

# Mental Reset System © (MRS)

By AthletePsychologyHub.com

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## Introduction: Your Secret Weapon on Game Day

Imagine this: it's the final quarter of a critical game.

Physically, you're up for the task and still feel fine.

You've trained hard, you're fit, and your skills are still sharp.

You're trying your best to insert yourself into the game and make crucial plays.

But something's off - you just can't seem to inject yourself as much as you used to.

You feel tight. Stressed. Overwhelmed.

Your mind races, the pressure builds—and suddenly, you're choking on simple plays you've nailed a thousand times in practice.

It's not your physical ability that's letting you down; it's your emotional state.

**Great news: you can learn to control this.**

That's what this guide is about.

It's your practical handbook for managing real-time emotions and performing at your best under pressure.

## The Real Battle is Mental

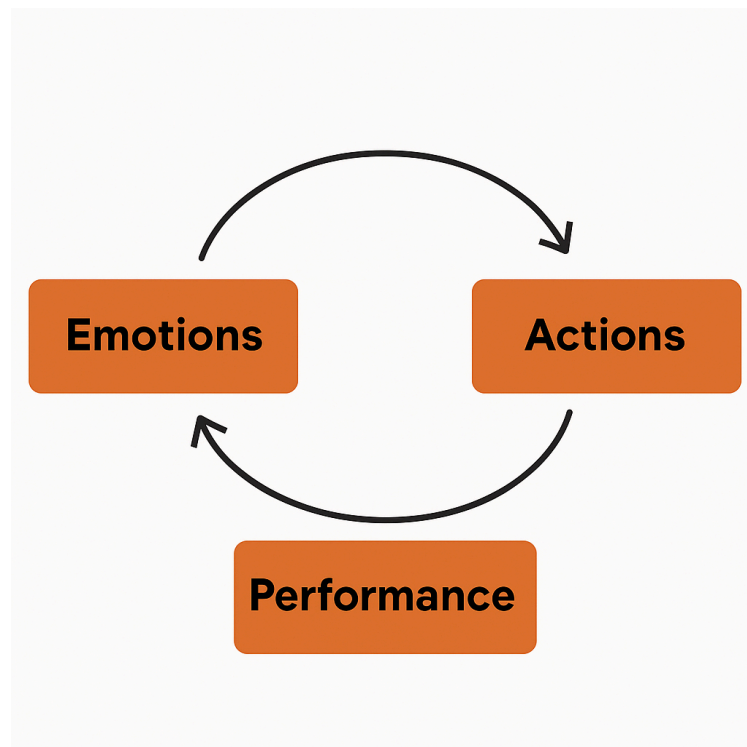
Most athletes mistakenly assume physical talent alone determines outcomes.

Yet, we've all seen talented players crumble under stress, missing easy shots, fumbling balls, or making poor decisions when it counts most.

*Why?*

It's simple: **your brain controls your emotions, and your emotions, in turn, affect your actions or behaviour, determining your overall**

performance. Your performance (good or bad) then affects your emotions, creating a positive or negative feedback loop.



When emotions surge under pressure, your brain enters a protective mode.

Stress hormones tend to flood your system, narrowing your attention and focus, tightening your muscles, and scrambling your ability to think clearly.

But, here's a core idea in this guide you **MUST** remember:

**You can't control the pressure, but can control how you respond to it.**

So, with that in mind, I created the Mental Reset System (MRS) because every athlete, no matter how skilled, will eventually face moments when their brain hijacks their performance.

You can't always control the initial wave of stress.

Your amygdala fires, your body tenses, and your focus narrows.

That's biology.

But what you *can* control is what happens next.

The MRS gives you a way to interrupt that automatic stress loop in real time, by learning to spot it, shift it, and take charge before it snowballs.

It's not about eliminating pressure but building a reliable system to respond when it hits.

## The Mental Reset System (MRS) Explained

My MR-Sytem uses a **traffic-light approach** for easy, real-time emotion management.

I developed it years ago after working with professional rugby players (and others) and noticing their inability to be aware of their emotional state during key phases or plays and react appropriately to them.

*In short*, it works like a traffic light, which is easy to remember and use in real time:




● **Green (In Flow):** Everything feels easy, natural, and effortless. You're fully present.

● **Orange (Elevated Emotions):** You're stressed, tense, or distracted, but still manageable.

● **Red (Overwhelmed):** Your emotions are out of control; you're either panicked or shut down completely.

So, what is your goal with this in real time (mid-game)?

