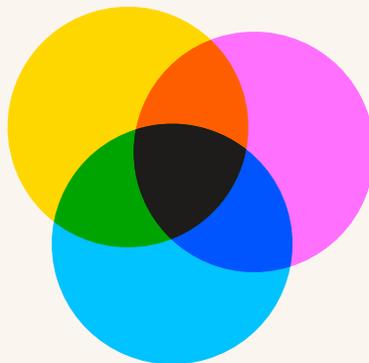


Chatter



Book Club Kit

For the Athlete and Coach



Ethan Kross

For the Athlete & Coach

1. Many professional sports require quick thinking in moments of high stress—sometimes calling for split-second decisions on a moment's notice. Under such circumstances, athletes need to rely on their automatic habits to excel, which is precisely what Kross says chatter can undo. Do you find that you or the athletes you coach face issues with chatter during high-pressure sport situations? Which of the tools outlined in *Chatter* would be most effective in these high-stakes environments to prevent choking and help athletes excel?
2. Does the voice in your head motivate or demotivate you during a tough competition or moments of pressure during a game or match?
3. Do you ever “talk to yourself” during a competition to psych yourself up? Do you think the conversations you have with yourself influence your performance? What types of self-talk do you find particularly helpful? Why do you think different types of self-talk help or harm performance?
4. After an incredible high school baseball career, pitcher Rick Ankiel was drafted by the Cardinals. During his first full year in the majors, at age 21, Ankiel was the starting pitcher against the Braves in game one of the playoffs. Despite having pitched at an elite level for nearly his whole life, Ankiel struggled during that high-stress game. He began to throw wild pitch after wild pitch—something he had never done before—due in part to the stress he was experiencing. Have you ever experienced something similar in your sports career? Were you able to overcome your mental block? Why or why not?
5. Although the value of being able to manage stress under high-stakes conditions is increasingly recognized as a key for achieving athletic excellence, some athletes and coaches are reluctant to talk about the role that chatter plays in athletic performance. Why do you think this is? How can you help create a culture where talking about chatter is commonplace and accepted?
6. Discuss how you can be a better “chatter advisor” to your teammates or athletes.
7. Athletics is a field that requires peak physical performance. How do you balance the physical demands on your body with the mental demands on your mind in the form of stress and anxiety? Are there particular moments when you train or compete that trigger chatter? What strategies that Kross describes can you use to mitigate that chatter going forward?
8. Kross writes that our default state is to “decouple” from the present, “our brains transporting us to past events, imagined scenarios, and other internal musings.” Do you ever find it difficult to harness your chatter to remain present during a game or competition?
9. Do you or your athletes participate in any rituals to help focus before a game, match, or competition? Why or why not? Are there any rituals you might want to establish having read *Chatter*?
10. Discuss which of the tools outlined in *Chatter* might be the most helpful to you as an athlete or coach. Why do those tools in particular seem to be the most fitting for your profession? Are there any that wouldn't work for you or your athletes? How will you implement them moving forward?