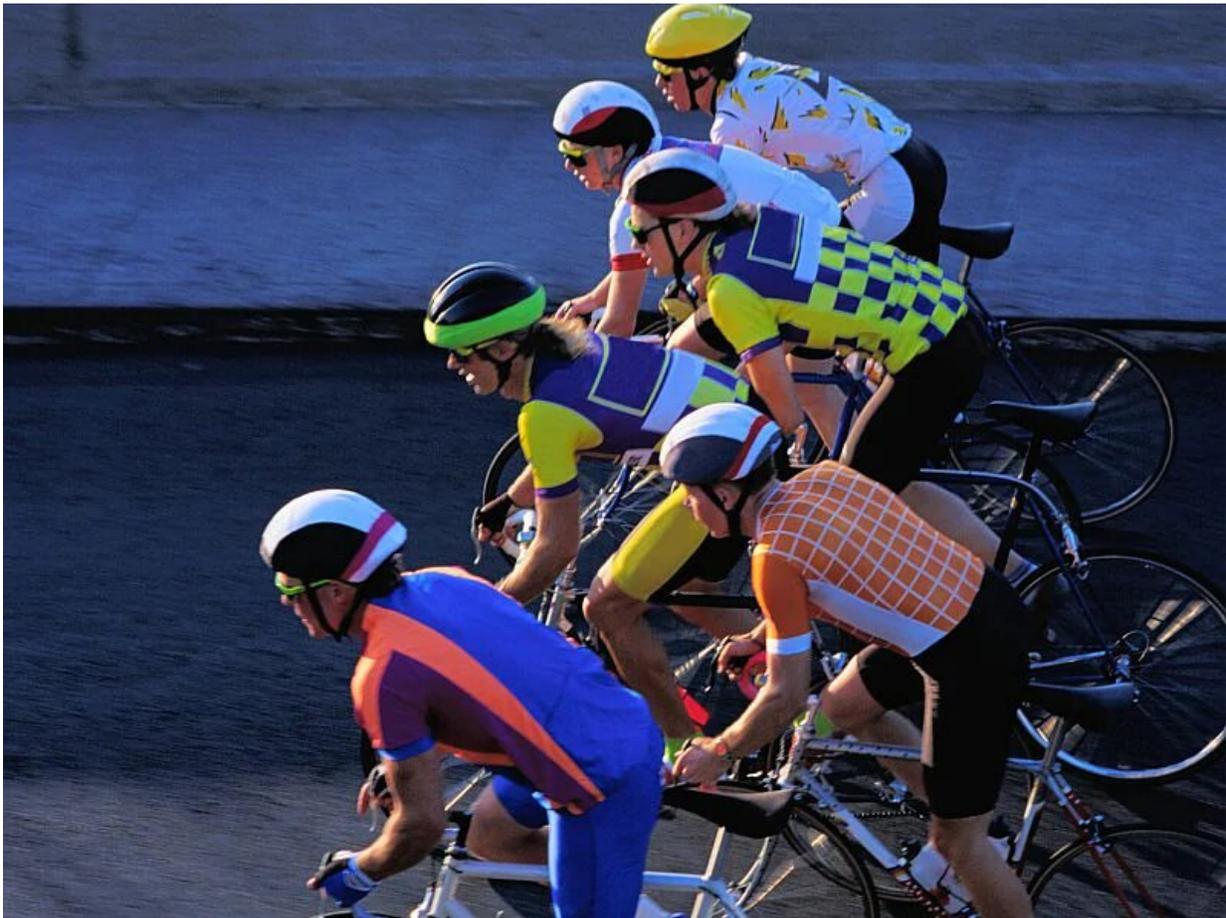


How to get ready mentally for your first competition

September 30 2019, by Len Canter



You've signed up for your first fitness event and you've mapped out your

training schedule for success. Now add mental preparation to the plan.

It's essential because the very physical training that gets your body into shape for competition can dull your mental motivation and even bore your muscles, according to the American College of Sports Medicine. So, build in some variety. Instead of your usual stretching, take a yoga class once a week. If you weight train with free weights, try resistance bands. If [cycling](#) is your typical cardio, try a rowing or cross country ski machine.

Next, add mental exercises, starting with visualization. Take a few minutes each day to run through the event in your mind, from picturing yourself full of energy at the starting line to working with focus during the event to sailing through to the finish. Try to see the image in as much detail as possible—your clothes, the air temperature, the balloons at the starting line. Draw on all your senses to experience the moment. This not only motivates you, but also tamps down any nervousness you might have.

Be your own booster squad. Use positive words to encourage yourself, and remind yourself of past accomplishments as you resist focusing on any doubts. Think about the fun element of the activity, why you love the sport, and that participating itself is the victory, rather than your finish time. Also resist getting caught up in comparisons to other participants and how well they might do. Focus on yourself and what you hope to accomplish.

After the event, celebrate your achievement and savor the moment. You'll draw on it to prepare for your second competition!

More information: Learn more about [visualization](#) at the Association for Applied Sports Psychology.

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