

## **DOC TALK with the Banner Concussion Center**

An early Happy Thanksgiving from the BCC family to yours! We are very happy to announce a new addition to our team here at the Banner Concussion Center – Dr. John DenBoer, Ph.D. Dr. DenBoer is a neuropsychologist and sport psychologist. He brings a passion for working with athletes and is very excited to work with AYSA! We have turned the column over to him this month - ENJOY!

### **Mindfulness: A Valuable Mental Technique in Soccer Competition**

Mindfulness is an important mental component of soccer competition. Mindfulness generally involves the focusing of attention and awareness. Basically, the overall goal is being in the present moment more often. Although this practice has its roots in Buddhist tradition, it is inherently non-religious, and not tied to any individual religious sect or denomination.

Mindfulness involves four components: deep breathing, mantra use, and the transformation of anger. These three components culminate in being in the soccer zone more often. I will review each of these briefly below:

- **Deep Breathing** – despite breathing all the time (hopefully!), many people do not engage in correct, helpful, breathing. The best type of breathing is called diaphragmatic breathing. By engaging in deep breaths that arise from our diaphragm, we can engage in optimal oxygenation of our body and lungs. Deep breathing involves inhaling from the stomach for a count of 7 (at which time the stomach should inflate), holding for a count of 3-4, then releasing the breath for a count of 8. One must work up to this depth of breathing. You can engage in deep breathing during timeouts or when you do not have the ball during a game.
- **Mantra Use** – mantras are short, repetitive, statements that reduce distraction and increase attention. An example of a mantra that I like to use is “on the ball,” although the words can be meaningless, such as “ba-ba-ba” or “ohhmmmm.” Practice using short, repetitive statements during breaks in the game. These breaks may be short (e.g., after a foul is called) or long (in between halves).
- **Transforming Anger** – have you ever been angry during a soccer match? At one point or another, all who have played the sport have. By using deep breathing and mindfulness, as well as identifying the precipitants of frustration/anger, we can work to transform our anger into more helpful, productive, emotion. Journaling is a helpful exercise in this process.
- **Zone Training** - By using the techniques above, you will be able to enter the zone more often. Many definitions have been offered for the zone, but it is commonly defined as a state of mental and physical harmony where the athlete is achieving their optimal mental and physical potential. These techniques will allow you to achieve optimal soccer performance, both individually and as a team, more often.

For more information on mental coaching techniques or Dr. DenBoer, please visit [www.mentaledgetennis.com](http://www.mentaledgetennis.com).

*For more information about the Banner Concussion Center, to schedule a baseline test or make an appointment with Dr. Erickson please contact us at 602-839-7285. We are located near the campus of Banner Good Samaritan Hospital at 1320 N. 10th St., Suite B Phoenix, AZ 85006. Information about the Banner Concussion Center can also be found on the Banner Health website [www.bannerhealth.com](http://www.bannerhealth.com)*

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