We recognize this is an opportunity to perform under pressure and so we let go of the frustration and refocus our attention to specifically what we need to do to win the next moment. We give our best effort to win the match. Although we lose the match, we are proud of our performance and use it as a valuable learning experience.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Viktor Frankle

Like every other skill and ability, managing stress takes consistent and intentional practice. Here are some ways you as a coach can help your student-athletes shift their mindset and manage stress better.

**Change your mindset:** Stress is NORMAL and BENEFICIAL. We are not helpless victims, instead we are in control of how we respond.

**Cultivate growth mindset:** Think how could this be a positive challenge? How can it help me improve? How can I be grateful for this moment?

**Shift perspective:** On a scale of 1-10 how life altering is this? Identify if our reaction is appropriate for the stress we are facing.

**Identify priorities and goals while utilizing time management:** How can you eliminate unnecessary stress by staying on top of your to do list?

**Choose a healthy lifestyle routine:** Sleep and nutrition are key! Make yourself a priority by setting a routine sleep schedule and ensuring your body is fueled with healthy food!

**Incorporate stress relieving activities to EVERYDAY:** Physical movement, breaks from technology, yoga and meditation, deep breathing, journaling, practicing gratitude, etc.

**Be willing to ask for help and to lean on your support team:** People are not mind readers, let them know when you need help and how they can help you.

**Reflect:** What is causing stress, how is it impacting performance and quality of life, plan possible coping measures to help manage the situation in the future.

**Collect:** Journal and write about all aspects of your days. Pay special attention to what is effective and helpful for coping with stress and what isn’t.
EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Everyday, children are surrounded by environments, interacting with people, and participating in activities that are causing them to feel a variety of emotions—some positive, some negative, and some just downright confusing. Because each emotion is shaped by past experiences, cultural beliefs, and individual attitudes, they are unique to each individual person—making it exceptionally challenging for a child to identify and name them. With that in mind, it is easy to understand why emotions are exceptional at “testing [children’s] ability to [respond to their environments] in thoughtful, controlled, and appropriate ways.”

What is Emotional Regulation (“ER”) and why is it important?

Emotional Regulation is the ability to not just identify but to respond to thoughts, emotions and outside experiences in a controlled way—regardless of what those experiences are. In sports especially this is an essential skill because of the rate at which participants are experiencing situational shifts. In a wrestling match for example, athletes are engaged in a fast paced and volatile environment—often fluctuating from seeing success to struggle and even failure in a matter of seconds. To get an understanding of what this looks like, let’s take a look at the example below:

Coaches Example 1.1:
Part way through practice, you decide that your team is ready to be introduced to a new skill. As they are drilling, you notice that one athlete is having a particularly difficult time. She doesn’t seem to fully understand the skill and as she continues to attempt it without seeing success, she grows increasingly frustrated. Finally, after her partner doesn’t give her the resistance she is anticipating, she responds by pushing and yelling at her teammate before storming away.

In the example above, the athlete demonstrated a lack of emotional regulation which resulted in physical violence, disrespectful behavior, and embarrassment. This happened because she experienced a variety of physical, mental, and emotional pressures—each of which was dictated by her past experiences and ultimately triggered her with a negative and impulsive response.

There is no way around it, emotions are going to happen, but how can we help our athletes practice understanding and controlling them?

Learning how to regulate emotions is a delicate combination of cognitive development, the modeling of observed behavior, and intentional practice. The most powerful thing you can do as a coach (besides modeling ER yourself), is build emotional regulation into your training. Follow the below steps to get started.

Step 1: Acknowledge and Question
It is difficult to make improvements when we lack self-awareness. We encourage you to introduce the concept of emotional regulation to your team and encourage them to take a leadership role in their own self-regulation.

- Is what I am feeling right now a threat or a challenge
  - Threat - Pressure to achieve outcome from either internal or external source
  - Challenge - Growth mindset embraces opportunity to learn and play
- What emotion am I feeling?
  - Are my emotions proportional to the actual challenge I am facing?
- Are my thoughts, behavior, and communication helping or hurting my performance?

