



The Task Focus Protocol

How to Stay Calm When Everything Feels On the Line

Purpose

This protocol is designed to help you stay composed in high-stakes moments, not by suppressing pressure, but by shrinking it.

When outcomes feel huge, the brain panics.

When the task feels small, the brain performs.

You are not trying to win the entire match.

You are training your mind to win the next 10 seconds.

What Happens Under Pressure?


In high-pressure moments:

- The amygdala increases threat detection
- Working memory becomes overloaded
- Attention shifts to consequences
- Internal dialogue becomes future-focused (“What if I lose?”)

Research in sport psychology shows that pressure reduces working memory efficiency because attention gets pulled toward outcome and evaluation rather than execution.

The brain cannot focus deeply on:

- The scoreboard
- The consequences



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- Other people's reactions
- And**
- Precise motor execution

At the same time.

Something has to give.

When attention spreads wide → performance drops.

When attention narrows to the task → performance stabilizes.

This is called **attentional control**.

And it can be trained.

The Task Focus Protocol

A 3-Step In-Moment Regulation Tool


Use this during:

- Final overs
 - Match points
 - Interviews
 - Public speaking
 - Exams
 - Any moment that feels “big”
-

Step 1 — Shrink the Moment

Internally say:

- “Focus only on the next 10 seconds.”



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- “Just this action.”
- “Nothing else exists.”

You are not thinking about:

- Winning
- Losing
- Celebration
- Regret

You are reducing the psychological field of view.

Big picture = anxiety.

Small task = control.

Pressure becomes manageable when it becomes specific.

Step 2 — Ask the Control Question

Ask yourself:

“What can I control right now?”


Not later.

Not the outcome.

Right now.

Examples:

- My breathing
- My grip
- My first step
- My eye focus
- My posture
- My opening sentence



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This shifts attention from evaluation → execution.

The prefrontal cortex re-engages when the brain receives a concrete action.

Clarity reduces anxiety.

Step 3 — Replace Outcome Thoughts With Action Words

Outcome thoughts sound like:

- “I have to win.”
- “I can’t mess this up.”
- “This is everything.”

Replace them with **execution cues**.

Examples:


- “Smooth.”
- “Strong start.”
- “See it.”
- “One.”
- “Steady.”

One or two words only.

Short cue words reduce cognitive load and prevent overanalysis, similar to how cue-based resets work in structured routines like the [Rapid Reset framework](#).

Your conscious mind needs a simple job.

Give it one.



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What This Protocol Trains

With repetition, you build:

- Narrow attentional focus
- Emotional regulation under stakes
- Reduced rumination
- Faster recovery from pressure spikes
- Trust in process over outcome

You are not becoming fearless.

You are becoming precise.

When to Practice

Do not wait for finals.


Train it:

- In practice
- In small competitive moments
- During drills
- During mock interviews
- During everyday stress

Pressure tolerance is built in low stakes first.

Final Reminder

Pressure feels big because your brain zooms out.



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Performance improves when you zoom in.

Shrink the moment.

Control the controllable.

Execute the action.

One small, precise task at a time.

That is how composure is built.

Keep going! :)
