Success Story: Building Mental Adaptability and Confidence in Top Junior Athletes

The Challenge

Despite strong physical ability, the athlete struggled to reset after mistakes. He tied his sense of success almost entirely to goal scoring, which led to frustration, self-criticism, and difficulty adapting during games — especially during scoring droughts.

Prior to using Skylar's Run, his support team spent **3–4 weeks** building a foundation with:

- Mindfulness practices
- Narrative therapy
- Breathing techniques ("Breathing in, I know I'm breathing in...")
  Informal mindfulness focused on present-moment awareness

Why THYNK

Skylar's Run was introduced as a tool to help the athlete **practice mental flexibility and emotional regulation in real time**.

During the **first three weeks**, sessions focused on:

- Mantras for success
- Relaxation response training
- Engaging with challenge and novelty

  (including the game's "smog bots")

Regular check-ins every 1–2 weeks helped the athlete reflect on what he was thinking and feeling while playing — and how those patterns showed up on the ice.

Client:
22 year old junior hockey player

Setting:
one::one coaching

Athlete Focus:
Athlete faced significant mental barriers — including **cognitive rigidity** and **persistent negative self-talk** — that were impacting both his confidence and performance.



“You can fail, but you are not a failure. Take a break, come back tomorrow and you **WILL** pass.”



The Breakthrough

When the athlete went through a period without scoring goals, old patterns began to resurface. However, a conversation with his coach reframed success around multiple performance variables, not just scoring.

This became a pivotal moment:

- He shifted his mindset from rigid, outcome-based thinking - allowing him to regain access to his skills
- He began valuing effort, positioning, decision-making, and teamwork
- Scoring moved from the top of his success list to one of many indicators of success

The mental skills practiced in Skylar’s Run directly supported this reframing.

The Outcome

Through consistent use, Skylar’s Run helped the athlete develop adaptability – a core cognitive skill – that extended beyond the game. It allowed him to calibrate his relationship with his on ice performance.

Key outcomes included:

- **Emotional Literacy:** A 100% success rate in improving the participant's ability to identify and describe complex emotions, even under stress.
- **Cognitive Resilience:** Significant gains in the ability to "let go" of distressing thoughts and perceive emotions without immediate reaction. This resulted in increased confidence in adapting to new challenges
- **Intentional Presence:** Moving away from "autopilot" behavior toward a more conscious, alert way of experiencing daily life.



Why it matters

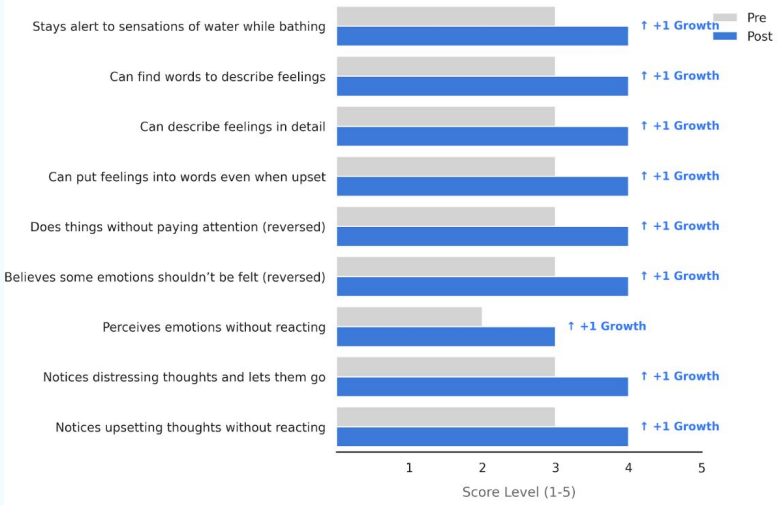
1. The Shift from "Knowing" to "Doing" While traditional therapy provided the theory - CBT/Mindfulness - Skylar's Run provided the *gym*. It offered a low-stakes environment to physically practice the act of failing, resetting, and regulating. This proves that digital interventions can serve as the "practice field" for executive functions before they are tested in high-stakes environments like a hockey game or a classroom exam.

2. Breaking the "Outcome" Trap Cognitive rigidity—focusing only on the final score and a narrow view of success—is a major barrier to growth in both athletics and academics. This tool successfully helped a high-performing young adult dismantle rigid thinking patterns and opened up his vuew if success. By gamifying the "reset," the user learned that success is about *adaptability*, not just the final result.

3. Measurable "Soft Skill" Growth Often, terms like "resilience" and "presence" are treated as abstract personality traits. This success story quantifies them. The move from autopilot to intentional presence shows that mental adaptability is a trainable skill that can be improved with consistent, targeted digital practice.

The Result

The athlete experienced growth in all domains of his life - especially in the non-reactivity section, implying that he exhibited improvements in mindfulness skills related to cognitive inhibition, behavioral inhibition, self-regulation, and emotional regulation. For example, he went from being able to reset and remain centered when something upsetting happens only some of the time to often.



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