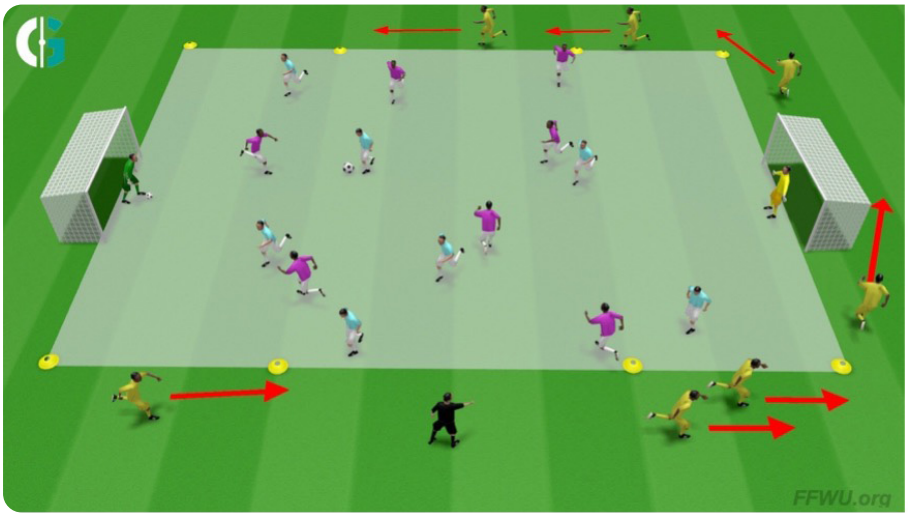
1. Notice fatigue or frustration building before your performance drops.
2. Apply effort at the same standard in the last part of a demanding session.
3. Change what the group does in the hardest part of the session.

3.5.3. Coach insight

Fatigue and frustration become routine at this stage rather than exceptional, and players often read them as signs that something is wrong. They are not - they are what improvement feels like from the inside. A group that understands this keeps working through the last ten minutes; a group that does not quietly stops.

EXERCISE

RUN & COMPETE



Players	21+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	50 x 30 m
Equipment	1 ball, 2 goals, 8 cones
Duration	total: 30 min play: 3 x 7 min breaks: 3 min
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Two teams play a 7v7 game, while the third team runs around the outside.
- The running team attempts to complete as many laps as possible during the playing time. Each player counts their own laps.
- After 7 minutes, the teams rotate so that each team experiences both the game and the running challenge.
- At the end of the activity, the tournament winner is determined by combining the playing score and the running score.
- Running score bonus:
  - Most laps = 3 additional goals
  - Second most laps = 2 additional goals
  - Fewest laps = 1 additional goal
  - Result = goals scored in the games + running bonus goals.
- Variations:
  - Use sprints instead of number of laps

Coaching Tips

1. Explain that both the game and the running challenge require **determination and sustained effort**.
2. Encourage players to **keep running and giving effort** even when they begin to feel tired.
3. Recognise teams that **stay determined and support each other** during demanding moments.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players notice fatigue building during their laps before it changes their running.	○ *When did the running challenge start to feel difficult?* ○ *Did you notice it before it affected your running?* ○ *Which lap was the turning point?*
2	Players run their last laps at the same pace as their first.	○ *When did the game feel most physically demanding?* ○ *How did you manage your effort in the last rounds?* ○ *How did your final lap compare with your first?*
3	Players change what the running group does when the pace drops.	○ *When did a teammate struggle during the activity?* ○ *What changed how the group worked in that moment?* ○ *Did the group run together or apart?*

Training

17-18 years



3.6. Stage 6 (17-18 years)

3.6.1. Stage characteristics

Older adolescents are capable of deeper reflection on their behaviour and understand the broader meaning of perseverance in sport and life. They recognise that setbacks, mistakes and losing situations are inevitable parts of competitive sport. At this stage players increasingly take responsibility not only for their own effort but also for their influence on the team. They are able to maintain determination in difficult match situations and encourage teammates to stay focused and committed.

These experiences help players develop a mature understanding of perseverance and prepare them to transfer this competence to other areas of life such as education, work and personal challenges.

3.6.2. Specific learning objectives

Older adolescents are capable of deeper reflection on their behaviour and their role within the team. They recognise that setbacks, mistakes and losing situations are inevitable parts of competitive sport.

