

**Performance development of adolescent athletes:  
A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach**

by

**ELLIE DYKEMA**

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. L. H. HUMAN

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i

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the subjective interpretations of five adolescent athletes who experienced a sport-specific version of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach. The MAC approach is an alternative sport psychology intervention to more traditional control-driven approaches, such as Psychological Skills Training (PST). An in-depth qualitative study was conducted at the High Performance Centre (hpc) of the University of Pretoria (UP). The sport-specific MAC programme was developed for the sport of athletics. The programme was facilitated to five adolescent athletes who participate in the sport of athletics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the participants experienced the programme. The interviews were based on written reflections provided by participants during the programme. The research position for this study was phenomenology, and specifically Interpretive Phenomenology (IP). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the material. The results revealed that there was only one theme that was common to all five participants. Furthermore, the results portrayed diversity amongst the participant experiences and subjectivity in their interpretations of the MAC approach. The results displayed how some themes are consistent with MAC-related literature, and how other themes contradict the literature. Additionally, some themes have not been reported in MAC literature before. Thus, the study contributed to the expansion of literature on the MAC approach.

**Key words:** Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC), Psychological Skills Training (PST), sport-specific, adolescent, athlete, phenomenology, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Acknowledgements

### Abstract

	Page
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	1
1.1 CONTEXT	1
1.1.1 University of Pretoria	1
1.1.2 Psychology Department	2
1.1.3 High Performance Centre	2
1.1.4 Sport Psychology Services at the High Performance Centre	3
1.1.4.1 Performance Termination	3
1.1.4.2 Performance Impairment	4
1.1.4.3 Performance Dysfunction	4
1.1.4.4 Performance Development	5
1.1.5 Sport Psychology Dilemmas at the High Performance Centre	5
1.1.5.1 Dilemma 1: Programme	5
1.1.5.2 Dilemma 2: Research	6
1.2 ATHLETICS	6
1.2.1 Athletics in South Africa	6
1.2.2 Athletics at the High Performance Centre	7
1.3 QUESTIONS	7



1.3.1	Primary Research Question 1	7
1.3.2	Primary Research Question 2	8
1.3.3	Primary Research Question 3	8
1.4	GOALS	9
1.4.1	General Goals	9
1.4.2	Specific Goals	9
1.5	MOTIVATION	10
1.5.1	Academic Motivation	10
1.5.2	Research Motivation	10
1.5.3	Organisational Motivation	11
1.6	STRUCTURE	11
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>		<b>13</b>
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>		<b>13</b>
2.1	PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING IN SPORT	13
2.1.1	Origin	13
2.1.2	Philosophy	
2.1.3	Psychological Skills	14
2.1.3.1	Arousal Control	14
2.1.3.2	Self-Talk	15
2.1.3.3	Imagery	15
2.1.3.4	Pre-performance Routines	16
2.1.3.5	Goal Setting	16

2.1.4	Research	17
2.1.5	Critique	18
2.2	MINDFULNESS-ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT IN SPORT	18
2.2.1	Origin	18
2.2.1.1	Origin of Mindfulness	18
2.2.1.2	Origin of Acceptance-Commitment	20
2.2.1.3	Origin of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Approach	21
2.2.2	Philosophy	21
2.2.3	Psychological Practices	22
2.2.3.1	Mindfulness versus Mindlessness	22
2.2.3.2	Acceptance versus Avoidance	23
2.2.3.3	Commitment versus Motivation	24
2.2.4	Research	25
2.2.5	Critique	28
2.3	MINDFULNESS-ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT AS FOCUS OF THIS STUDY	28
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>		
<b>RESEARCH INQUIRY</b>		31
3.1	CONTEXT	31
3.1.1	Sport Context	31
3.1.2	Academic Context	31

3.2	POSITION	32
3.2.1	Descriptive Phenomenology	32
3.2.1.1	Origin	32
3.2.1.2	Ontology	33
3.2.1.3	Epistemology	33
3.2.1.4	Methodology	33
3.2.1.5	Axiology	35
3.2.1.6	Rhetoric	36
3.2.2	Interpretive Phenomenology	36
3.2.2.1	Origin	36
3.2.2.2	Ontology	36
3.2.2.3	Epistemology	37
3.2.2.4	Methodology	37
3.2.2.5	Axiology	39
3.2.2.6	Rhetoric	40
3.2.3	Interpretive Phenomenology as Research Position for this Study	40
3.2.3.1	Previous Knowledge of the Phenomenon	40
3.2.3.2	Subjective Relationship with Participants	41
3.2.3.3	Contextual Factors	41
3.3	PARTICIPANTS	41
3.3.1	Sampling Method	41
3.3.2	Sampling Criteria	42
3.3.3	Selection of Participants	42

3.4	PROCESS	43
3.4.1	Permission	43
3.4.1.1	Faculty Permission	43
3.4.1.2	Organisational Permission	44
3.4.2	MAC Programme	44
3.4.2.1	Development	44
3.4.2.2	Facilitation	44
3.4.2.3	Reflections	46
3.4.2.4	Data Collection	47
3.4.2.5	Transcriptions	48
3.4.2.6	Analysis	48
3.4.3	Quality	49
3.4.3.1	Journal	49
3.4.3.2	Supervision	50
3.5	ETHICS	50
3.5.1	Privacy	50
3.5.1.1	Anonymity	50
3.5.1.2	Right to Refuse Disclosure	51
3.5.1.3	Right to Confidentiality	51
3.5.2	Informed Assent	51
3.5.3	Informed Consent	51
3.5.4	Dual Roles	52
3.5.5	Support	52

