

mary-kate and ashley



Amy Acuff (Tiger/Asics Corp.)

{ mind, body
& soul }

Cross-Train Your Brain

We all want to do our best but we all get nervous under pressure -- to score high on a test, deliver a speech, or make the first string on the team.

We at mary-kateandashley.com consulted an expert, **Dr. Jenn Berman**, sports psychologist and former National Gymnastics Champion, who gave us three top tips on how you can learn to perform better than you ever dreamed you could.

1. **Imagery.** "Imagine yourself, in your body, doing whatever thing you feel nervous about doing," says Dr. Jenn. "It could be standing in front of your class delivering your oral report, kicking the soccer ball into the net, performing on stage in the school play."

Close your eyes and walk through things, step by step in your mind, detail by detail. Try it out the night before you have to perform and then again before your "big" moment. The more you imagine this event in your mind, the better results you'll get.

According to Dr. Jenn, "Studies show you have to imagine yourself, not as a spectator, but actually inside your body." Then, the imagery becomes ingrained in your muscles, nerves and joints.

Cross-Train Your Brain (page 2)

... { Continued }

2. **Breathing.** When you get nervous do you have trouble catching your breath? Do you breathe faster and start sweating? That's human nature. "You can't make your heart slow down but," Dr. Jenn says, "you can control your breathing."

Here's how: Inhale for four counts, hold for four counts and exhale for four counts. Repeat three or four times. Practice this right before you tackle your next challenge. You'll do better, look calmer and use a lot less antiperspirant.

3. **Pump yourself up.** Positive self-talk is another great way to give yourself that winning edge. Professional athletic coaches strive to give four positive comments to every one criticism. Why? Most of us tend to only remember the bad things.

Remember what's good about you. Give yourself a test every time you walk by a store window: For every negative thought you think about yourself -- "I look fat or my hair looks ugly" -- make yourself think two positive thoughts, like "I have nice shoulders and my freckles are cute."