At this stage players increasingly take responsibility not only for their own performance but also for their influence on teammates. Difficult match situations require determination, resilience and commitment to continued effort. Learning to remain focused and supportive during setbacks helps players develop a mature understanding of perseverance.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

1. Recognise a setback and stay with the goal.
2. Change your approach when persistence alone is not working.
3. Keep your effort at the end of a losing game at the level of the beginning.

3.6.3. Coach insight

Determination has become visible to others by this stage. A player who keeps working when the team is a goal down and a player short does more for the group than any instruction from the touchline, and teammates take their cue from it. What is practised here rarely stays inside football.

EXERCISE

STAY IN THE GAME



Players	22+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	full field
Equipment	1 ball, 10 bibs, 8 cones, 2 goals
Duration	total: 33 min play: 2 x 15 min breaks: 3 min
Author	Sascha Bauer

Description

- Organise a full 11v11 game
- One team begins the game with a two-goal disadvantage (0–2) and plays with one player less, simulating a red card situation.
- The game is played normally. The team facing the disadvantage must continue working together and remain committed despite the difficult situation.
- Players are encouraged to maintain effort, communication and positive behaviour even when the score and player numbers are unfavourable.
- After 15 minutes, the teams switch roles so that both teams experience playing from a losing position with one player less.

Coaching Tips

1. Explain that **difficult match situations** such as red cards or losing scores **are part of competitive football**.
2. Encourage players to **stay focused on teamwork and effort** when the team is losing or a player down.
3. Recognise players who **continue supporting teammates and showing determination** during adversity.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players recognise the two-goal deficit and keep working towards the goal.	○ *When did the game feel most difficult for your team?* ○ *How did you react when you were losing?* ○ *When did you first believe it was possible?*
2	Players change how their team plays rather than only trying harder.	○ *What did your team change after conceding?* ○ *What did you do differently rather than just trying harder?* ○ *Whose idea changed the approach?*
3	Players keep their effort in the last minutes at the level of the first.	○ *How did your effort in the last part compare with the start?* ○ *When was a teammate discouraged, what did the team do?* ○ *Who kept the team going?*

4. REFERENCES

Bae, S., Lee, H., & Kim, J. (2024). The impact of structured programs on grit and life satisfaction among adolescents. Journal of Adolescent Health, 74(1), 25–32.

Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? American Psychologist, 59(1), 20–28. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.20

Brady, A., & Alleyne, R. (2017). Resilience and growth mindset in sport and physical activity (pp. 102–114). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315304397-9

Braun, S., Dufour, J., & Hurst, C. (2024). The role of supportive relationships in developing grit in athletes. International Journal of Sports Psychology, 55(3), 220–235.

Cazayoux, D., & DeBeliso, M. (2019). The relationship between grit and performance in athletes: A longitudinal study. Journal of Sports Science & Medicine, 18(4), 789–797.

Clough, P. J., Earle, K., & Sewell, D. (2002). Mental toughness: The concept and its measurement. International Journal of Sports Psychology, 33(1), 12–25.

Cobas Román, M. J., & Bestard, J. (2021). The importance of volitional qualities in athletic performance. Sports Psychology Review, 15(2), 89–103.

Coutinho, P., Bessa, C., Mesquita, I., & Fonseca, A. M. (2025). Parental involvement in sport: Mother- and father-initiated motivational climates and their associations with grit in youth male team sport players. Sports. https://doi.org/10.3390/sports13120421

Coutinho, P., Tavares, F., & Lima, R. (2025). Parental involvement in youth sports: The impact on children's grit and motivation. Journal of Sports Behavior, 48(2), 150–165.

Credé, M., Roch, S. G., & Kieszczynka, U. M. (2017). Classifying the academic performance of college students: A meta-analysis of the predictive validity of grit. Journal of Educational Psychology, 109(4), 507–521.

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92(6), 1087–1101. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087

Dweck, C. S. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success. Random House.

Ericsson, K. A., & Pool, R. (2016). Peak: Secrets from the new science of expertise. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Erina, O. I., Kim, T. K., & Kuzmenko, G. A. (2023). Pedagogical support of parents as a condition for perseverance development among young athletes who participate in the "Sports class" educational project. Russian Journal of Physical Education and Sport. https://doi.org/10.14526/2070-4798-2023-18-1-165-170

Gucciardi, D. F., Gordon, S., & Dimmock, J. A. (2015). Mental toughness in sport: An overview of the literature. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 10(2), 241–258.