3.5.6 Storage	52
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## **CHAPTER 4**

<b>FINDINGS (Participant 1)</b>	<b>54</b>
---------------------------------	-----------

4.1 MINDFULNESS	54
-----------------	----

4.1.1 Learning	54
----------------	----

4.1.1.1 Understanding	54
-----------------------	----

4.1.1.2 Conflict	55
------------------	----

4.1.1.3 Habits	55
----------------	----

4.1.2 Application	56
-------------------	----

4.1.2.1 Valuable	56
------------------	----

4.1.2.2 Threats	56
-----------------	----

4.1.2.3 Psychological Skills Training	58
---------------------------------------	----

4.1.3 Transference	58
--------------------	----

4.1.3.1 Surprised	58
-------------------	----

4.1.3.2 Valuable	58
------------------	----

4.1.3.3 Threats	59
-----------------	----

4.2 ACCEPTANCE	60
----------------	----

4.2.1 Learning	60
----------------	----

4.2.1.1 Assisting Factors	60
---------------------------	----

4.2.1.2 Challenging	60
---------------------	----

4.2.2 Application	61
-------------------	----

4.2.2.1	Difficulty	61
4.2.2.2	Avoidance	62
4.2.3	Transference	63
4.2.3.1	Valuable	63
4.2.3.2	Difficulties	64
4.3	COMMITMENT	65
4.3.1	Learning	65
4.3.1.1	Motivation and commitment	65
4.3.1.2	Requirements	65
4.3.2	Application	66
4.3.2.1	Motivation and Commitment	66
4.3.2.2	Improving Factors	67
4.3.2.3	Valuable	67
4.3.3	Transference	67
4.3.3.1	Difficulties	68
4.3.3.2	Solution: Mindfulness	68
4.3.3.3	Valuable	69
4.3.3.4	Improving Factors	69
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>		
<b>FINDINGS (Participant 2)</b>		71
5.1	MINDFULNESS	71

5.1.1	Learning	71
5.1.1.1	Confused	71
5.1.1.2	Conflicted	72
5.1.2	Application	72
5.1.2.1	Understanding	73
5.1.2.2	Forward Thinking	73
5.1.3	Transference	74
5.1.3.1	Threats	74
5.1.3.2	Conflicted	75
5.1.3.3	Mindlessness	76
5.2	ACCEPTANCE	76
5.2.1	Learning	76
5.2.1.1	Understanding	76
5.2.1.2	Valuable	77
5.2.2	Application	78
5.2.2.1	Valuable	78
5.2.3	Transference	79
5.2.3.1	Valuable	79
5.3	COMMITMENT	80

5.3.1	Learning	80
5.3.1.1	Ability	81
5.3.1.2	Motivation and commitment	81
5.3.2	Application	82
5.3.2.1	Valuable	82
5.3.2.2	Improving Factors	83
5.3.2.3	Threatening factors	84
5.3.3	Transference	85
5.3.3.1	Valuable	85
5.3.3.2	Difficulties	86
5.3.3.3	Assisting factors	86
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>		
<b>FINDINGS (Participant 3)</b>		88
6.1	MINDFULNESS	88
6.1.1	Learning	88
6.1.1.1	Understanding	88
6.1.1.2	Threats	89
6.1.1.3	Mindlessness	89
6.1.2	Application	89
6.1.2.1	Understanding	90
6.1.2.2	Valuable	90



6.1.2.3	Threats	91
6.1.3	Transference	92
6.1.3.1	Valuable	92
6.1.3.2	Threats	92
6.2	ACCEPTANCE	94
6.2.1	Learning	94
6.2.1.1	Assisting Factors	94
6.2.1.2	Avoidance	95
6.2.1.3	Challenging	95
6.2.2	Application	95
6.2.2.1	Ability	96
6.2.2.2	Valuable	96
6.2.2.3	Avoidance	97
6.2.3	Transference	97
6.2.3.1	Valuable	98
6.2.3.2	Ability	99
6.2.3.3	Avoidance	99
6.3	COMMITMENT	100
6.3.1	Learning	100
6.3.1.1	Understanding	100

6.3.1.2	Motivation and Commitment	100
6.3.1.3	Threat	101
6.3.2	Application	101
6.3.2.1	Understanding	102
6.3.2.2	Training vs. Competition	102
6.3.2.3	Motivation and Commitment	102
6.3.3	Transference	103
6.3.3.1	Goals	103
6.3.3.2	Difficulties	104
6.3.3.3	Past vs. Present	104
<b>CHAPTER 7</b>		
<b>FINDINGS (Participant 4)</b>		105
7.1	MINDFULNESS	105
7.1.1	Learning	105
7.1.1.1	Understanding	105
7.1.1.2	Personal Reflection	106
7.1.2	Application	106
7.1.2.1	Threats	107
7.1.2.2	Mindlessness	108
7.1.3	Transference	109
7.1.3.1	Threats	109

7.1.3.2	Mindlessness	110
7.2	ACCEPTANCE	111
7.2.1	Learning	111
7.2.1.1	Understanding	111
7.2.1.2	Assisting Factors	112
7.2.2	Application	113
7.2.2.1	Valuable	113
7.2.2.2	Avoidance	114
7.2.3	Transference	115
7.2.3.1	Death: Acceptance vs. Avoidance	115
7.2.3.2	Diversity: Acceptance vs. Avoidance	116
7.2.3.3	Socio-economic Status	116
7.3	COMMITMENT	117
7.3.1	Learning	117
7.3.1.1	Understanding	117
7.3.1.2	Assisting Factors	117
7.3.1.3	Ability	118
7.3.2	Application	118
7.3.2.1	Understanding	119
7.3.2.2	Valuable	120