 To quickly recognise your emotional state (*your colour*), and shift it toward “Green” by pulling one or more of these four mental “levers”:

1. **Focus:** What are you paying attention to right now?
2. **Communication:** How are you speaking to yourself or teammates?
3. **Body:** How are you physically responding? How’s your breathing?
4. **Action:** What immediate steps are you taking next? What do you need to do/stop doing right now?

Think of these levers as “real” control points with which you don't just leave your emotions to determine your performance but **deliberately move them toward optimal performance.**

## Real World Example (Rugby)

Imagine you’re a flanker in rugby.

The game is tight.

You’ve just knocked on the ball at the breakdown and the opposition has a scrum in your 22.

You feel your heart rate spike, your jaw tense, and frustration creeping in.

This is a classic *Orange* moment.

BUT, you’re not completely falling apart, yet, however if you don’t regulate quickly, you could slip into *Red*.

Maybe you overcommit in the next tackle, miss your read on defense, or start barking at teammates, or worse, the ref.

That's when things unravel.

But, now imagine that you've trained this MR system and have process to deal with this situation.

You catch yourself in the *Orange* and pause — just long enough for awareness to kick in.

**You pull the Focus lever (for example):**

"Next job," you tell yourself. You narrow your attention to just the first defensive phase after the scrum. Nothing else.

**You pull the Communication lever:**

You say to yourself, "Flush it!" You actively calm yourself by letting the mistake go (it's in the past) and you reengage the game quickly.

**You pull the Body lever:**

You drop your shoulders. You breathe in for 4, out for 4. You reset posture, eyes up, just before the scrum.

**And you pull the Action lever:**

You decide on your next task after the scrum. You move with purpose. You set your sights, scan the 10, talk to the inside defender. You're back in it.

You've shifted.

You caught the *Orange* before it bled into *Red*, and by doing so, you pulled yourself back into *Green*, where you can actually perform.

This is basically how this system works: **You see the light, pull the levers, reset fast.**

In the next section, we'll look at each of the four FCBA levers in more detail, and how to develop them as go-to tools, especially under pressure.

# Pulling Your Mental Levers (FCBA)

## 1. Focus (F): Your Mental Spotlight

What you focus on grows. Where focus goes, energy flows.

That seems to be a law of nature AND sports performance.

So, in simple terms, if you dwell on mistakes or potential failures, your anxiety spikes as a natural reaction to your focus.

But, if you shift your focus to manageable, 'next' tasks or familiar actions, your brain tends to relax.

*Example:* Rugby players might "flush" a dropped pass by quickly focusing on their next role in defence and ensuring they make only the next tackle. This gets them "back in the game" quickly.

## 2. Communication (C): Talk Yourself into Performance

Self-talk is based on neuroscience, and isn't just fluff as some athletes might think.

Negative self-talk tends to increase stress hormones, such as cortisol and excess epinephrine, which can harm performance.

Positive, constructive, and clear communication does the opposite.

*Example:* Tennis players often use brief phrases like "next point" or "reset" to rapidly shift out of negative spirals, especially when



games are so brief (few points) and even a short lapse in concentration can cost you one or two games quickly.

### **3. Body (B): Your Physical Reset Button**

Your body directly influences your mind - just consider how much harder it is to mentally concentrate during a rugby game when you're unfit versus when you're physically fit. The difference is huge.

So, beyond being fit to start with, taking deep breaths, making posture adjustments, or taking simple actions like pulling up socks can all contribute to mental fortitude or breaking unhelpful mental patterns.

*Example:* A (fit) hockey goalie who taps the goalposts between shots refocuses physically and mentally.

### **4. Action (A): Quick Wins Under Pressure**

Taking immediate action is a helpful, practical way to interrupt spiralling emotions by providing a tangible response to a situation. It also prevents athletes from dwelling on negative thoughts and feelings.

This type of active engagement can often help you shift your focus away from the negative downward spiral and towards the task at hand (the next task, as we often call it), thereby improving your performance and helping you recover emotionally quicker.

So, in short, engaging in small, achievable next tasks can quickly restore your confidence and control in crucial moments during a sports performance.

*Example:* The tackled player who failed to offload the ball, quickly gets up and immediately focuses just making the next tackle, and if possible, securing the ball again.

As a team, they also need to recognise the mistake, not dwell on it, and immediately shift their focus to securing the ball and setting up a new attacking phase from the ruck.