Gucciardi, D. F., Peeling, P., Ducker, K. J., & Dawson, B. (2016). When the going gets tough: Mental toughness and its relationship with behavioural perseverance. Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport, 19(1), 81–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsams.2014.12.005

Hernández, E. H., Moreno-Murcia, J. A., Cid, L., Monteiro, D., & Rodrigues, F. (2020). Passion or perseverance? The effect of perceived autonomy support and grit on academic performance in college students. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17062143

Huéscar Hernández, M., Martínez-Moreno, G. A., & Ruiz, J. F. (2020). The role of autonomy support in fostering resilience in students. Educational Psychology, 40(8), 1011–1025.

Humińska-Lisowska, K. (2024). The impact of psychological interventions on athletes' mental states. Journal of Sports Psychology, 29(1), 45–60.

Hurst, C., & Good, K. (2010). Midlife challenges and resilience: A longitudinal study. Journal of Adult Development, 17(3), 133–142.

Hwang, M.-H., & Nam, J. K. (2021). Enhancing grit: Possibility and intervention strategies (pp. 77–93). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-57389-8_5

Jandu, K., & Pradhan, R. K. (2025). Inquiring long-term goal achievement and grit in a collectivist culture: A qualitative content analysis. Cogent Psychology, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2025.2454090

Jones, G., Hanton, S., & Connaughton, D. (2002). What is this thing called mental toughness? An investigation of elite athletes. Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 14(3), 256–274.

Khan, S. F. (2025). Building resilience: Strategies for mental strength and holistic growth. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 133–135. https://doi.org/10.52711/2321-5828.2025.00023

Larkin, P., O'Connor, D., & Williams, A. M. (2022). The role of grit in youth sports: A longitudinal study. Journal of Sports Sciences, 40(5), 589–598.

Martínez-Moreno, G. A., Montalvo, M., & Ruiz, J. F. (2021). Consistency of interest and effort in sports: Implications for coaching. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 16(4), 823–835.

Mähliß, C. (2022). Functional imagery training as a tool for enhancing motivation and grit in youth athletes. Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 58, 102–110.

Mills, A., Butt, J., & Maynard, I. (2023). Introducing an integrated model of talent development: From research to practice. Journal of Sport Psychology in Action, 14(2), 121–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2022.2148798

Morgan, P. J., Lubans, D. R., & Callister, R. (2019). The role of physical activity in promoting healthy weight in children and adolescents. Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 55(3), 220–229.

Nothnagle, E. A., & Knoester, C. (2022). Sport participation and the development of grit. Leisure Sciences, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2022.2090037

Pop, C., & Zamfir, M. V. (2020). Nonverbal communication of young players in team sports. Physical Education of Students, 24(1), 26–29. https://doi.org/10.15561/26649837.2020.0104

Román, J. C. C., & Revilla, D. C. A. B. (2021). Psychological intervention to enhance the volitional quality of perseverance in athletes with hearing impairment. MOJ Orthopedics & Rheumatology. https://doi.org/10.15406/mojor.2021.13.00547

Sehrawat, V., Kumari, B., & Nara, K. (2024). Psychological resilience and sports performance: A correlational study. Maharshi Dayanand University Research Journal (Arts).

Sekh, N., Biswas, A. kr, & Chowdhury, M. (2023). IMPACT OF GRIT PERSONALITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MINDSET AMONG THE FEMALE VARSITY FOOTBALL PLAYERS. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR), 10(5), i757. www.jetir.org

Sigmundsson, H., Haga, M., & Hermundsdottir, F. (2020). Passion, grit and mindset in young adults: Exploring the relationship and gender differences. New Ideas in Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2020.100795

Sorensen, S., Jarden, A., & Schofield, G. (2016). Lay perceptions of mental toughness: Understanding conceptual similarities and differences between lay and sporting contexts. International Journal of Wellbeing, 6(3), 71–95. https://doi.org/10.5502/IJW.V6I3.551

The key to sports psychology: Mental toughness. (2023). https://doi.org/10.59287/nfss.816