7.3.3	Transference	120
7.3.3.1	Academics	120
7.3.3.2	Family	121
7.3.3.3	Discipline	122
<b>CHAPTER 8</b>		
<b>FINDINGS (Participant 5)</b>		<b>123</b>
8.1	MINDFULNESS	123
8.1.1	Learning	123
8.1.1.1	Understanding	123
8.1.1.2	Threats	124
8.1.2	Application	125
8.1.2.1	Understanding	125
8.1.2.2	Threats	125
8.1.2.3	Psychological Skills Training	126
8.1.3	Transference	127
8.1.3.1	Understanding	128
8.1.3.2	Conflicted	128
8.1.3.3	Valuable	128
8.2	ACCEPTANCE	129
8.2.1	Learning	129
8.2.1.1	Understanding	129

8.2.1.2	Personal Perception	130
8.2.2	Application	131
8.2.2.1	Valuable	131
8.2.2.2	Prefers Avoidance	132
8.2.3	Transference	132
8.2.3.1	Valuable	132
8.2.3.2	Avoidance	133
8.3	COMMITMENT	134
8.3.1	Learning	134
8.3.1.1	Requirements	134
8.3.1.2	Internal Locus of Control	135
8.3.2	Application	135
8.3.2.1	Valuable	136
8.3.2.2	Requirements	136
8.3.2.3	Threats	136
8.3.2.4	Improving Factors	137
8.3.3	Transference	137
8.3.3.1	Motivation and Commitment	137
8.3.3.2	Valuable	138
<b>CHAPTER 9</b>		
<b>CONCLUSION</b>		140

9.1	FINDINGS ABOUT LEARNING	140
9.1.1	Learning: Mindfulness	140
9.1.2	Learning: Acceptance	142
9.1.3	Learning: Commitment	142
9.2	FINDING ABOUT APPLICATION	143
9.2.1	Application: Mindfulness	143
9.2.2	Application: Acceptance	144
9.2.3	Application: Commitment	144
9.3	FINDINGS ABOUT TRANSFERENCE	145
9.3.1	Transference: Mindfulness	145
9.3.2	Transference: Acceptance	146
9.3.3	Transference: Commitment	146
9.4	SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS	147
9.4.1	Learning	148
9.4.2	Application	148
9.4.3	Transference	149
9.5	LIMITATIONS	149
9.5.1	Sample	150
9.5.2	The Sport of Athletics	150
	REFERENCES	151
	APPENDICES	165

Appendix A	165
Appendix B	166
Appendix C	167
Appendix D	168
Appendix E	169
Appendix F	170

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND

### Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the context of the study. This involves a brief discussion of both the University of Pretoria (UP), and the High Performance Centre (hpc)<sup>1</sup> as the research contexts. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of the research questions, athletics in South Africa (SA), the motivation and goals for the research, and ends with explaining the structure of this study.

### 1.1 CONTEXT

The University of Pretoria and more specifically the Department of Psychology was the academic context for this study. Additionally, the hpc was the research environment for the study, and involved the hpc psychological services.

#### 1.1.1 University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria is a multi-campus, public research university, located in the city of Pretoria, South Africa. Research conducted at UP is recognised not only on a national level, but also internationally for its academic excellence. Furthermore, UP emphasises a holistic approach to student life, which includes music, arts, culture, as well as sport. The university's sport division, TuksSport, comprises 30 different sports clubs and twelve sports academies. Also, it offers an hpc, which accommodates national as well as international sportsmen and women (University of Pretoria, 2011).

UP has six campuses, situated in and around Pretoria, and consists of ten different faculties. One of these is the Faculty of Humanities. The Department of Psychology, from where the study is conducted, forms part of this faculty (University of Pretoria, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> The official abbreviation for the High Performance Centre is “hpc” and not “HPC”.



## 1.1.2 Psychology Department

The Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria offers four distinct degree courses. Firstly, there is an undergraduate degree, majoring in psychology. Secondly, after completion of the aforementioned, one can commence with an honours degree in psychology. Thirdly, a Master of Arts (MA) degree in psychology is presented, where a choice needs to be made between three training directions, namely the MA (Clinical Psychology), MA (Counselling Psychology) and MA (Research Psychology). Lastly, a Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) can be commenced with on completion of the MA degree. The current study will be conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA (Counselling Psychology) degree (Human, 2008).

## 1.1.3 High Performance Centre

The hpc is South Africa's first elite sport performance facility, and is situated on the University of Pretoria sport campus. This training ground for future sportsmen and women was the research environment for the current research study. The hpc was launched in May 2002 and offers athletes training facilities, medical services, and accommodation. Furthermore, the hpc has modern technology and expertise, which are endorsed by the university's Institute of Sport Research (University of Pretoria, 2012). My practical experience at the hpc included group and individual work with adolescent<sup>2</sup> athletes. In order to identify these athletes' specific needs, and to ensure that the appropriate intervention for that need is applied, the Multilevel Classification System for Sport Psychology (MCS-SP) was utilised. This was developed by Gardner and Moore (2004a), and is used by the hpc psychological services.

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<sup>2</sup> "Adolescent athletes" refer to participants between the ages of 12 and 18, ages which, according to Erik Erikson's developmental theory, refer to the "identity versus identity confusion" stage. This stage has to do primarily with identity formation (Erikson, 1968).