## Your Brain When Dealing With Pressure (Simplified)

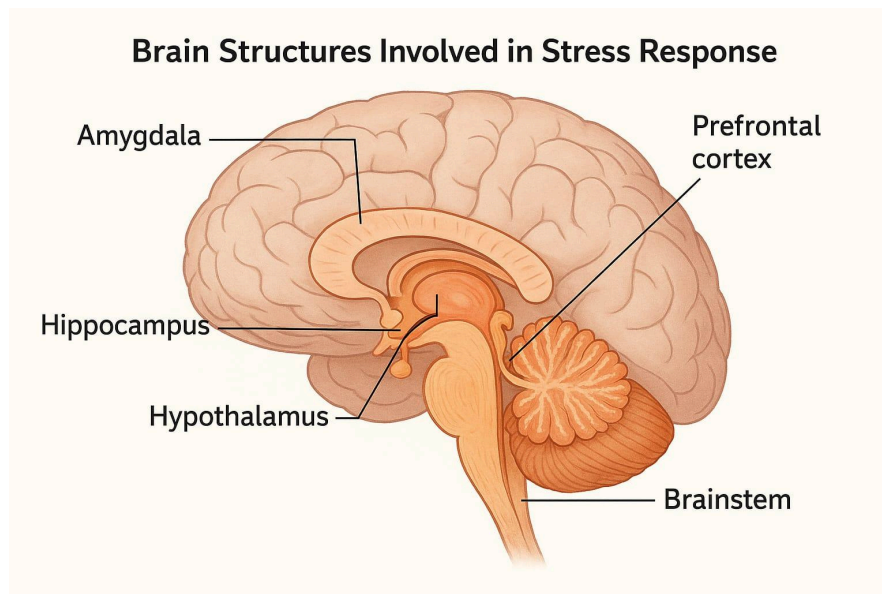
Here's *why* the MRS works and you should build a pressure-coping strategy around it:

When you're under pressure, late in the game, behind on the scoreboard, or after making a mistake, your brain doesn't know you're playing a sport.

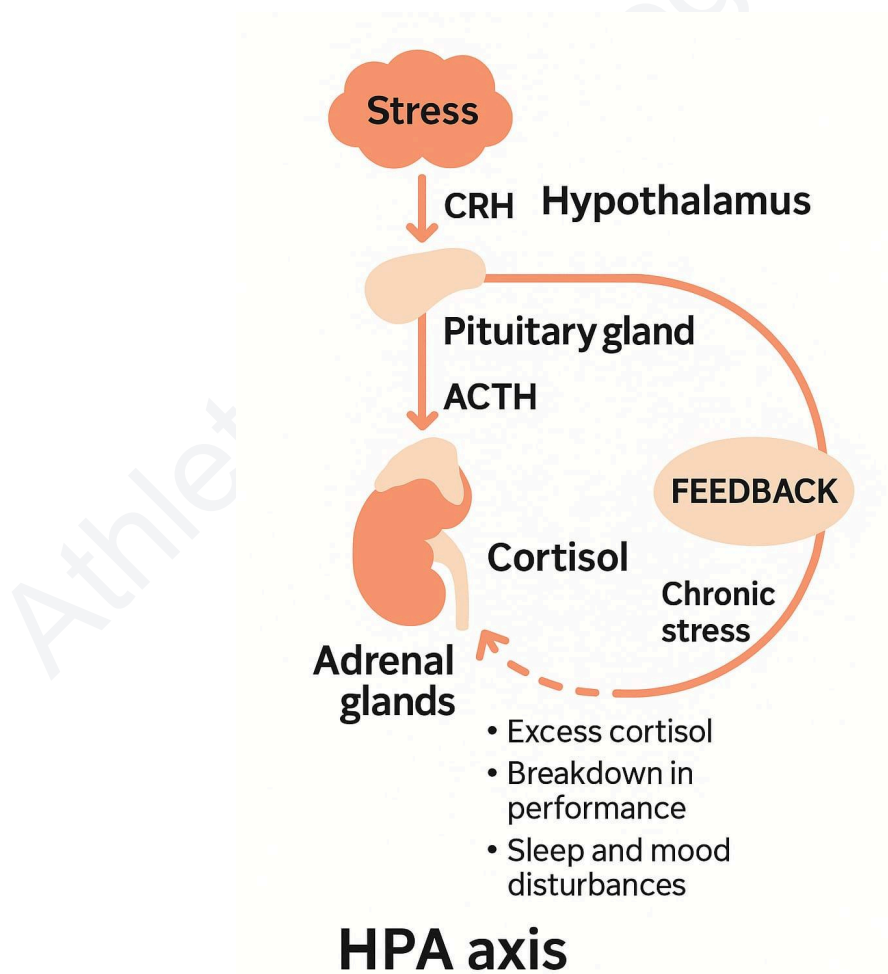
It reacts as if you're under a 'real' threat, which, of course, you're not.

