



BRING YOUR MIND TO THE GAME

SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

&

MENTAL TRAINING

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Lionel Messi and the Art of the In-Moment Reset

If you watch him closely, something stands out. A goal is scored against his team. A chance is missed. A mistake happens. There is no visible spiral. Within seconds, his eyes lift. He scans the field. He adjusts his position. He is back in the game. No dwelling. No visible emotional hangover.

Just reset → read → respond.

That is not just his personality. That is trained regulation.

The ARC Protocol

Accept – Reset – Commit

A 3-Step Mental Reset for In-Game Moments

This protocol is designed for in-the-moment use.

Not before competition.


Not after competition.

During.

The Science Behind the Reset (Brief and Practical)

When a mistake happens:

- The **amygdala** activates (threat detection).
- The nervous system spikes (heart rate, muscle tension).
- The left hemisphere increases verbal overanalysis.
- Attention shifts backward (“Why did I do that?”).



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If not interrupted, performance drops.

A reset works because it:

1. Re-engages the **prefrontal cortex** (decision-making and regulation).
2. Reduces sympathetic overactivation (breath slows physiology).
3. Redirects attention forward (task-focused networks re-engage).

You are not trying to eliminate emotion.

You are preventing emotion from hijacking execution.

The ARC Protocol (In-Game Version)

Step 1: ACCEPT (1–2 seconds)

Acknowledge what happened.

Not dramatically.

Not emotionally.

Neutrally.


Internally say:

- “That happened.”
- “Miss.”
- “Lost point.”
- “Okay.”

No analysis.

No story.

No self-judgment.



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Acceptance prevents resistance.

Resistance prolongs emotion.

This step stops rumination before it begins.

Step 2: RESET (1 breath + cue)

Now interrupt physiology.

You have 3 options (choose one and train it repeatedly):

Option A: One Controlled Breath

- Inhale through nose
- Slow exhale
- Drop shoulders
- Unclench jaw

Option B: Physical Micro-Reset


- Adjust grip
- Tap shoes
- Look at a fixed target
- Briefly turn away and back

Option C: Cue Word

Use one trained cue word (see Cue Word List)

Examples:

- "Here."
- "Next."
- "One."
- "Present."
- "Trust."



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The cue occupies the conscious mind just enough so overthinking doesn't.

Reset is not emotional suppression.

It is emotional regulation.

Step 3: COMMIT (Immediate Forward Focus)

Now you actively shift attention to the next action.

Ask:

- Where am I positioned?
- What is the next play?
- What is my role right now?

Then fully commit.

Not half-engaged.

Not lingering mentally behind.


You "box" the mistake for later analysis.

You can analyze after the game.

Right now, you execute.

This is critical:

Mistakes are reviewed later.
Decisions are made now.



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What This Protocol Trains

Repeated use builds:

- Emotional tolerance
- Faster recovery time
- Reduced rumination
- Stronger attentional control
- Identity as a composed performer

You are shortening the emotional recovery window.

Elite performers don't feel less.

They recover faster.

How to Practice ARC

1. During Practice (Live Reps)


Deliberately use ARC:

- After every missed shot
- After losing a rally
- After a turnover

Train it in low stakes so it works in high stakes.

2. In Visualization Sessions

In your regular visualization work (see the [Visualization Protocol](#)):



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Add deliberate mistake moments.

Visualize:

- Missing.
- Conceding.
- Falling behind.

Then rehearse:

Accept → Breath → Cue → Commit.

Slow motion.

Detailed.

Present tense.

This builds neural familiarity.


Familiarity reduces emotional shock.

3. In Clutch Scenarios

Combine ARC inside high-pressure rehearsal (as structured in the advanced [Clutch Performance Protocol](#)).

Pressure spike → ARC → Execute cleanly.

That is how clutch identity is built.



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Final Reminder

You are not trying to be emotionless.

You are training speed of recovery.

The moment after the mistake matters more than the mistake itself.

ARC is simple.

But simple, repeated under pressure, becomes automatic.

Accept.

Reset.

Commit.

And play the next moment fully.

All the best! :)