#### 1.1.4 Sport Psychology Services at the High Performance Centre

A debate regarding the scope of practice of Sport Psychology and Sports Counselling has presented itself within the sport context. Traditionally, Sports Counselling formed part of Clinical and Counselling Psychology, whereas Sport Psychology formed part of Sport Science. Sports counselling professionals were mainly responsible for treating athletes who presented with diagnosable psychological disorders or difficult life situations. Sport Psychology professionals, trained in Exercise and Sport Science, addressed the general sport performance issues, for example enhancing an athlete's performance. As a result, the division between the two disciplines became problematic. Practitioners were hesitant to overstep their boundaries regarding the Scope of Practice, and as a result athletes were referred back and forth between the Sport Psychologist and the Sports Counsellor (Gardner & Moore, 2004b; Hinkle, 1994; Petrie & Watkins, 1994).

The abovementioned division between Sport Psychology and Sports Counselling clearly demonstrated the need for an interdisciplinary model or approach to combine both disciplines, and to ensure the continuity of efficacious interventions. The MCS-SP, a classification system used by the hpc psychological services, is a model that bridged the distance between these two fields and integrated Sport Psychology and Sports Counselling. This classification system for Sport Psychology is used mainly to assess and classify the full range of athlete-client needs. Furthermore, it provides strategies for case-conceptualisation and assists the professional in applying the most efficient intervention for the specific needs of the athlete. In the next section I will outline the MCS-SP classification categories and the recommended interventions (Gardner & Moore, 2004b, 2006; Hinkle, 1994; Petrie & Watkins, 1994).

##### 1.1.4.1 Performance Termination

Performance Termination (PT) refers to the end of an athlete's career. A distinction is made between voluntary termination (e.g. retirement), known as Performance Termination I (PT-I) and involuntary termination (e.g. injury), known as Performance Termination II (PT-II). For example, in the case of voluntary termination, an internationally recognised sportsman who has peaked in his performance may make

a decision to retire from his professional sporting career. Even though it is the athlete's decision, it is still difficult for an athlete to make this life transition. Conversely, involuntary termination is the termination of an athlete's sporting career without his or her having a choice, for example due to an injury or suspension. Both these types of terminations from sport could be challenging for the athlete, and the recommended intervention for these specific cases will be Sports Counselling (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

#### 1.1.4.2 Performance Impairment

Performance Impairment (PI) refers to significant psychological distress, which generally includes a Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) diagnosed disorder. There are two PI categories. In the first category, known as Performance Impairment I (PI-I), the psychological distress experienced by the athlete may result in severe impairment in his or her general functioning. An example could be an athlete struggling with depression. Secondly, in the Performance Impairment II (PI-II) category, the psychological distress may lead to behavioural dysregulation in the athlete. This may include anger and impulse disorders, drug or alcohol abuse, or domestic violence. Sports Counselling will be the intervention of choice for this category (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

#### 1.1.4.3 Performance Dysfunction

Performance Dysfunction (PDy) refers to interpersonal (external) life events and/or intrapersonal (internal) characteristics that have an impact on the athlete's performance. It should be noted that these internal and external factors are not of a clinical nature. Performance Dysfunction I (PDy-I) is the category for external factors, which can include examples such as the divorce of parents, loss of a loved one, or disagreement with a significant other. Performance Dysfunction II (PDy-II), refers to the internal characteristics or certain schemas with which the athlete presents, such as perfectionism, fear of failure or a low frustration tolerance. The preferred intervention for these types of cases is Sports Counselling, combined with a Sport Psychology programme, for example the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

#### 1.1.4.4 Performance Development

Performance Development (PD) refers to a desire to improve athletic performance as the primary need of the client. In the first category, Performance Development I (PD-I), the athlete is at a level where physical skills are still being developed, for example a high school athlete working towards provincial level. Alternatively, in the Performance Development II (PD-II) category, the athlete's physical potential is fully established, for example an Olympic athlete. A Sport Psychology programme such as MAC would be the intervention of choice for this category of athletes (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

The participants in this study form part of the PD-I classification category, as physical skills are still being developed. It was therefore appropriate to conduct the MAC programme with these participants, as recommended by the MCS-SP (Gardner & Moore, 2004b).

#### 1.1.5 Sport Psychology Dilemmas at the High Performance Centre

##### 1.1.5.1 Dilemma 1: Programme

The MAC programme is a well-known Sport Psychology intervention used by the hpc's psychological services to assist athletes with performance development. However, to date, a generic version of the MAC programme has been facilitated for athletes participating in various types of sports. According to Farres (2000), different types of sports more often than not require different psychological needs in order for the athlete to be successful. Therefore, it would be appropriate to develop a MAC programme that is more sport-specific for each of the different sports offered at the hpc. This study focused on the sport of track-and-field athletics. Thus, a MAC programme was developed and subsequently facilitated specifically for athletes competing in track-and-field athletics, making it sport-specific.

### 1.1.5.2 Dilemma 2: Research

The Sport Psychology component of the hpc forms an integral part of the health care services at the hpc. However, to date no research has been conducted on any aspect of the psychological services of the hpc. I therefore decided to conduct this study, which forms part of a larger research project on performance development currently underway at the hpc Sport Psychology services.

The primary research project includes six students from the field of Sport Psychology, conducting research on performance development in sport. Each research project focuses on different role players at the hpc context, with this study focusing on the athletes themselves.

## 1.2 ATHLETICS

Sport in general is controlled at international level by a world governing body, whose membership comprises national bodies. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) is the international governing body specifically for the sport of athletics. The IAAF dates back to 1912 when their first congress was held in Stockholm, Sweden. The IAAF's members' federation is divided into six area associations, of which one is the Confederation of African Athletics (CAA). Furthermore, the CAA is divided into five regions, each governing various national athletics association. The Southern Region of the CAA consists of fourteen such associations, of which Athletics South Africa (ASA) is one (Matthews, 2012).