This reaction is driven by your brain's **limbic system**, especially the **amygdala**.

The amygdala detects danger and triggers your normal survival response (fight, flight, or freeze).



This typically sets off a chain reaction along the HPA (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal) axis (reasonably widely known nowadays:



- The **hypothalamus** signals your **adrenal glands** (located on top of the kidneys) to flood your system with **cortisol** and **adrenaline**.
- Your **prefrontal cortex** — the part of your brain responsible for focus, decision-making, and planning (elements vital for sports performance) — becomes suppressed.
- Muscle tension also increases, heart rate spikes, breathing shortens, and your attention narrows.

Now, that is an excellent response by your body if you're avoiding an imminent car crash.

But, it's not so great if you're lining up a penalty kick, stuck in a scramble on the mat, or trying to run a clean drill under pressure.

That is where my **FCBA approach** comes in: *Focus, Communication, Body, and Action*.

These are the four "levers" you can *train* and use in real time to shift gears in real-time during a sports performance:

- **Focus:** Helps redirect your mental energy away from fear and toward the task at hand.
- **Communication:** Shapes your inner dialogue (self-talk) and external cues to reframe the moment.
- **Body:** Uses breathing, posture, and tension release to calm the nervous system.

- **Action:** Re-engages you with the next task, keeping you from freezing or overthinking.

By pulling these levers, you essentially interrupt the amygdala's takeover (above) and bring the **prefrontal cortex** (thinking, decision-making, focus) back online.

That's how you stop spiralling out of control and start performing to your potential again.

You're not just calming down, you're literally **retraining your brain's default reaction** to pressure, over time.

But I want to help you simplify that, which is where my MRS Digital Assessment tool comes in.

## How You Can Use the MRS Digital Assessment Tool

The accompanying MRS digital tool I created and that is available to you is your personalised feedback mechanism.

**You can use it anytime, post-games, to review and assess your performance from a mental or psychological perspective.**

I know that many athletes usually conduct debriefs and game reviews after games (I've sat in several of them over the years), but these often focus on gameplay, strategic errors, defensive tactics, skill, fitness, and so on.

Very few review how individuals and/or the team performed “mentally” during crucial or pressure moments of a game; Not in-depth, anyway.

I have always found this lacking for many of the people I’ve worked with in the past.

So, to help you with this “mental review,” I’ve created a simple digital tool you can use to help pinpoint your emotional management, strengths, and gaps immediately after a game or intense practice session.

It basically assesses your mental performance and real-time use of FCBA levers in competition.

It also gives you practical tips based on your performance patterns during the most recent game or practice, since performances change from game to game. So, it’s never the same.

And by consistently using this tool, you can reinforce (i.e., train) your emotional management skills for competition, making performing well in high-pressure situations a new normal.

## Examples from the Field

**Cricket:** A batter uses a simple physical trigger, touching gloves between deliveries, to reset mentally.

**Kickboxing:** Fighters use quick, rhythmic breathing and mental rehearsal of the first move (next step) before matches to keep nerves in check.

**Netball:** Players adopt clear calls ("mine," "yours," "hold") under pressure to keep confusion and panic at bay.

## Put the MRS into Daily Practice

As an athlete, I encourage you to make training emotional regulation part of your daily routine.

Use this guide and the digital assessment tool to your advantage and growth.

Make sure you:

**Practice:** Regularly simulate pressure scenarios in training.

**Reflect:** Use the digital assessment consistently to see progress.

**Adjust:** Constantly refine your FCBA levers to keep performance sharp.

## Closing Thoughts: From Pressure to Performance

Emotions are only signals and not your enemy.

Don't aim to avoid them or to feel things like frustration or anger.

They are signals that are trying to tell you something.

So, pay attention.

Because once you learn to read them and respond strategically, you gain a massive competitive advantage over your opponents.

The Mental Reset System is grounded in psychological research and proven athletic practice and doesn't just improve your game; it changes your relationship with pressure.

Once you know you can handle pressure well, no matter what happens on the field, it becomes very hard to deal with as an opponent.

Just think back to any opponent you've ever competed against whom you couldn't rattle - how tough was it dealing with that?

So, the next time the stakes are high, you'll be ready, not because you're hoping for the best, but because you've trained for it.

You've learned how to reset mentally, instantly, and effectively.

That's not just the key to high performance, it unlocks ultimate confidence.

You've got this.

Now, just go and put in the work.

-Gideon

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**PS.** If you need more help with your athletic performance, also check out my free [Mental Toughness assessment](#) with loads of helpful suggestions.