Step 2: Identify and Practice your Management Strategy
Each athlete is equipped with emotions unique to them derived from a combination of their life experiences leading to triggers that are individual to each athlete. There is no blanket strategy to help athletes manage their emotional regulation, except by giving the athletes the tools to be their own change-makers. It is important to build Emotional Regulation training into your practices and team building activities so your athletes can develop their own skills, just like they do with technical wrestling, to establish a strategy that fits them best.

- Incorporate Emotional Regulation training scenarios in practice, competition, or mental skills training so athletes can identify what they may feel and how they can respond when the stressors occur.
- Support your athletes in controlling the narrative by reframing the scenario while utilizing positive self-talk.
- Encourage your athletes to create emotional and physical separation of the perceived triggers by changing locations or tasks.
- Assist your athletes in reconnecting to the present moment by utilizing meditation, muscle tension & relaxation techniques, and/or deep breathing.
- Foster a positive environment and mental reframe by finding the humor in the moment while focusing on empowering body language, remembering past successes, and sharing your “why” with the athletes.
REINFORCING SKILLS

Learning new skills takes time and repetition. Finding ways to include additional practice of new skills throughout your training session can help your athletes acquire new skills more quickly over time. It’s also a great way to shake up the monotony of practice by using a variety of games, drills, and exercises throughout the season. Below you’ll see some ideas on how to include this week’s technique of penetration steps and lines of defense into a practice, but we encourage you and your athletes to come up with new creative ideas as well!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm Up / Cool Down</th>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Drilling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stretching: Static: Seatches / Up Dog Dynamic: Seal Crawl - Forward &amp; Back Motion / Left &amp; Right Motion / Circle Motion</td>
<td>Knee Tag: Point for touching opponent’s knee (Can be played on feet, on knees, and in bear crawl position.) Find the Lock: Point for getting both hands, locked around the opponent’s leg. (Can be played on feet, on knees, and in bear crawl position.) Singles Only: In this game we can only attack with single leg take-downs. Scoring a single leg take down is worth 2 points, defending and scoring on defense is worth 1 point. First person to score 6 points wins!</td>
<td>Van Speed: Slow set up with explosive finish or vice versa Create Complexity: Opponent posts and knee slides, or circles to chase the near ankle Manipulate Resistance: Partner allows for easy sprawl go behind or begins to recover the single and defend Change Reactions: Opponent attempts maintaining two hands locked on the single + on both knees or posts hands to knee slide back up</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sparring / Combat</th>
<th>Strength &amp; Conditioning</th>
<th>Spotlight: Varying Resistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manipulate Resistance: Easy In / Hard Out</td>
<td>Partner Single Drill: Partner lifts single leg, athlete balances on one leg. Can touch the ground &amp; bounce back up</td>
<td>Easy In / Hard Out: Low resistance to hands locked around the leg but spar once there</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situational Starts: Must Score / Must Defend Easy In / Combat Out Utilize Restrictions</td>
<td>Conditioning: Spin drill on arm more than on speed</td>
<td>Low resistance to hands locked around the leg and defensive finished but spar once in pare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Weight: Reverse tango to knee drive Super Woman Hold Single Leg Balance + Squat</td>
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<td>Hard In / Easy Out: Sparring hand flight for set up but once hands locked around the leg easy defensive finish to go behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sparring hand flight, hands locked around the leg, and defensive finish to go behind but once in pare they lose resistance for the turn</td>
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CONNECTION CORNER

Create Partnerships: Partner with another club or sport in your area to develop a crossover event. Let all coaches lead a portion of the event that focuses on their sport. This round-robin sport sampling presents an opportunity to recruit new athletes while strengthening local relationships.

Include Everyone: Invite local sport administrators, thought-leaders, and community centric establishments to a VIRTUAL open house. You can showcase your program while sharing club information, offer physical demonstrations, host an Athlete and Parent Q&A, and start the conversation on how THEY can bring wrestling directly to their community programs, schools, clubs, and even universities.

Open Your Doors: Wrestling welcomes all body types, age, sex, gender, race, and religion. Host an introductory wrestling clinic in your local community that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially to new-to-wrestling wrestlers! With intentional planning and marketing, new-to-wrestling wrestlers can enjoy games delivered to their skill level which foster positive Emotional Regulation and stress management. Focus on introductory skills and games while keeping the event short to spur interest and facilitate future engagement. Coaches, don’t forget to use this time to connect with the athletes to help them fall in love with sport.