### 1.2.1 Athletics South Africa

As mentioned above, ASA is the primary governing body for athletics in South Africa. However, guided by the ASA, there are individual provincial athletic bodies. In the province of Gauteng there are two governing bodies for athletics known as Athletics Gauteng North, and Central Gauteng athletics. The hpc TuksSport School operates under Athletics Gauteng North (The Constitution of Athletics South Africa, 2008).

## 1.2.2 Athletics at the High Performance Centre

The hpc TuksSport School manages twelve sport academies, including the TuksAthletics Academy. The TuksAthletics Academy consists of all items in track-and-field athletics. Coaches are specialised in these various track-and-field items and athletes receive individual coaching attention. The coaching of these athletes is age-specific and event-specific and designed for athletes to peak in their performance at major championships (TuksSport High School, 2012; University of Pretoria, 2012).

This academy strives to comply with the IAAF philosophy and to provide athletes with a variety of services. Firstly, their training involves four components, namely physical, mental, technical and tactical training. Secondly, athletes are entitled to medical and psychological services. Lastly, the hpc takes into consideration the athlete's nutritional needs and provides for them accordingly. Thus, a holistic approach to training is followed by TuksAthletics Academy (TuksSport High School, 2012; University of Pretoria, 2012).

## 1.3 QUESTIONS

This study consists of three primary research questions. Each primary question is then divided into three secondary questions.

### 1.3.1 Primary Research Question One

What did adolescent athletes experientially **learn** about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment through their participation in a MAC programme? This question was divided into three secondary questions:

1. What did adolescent athletes experientially **learn** about **mindfulness** through their participation in a MAC programme?
2. What did adolescent athletes experientially **learn** about **acceptance** through their participation in a MAC programme?

3. What did adolescent athletes experientially **learn** about **commitment** through their participation in a MAC programme?

### 1.3.2 Primary Research Question Two

How did adolescent athletes **apply** what they learnt about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment? This question was divided into three secondary questions:

1. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **applying** what they have learnt about **mindfulness** to athletics?
2. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **applying** what they have learnt about **acceptance** to athletics?
3. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **applying** what they have learnt about **commitment** to athletics?

### 1.3.3 Primary Research Question Three

How did adolescent athletes **transfer** what they learnt about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to life? This question was divided into three secondary questions:

1. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **transferring** what they have learnt about **mindfulness** to life?
2. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **transferring** what they have learnt about **acceptance** to life?
3. How did adolescent athletes anticipate **transferring** what they have learnt about **commitment** to life?

## **1.4 GOALS**

### **1.4.1 General Goals**

This study had three general goals:

1. To develop an understanding of Psychological Skills Training (PST) and MAC programmes for performance development. This was achieved through the exploration of previous scholarly literature.
2. To develop an understanding of what adolescent athletes at the hpc experientially learnt about performance development. Furthermore, how they applied their learning to athletics, and how they transferred their learning to their lives.
3. To provide feedback in the form of a presentation and report to the hpc based on the primary goals as stipulated in 1.4.1 (1) and 1.4.2 (2).

### **1.4.2 Specific Goals**

The following specific goals acted as guidelines to achieve the three aforementioned general goals:

1. To conduct a literature review on PST and MAC programmes in sport, as portrayed in scholarly literature (see Chapter 2).
2. To describe the research position of this research project, being Interpretive Phenomenology (IP) (see Chapter 3).
3. To describe the research inquiry of this research project, with specific reference to research context, research participants, research process and research ethics (see Chapter 3).



4. To report the findings of this research project in the form of a mini-thesis (see Chapters 1 - 9), as well as a scholarly article.
5. To arrange a feedback session with the relevant role players at the hpc with the purpose of giving feedback regarding on the research project conducted at the hpc with adolescent athletes.

## **1.5 MOTIVATION**

The motivation for the current study was divided into three motivational areas, academic, research, and organisational motivation.

### **1.5.1 Academic Motivation**

This study was conducted in fulfilment of the requirements of the MA (Counselling Psychology) degree at the Department of Psychology, UP. This degree is based on the researcher-practitioner training model. Thus, the research project contributes 50% of the programme (Human, 2008). The requirement of the mini-thesis for completion of the MA (Counselling Psychology) degree therefore served as the academic motivation for the study.

### **1.5.2 Research Motivation**

In conducting this study I developed a sport-specific MAC programme for performance development. Subsequently, I facilitated this programme to participants participating in the sport of athletics. Upon completion of the MAC programme, participants provided me with written reflections of their experiences. These reflections were utilised to develop a semi-structured in-depth interview with each participant. This part of the study reveals my personal motivation for conducting the study. I was driven to explore the detailed, subjective experiences of each participant, in order to gain an understanding of their perception of the sport-specific MAC program.

### **1.5.3 Organisational Motivation**

This study forms part of a larger (primary) research project at the hpc of the UP, which serves as the organisational motivation. Altogether six postgraduate students are conducting research in the field of Sport Psychology at the hpc. However, each student studied different role players in the broader sport context. Firstly, two PhD students conducted mixed method studies, one with coaches as participants, and the other with parents of athletes. Secondly, one MA (Psychology) student conducted a qualitative study, with sport scientists as participants. Lastly, three MA (Counselling Psychology) students, myself included, conducted studies on athletes from different sport types as participants. For a full description of the entire research project refer to Appendix A.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE**

The structure of this study is:

Chapter 1 described the background of this study, with regard to the research context and the sport of athletics. Furthermore, the research questions and goals were discussed, and lastly the motivation behind the study.

Chapter 2 elaborated on two Sport Psychology programmes; PST and MAC. The chapter elaborates on the origin, the philosophy, the programme components, and previous research of each of the two programmes. The chapter concluded with an explanation for the decision to utilise the MAC programme in this study.

Chapter 3 described the research inquiry of this study. The chapter described the research context, the research position, the research participants, the research process, and the ethics pertaining to this study.

Chapter 4 to Chapter 9 portrayed the findings of Participant 1 (P1) to Participant 5 (P5). The findings of these chapters were divided into three broad categories, namely: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into learning, application, and transference.

Chapter 9 included a summary of the findings on all five participants. The findings were grouped according to the research questions of this study, as portrayed in Chapter One. The chapter also describes the limitations of the study.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter served as an introduction to the research project. The focus of this chapter was on the research context and athletics in South Africa (SA). Furthermore, the research questions, the motivation for the current study, as well as the research goals, were discussed. In the final section, the structure of the research was portrayed.

In the following chapter I address two Sport Psychology programmes, namely the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach and Psychological Skills Training (PST). Moreover, the decision to use the MAC approach as the focus of this study will be explored.

## **CHAPTER 2 PROGRAMMES**

### **Introduction**

PST and the MAC approach are two dominant performance enhancement programmes in Sport Psychology. This chapter includes an in-depth description of both, and elaborates on the decision to use the MAC approach as the focus of the current study.

### **2.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING IN SPORT**

This section portrays the origin, philosophy, and the different skills of the PST approach. A summary of previous research conducted on PST and athletics is also provided.

#### **2.1.1 Origin**

Traditionally the field of Sport Psychology relied mainly on cognitive behavioural approaches to assist athletes in enhancing their performance. PST is one of these approaches and is well known in the field of Sport Psychology (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Wolanin & Schwanhauser, 2010). The development of PST was specifically influenced by Meichenbaum (1977) and Bandura (1977) and can be defined as “...the systematic and consistent practice of mental or psychological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance, increasing enjoyment, or achieving greater sport and physical activity self-satisfaction” (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p. 250).

#### **2.1.2 Philosophy**

PST is a controlled, systematic Sport Psychology practice and is utilised by athletes for the purpose of performance enhancement. The focus of PST models appears to be the development of control within athletes, therefore being referred to as the control-driven approach. Being in control of one’s internal experiences (e.g.

thoughts and feelings), external stimuli (e.g. effects of spectators) and bodily sensation (e.g. tiredness) are seen as fundamental in PST. According to the PST approach negative internal experiences, external stimuli, and bodily sensations that are not controlled by the athlete, may influence his or her performance negatively. Thus, in order for an athlete to reach optimal performance, he or she should gain control of these factors (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Moore, 2009; Seiler & Stock, 1994; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

The PST approach focuses on assisting athletes to attain self-control of their internal states, external stimuli and bodily sensations in order to create an ideal state of performance. The philosophy behind PST therefore appeared to suggest that performance enhancement and achievement is only possible in the absence of discomfort. Therefore, if athletes experience unwanted or uncomfortable internal experiences, external stimuli or bodily sensations they should attempt to control those by means of elimination or change. In order for an athlete to do this he or she needs to utilise certain psychological skills such as Arousal Control, Self-Talk, Imagery, Pre-performance Routines and Goal Setting. These skills will be discussed in the following section (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Moore, 2009; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

### **2.1.3 Psychological Skills**

PST makes use of the following psychological skills in order to establish a state of optimal performance:

#### **2.1.3.1 Arousal Control**

“Arousal is defined as the cognitive and somatic reaction to an internal or external stimulus” (Birrer & Morgan, 2010, pp. 82). This reaction can be felt both physiologically (e.g. an increased heart rate) or psychologically (e.g. feelings of stress). During sport events, athletes may at times be over- or under aroused, which could influence their performance. However, different sport types require different levels of arousal. In archery, for example, arousal levels should generally be low, where as in high intensity sports such as the 100 m sprints; one would expect higher

levels of arousal. Thus, the PST skill of Arousal Control assists athletes to control their internal state, usually through relaxation techniques or music, in order to attain the required level of arousal, creating an optimal state of performance (Jones, 2003; Kerr, 1985; Moran, 2004; Movahedi, Sheikh, Bagherzadeh, Hemayattalab, & Ashayeri, 2007).

#### 2.1.3.2 Self-Talk

Self-Talk is defined as a way in which athletes communicate messages to themselves. Athletes can use self-talk to motivate, to interpret feelings, to evaluate, to give instructions or for reinforcement (Hackfort & Schwenkmezger, 1993).

Self-Talk can either be positive or negative, and it can influence your performance accordingly. Firstly, if Self-Talk is positive, it motivates and encourages the athlete (e.g. “You can do it.”) Secondly, if Self-Talk is negative, pessimistic and critical, it may have a damaging influence on the athlete’s performance (e.g. “You can just as well give up.”) Therefore, PST focuses on changing negative Self-Talk into positive Self-Talk, in order to create an optimal state of performance (Hardy, Gammage, & Hall, 2001; Smith & Kays, 2010). Thus, according to Birrer and Morgan (2010), positive self-talk can be utilised to control and change an athlete’s performance state for optimal performance. For example, physical discomfort during an athlete’s performance could be reduced and pain tolerance increased by a statement such as “I can do it.”

#### 2.1.3.3 Imagery

Imagery is defined as the creation or re-creation of specific situations in one’s imagination or mind. Athletes apply Imagery for skills learning, preparation or rehearsal, familiarisation, modifications, self-confidence, motivation and coping with various stressors. Another term used for Imagery is Mental Practice, using one’s mind to train and prepare for certain events, situations and skills. Thus, an athlete will imagine a state of optimal performance, where there is no discomfort or difficulties. Subsequently, a mental image is developed where optimal performance

is possible in the absence of discomfort or difficulties (Morris, Spittle & Watt, 2005; Vealey, 2007).

Conversely Imagery can also be used to prepare athletes for situations where they may experience discomfort, as these situations are seen to threaten the athletes' potential to perform. Thus, an athlete will mentally prepare for distractions such as tiredness, pain, or spectators. This is done in order to control or decrease the effect that these factors may have on their performance (Birrer & Morgan, 2010).

#### 2.1.3.4 Pre-performance Routines

Observing sportsmen and -women preparing for a jump, take-off, sprint or throw one will often notice mannerisms that are unique to each athlete. These mannerisms are known as Pre-performance Routines, and are defined as a sequence of behaviours performed immediately before the implementation of a task. A Pre-performance Routine is utilised for preparation purposes, or familiarisation of a situation. In terms of the PST philosophy, it is performed to control the uncomfortable experiences that occur when they perform in an unfamiliar setting (Cohn, 1990; Lidor, 2007).

#### 2.1.3.5 Goal Setting

Goal Setting is used in Sport Psychology as a valuable motivational approach to performance enhancement. Without goals athletes may find it challenging to have direction or focus, and is perceived as training without purpose. Thus, goal setting is applied in order to provide direction and subsequently decrease insecurity and discomfort in the athlete. However, in conjunction with goal-setting, athletes need to show future orientated planning in order to achieve those goals. Furthermore, the goals need to be specific as well as measurable, and athletes need to evaluate and manage their behaviour in order to achieve those goals. Thus, Goal Setting appears to be a structured and systematic procedure used by athletes to avoid or decrease the discomfort of being unprepared (Salehian, Rad, Mogaddam, Imani, & Fazlollahi, 2011; Vealey, 2007).

#### 2.1.4 Research

Research on PST programmes has been published since the mid-1980s and has since shown a rapid increase. Due to the large number of studies available on PST in sport, I narrowed my literature review to studies that utilised PST programmes, and not individual PST skills. Furthermore, I only included articles related to the sport of athletics. Thus, I performed a literature search using “Psychological Skills Training PST in athletics”, “Psychological Skills Training PST in track-and-field athletics” and “Psychological Skills Training PST in athletics South Africa” as search terms. This literature search was performed using different search engines; PsycINFO, SPORTDiscus, and ScienceDirect. In this section I shall give an overview of identified articles.

The aforementioned search specifications delivered only two research articles (Barwood, Thelwell, & Tipton, 2008; Brewer & Helledy, 1998). These studies were conducted in the United States of America (USA) (Brewer & Helledy, 1998) and in the United Kingdom (UN) (Barwood et al., 2008). Both studies were performed within the discipline of Sport Psychology. Furthermore, these studies were both conducted with adult<sup>3</sup> participants (Barwood et al., 2008; Brewer & Helledy, 1998). However, regarding gender, Barwood et al. (2008) included only males as participants, and Brewer and Helledy (1998) included males and females. Furthermore, both studies were conducted from a quantitative methodological point of view (Barwood et al., 2008; Brewer & Helledy, 1998).

The findings from the abovementioned research articles portrayed the success of PST programmes on performance development in the sport of athletics (Barwood et al., 2008; Brewer & Helledy, 1998). Barwood et al., 2008 concluded that PST programmes assist athletes to deal with difficult training circumstances. Thus, PST interventions could improve an athlete’s running performance, specifically when running in intense heat. Additionally, Brewer and Helledy (1998) found an improvement in athletes’ performances after the facilitation of a PST programme.

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<sup>3</sup> Adult athletes in this study refers to participants of 18 years old and older.



### **2.1.5 Critique**

As evident from the previous section, only two studies were found in the literature search (see 2.1.4). Thus, it appears that limited research has been conducted on PST and athletics. This is confirmed by Birrer and Morgan (2010) who refer to the scarcity of research related to high intensity sport and PST programmes. Furthermore, the studies detected have been conducted in the United Kingdom and the United States of America respectively (see 2.1.4). Thus, no previous studies have been carried out in South Africa. Moreover, all previous studies were conducted on an adult population (see 2.1.4), thereby excluding minors. In terms of the research method, no studies were conducted from a qualitative perspective, as both articles remain within in the quantitative methodological model (see 2.1.4).

## **2.2 MINDFULNESS-ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT IN SPORT**

In this section I discuss the MAC approach, an alternative intervention to performance development in sport. The origin, philosophy, and the different concepts of the MAC approach will be presented. Also, a summary of previous research conducted on the MAC approach is included.

### **2.2.1 Origin**

#### **2.2.1.1 Origin of Mindfulness**

The MAC approach has three main concepts: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. In this section I will discuss the origin of the first main concept, mindfulness. Mindfulness originally evolved in Eastern philosophy, and only later became part of Western psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

#### **1. Mindfulness in Eastern Philosophy**

Mindfulness originally emerged from Eastern meditation principles, and is seen as a form of present-moment attention. Historically mindfulness formed a vital part of

Buddhist meditation practices, and Kabat-Zinn (2003) describes it as “...paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (p. 145).

Mindfulness is empirically and theoretically associated with psychological well-being, and was traditionally described by the Sanskrit<sup>4</sup> word *dharma*, which is universal in its meaning instead of exclusively Buddhist. *Dharma* refers to a phenomenological description of the nature of mind and emotion, of suffering, and the release thereof. The same way that *dharma* is seen as universal, mindfulness is also viewed as a universal human experience in Western cultures, unrelated to Buddhism. However, its main development resides within the Buddhist traditions. Even though mindfulness forms only one part of a complex concept in Buddhist traditions, it gained the attention of Western society and inspired a growing interest in this concept (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011; Miller, Fletcher, & Kabat-Zinn, 1995; Rosch, 2007).

## 2. Mindfulness in Western Psychology

Buddhist traditions date back to 563 BC. However, it is only during the past 40 years that a cultural shift has been observed in the West. Within this cultural shift, an interest has emerged to incorporate some Buddhist traditions, such as mindfulness into clinical interventions in the field of medicine, as well as in psychology. This is especially evident in the increasing number of research studies on mindfulness in the past few decades (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng et al., 2011).

As mindfulness entered the Western societies and academic disciplines, differences between mindfulness practices in the East and in the West became evident. These differences are grouped into context, process, and content. Firstly, Western mindfulness practices differ from those of the East in that the former are viewed as independent concepts, and not as part of a complex spiritual system which needs to be practised together with various other aspects, as in Buddhist traditions. Secondly, concerning the process, Western societies place less focus on the

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<sup>4</sup> An ancient Indic language of India, in which the Hindu scriptures and classical Indian epic poems are written and from which many northern Indian languages are derived.

contemplation of non-self and impermanent features than traditional Buddhists. Thirdly, on the content level, the Western practices of mindfulness focus on both internal and external stimuli influencing an individual. However, the Eastern concept of mindfulness mainly highlights an introspective awareness especially regarding the person's physical and psychological experiences (Keng et al., 2011).

#### 2.2.1.2 Origin of Acceptance-Commitment

This section will focus on the remaining two concepts in the MAC approach, namely acceptance and commitment. Acceptance and commitment, but more specifically, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), introduced by Hayes and Wilson (1994), formed a vital component in the development and understanding of the MAC approach. ACT has its origin in Relational Frame Theory (RFT), a comprehensive psychological theory of human language and cognition, which is based on functional contextualism. Furthermore, ACT is behaviourally based, and is categorised, in what is known as the third wave of behaviour therapy (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005).

The first wave of behaviour therapy is characterised by its rebellion against standing clinical, non-empirical traditions. First wave behaviourists maintain that theory should have firm empirically studied foundations, and furthermore emphasise first-order change compared to the underlying process. The second wave of behaviour therapy focuses on similar first-order changes. However, cognitive approaches become the focus, in addition to the behavioural practices. Moreover, a merge between behavioural therapy and cognitive therapy, known as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) forms part of this second wave (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005; Hasker 2010; Hayes, 2004; Strosahl, Hayes, Bergan & Romano, 1998).

A return to more traditional clinical treatments and second-order change interventions characterises the third wave of behavioural and cognitive therapies. The focus is on contextual and experiential change instead of a direct focus on the content. ACT is an approach that developed within this third wave and emphasises acceptance and commitment. Where previous behavioural and cognitive approaches focused on changing the content of thoughts, these third wave therapies focus more on one's relationship with cognitions, and the acceptance thereof

(Fletcher & Hayes, 2005; Hasker 2010; Hayes, 2004; Hofmann, 2008; Strosahl et al., 1998).

ACT is defined as a psychotherapeutic approach that utilises acceptance, mindfulness, commitment and behavioural practices to obtain psychological flexibility. As stated above, various elements of mindfulness are integrated in ACT, and it is furthermore suggested that these elements play an important role in the therapeutic changes that occur in clients (Fletcher & Hayes, 2005; Hayes, Strosahl, Bunting, Twohig, & Wilson, 2004). Therefore, the two major concepts of ACT, acceptance and commitment, were combined with mindfulness in the development of the MAC approach.

### 2.2.1.3 Origin of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach

The MAC approach to performance development was created by Gardner and Moore (2004a) specifically for the athlete population. The empirical limitations of previous, change-based performance development approaches such as PST, created a need for new contemporary approaches in Sport Psychology, such as the MAC approach (Gardner & Moore, 2006).

The MAC approach is based on acceptance-commitment practices, and integrates mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. The MAC approach also emphasises acceptance, rather than control, change or suppression of cognitive and emotional experiences. Non-judgemental attention to the present moment forms the basis of this methodical approach and it is associated with optimal performance (Bernier, Thienot, Codron, & Fournier, 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a; Gardner & Moore, 2006; Moore, 2009).

## 2.2.2 Philosophy

The philosophy underlying the MAC approach encourages a way-of-being in athletes, which is a life-style instead of a group of skills. This lifestyle focuses on mindful living, where an individual becomes aware of his or her internal experiences, external stimuli, and bodily sensations, and accepts them whether they are pleasant

or unpleasant. If one can accept these factors as part of being human, there seems to be no need to change, they can only be accepted as a normal part of existence. Thus, in terms of sport performance, a MAC lifestyle will require athletes to accept certain uncomfortable experiences as part of being human and being an athlete. According to the MAC approach, athletes can perform optimally despite their occasional discomfort (Bernier et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Moore, 2009).

If one is able to perform optimally despite discomfort, there is no need to control or change these uncomfortable experiences. Thus, all of the athlete's attention would be on the task that he or she is performing, instead of the utilisation of skills that will eliminate their discomfort. Thus, the MAC approach encourages mindfulness of the present moment, acceptance of internal states, external stimuli or bodily sensations (whether they are pleasant or unpleasant), and commitment to goals and values (Bernier et al., 2009; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Moore, 2009).

### **2.2.3 Psychological Practices**

The following section will depict the meaning of the three main concepts of MAC; mindfulness, acceptance and commitment.

#### **2.2.3.1 Mindfulness versus Mindlessness**

##### **1. Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is defined as a state where one purposefully pays attention to the current moment in time (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness can be divided into mindful awareness and mindful attention. Mindful awareness is to become conscious of the current moment in time. The awareness should specifically be focused on internal experiences (thoughts and feelings), external stimuli and bodily sensations. This form of awareness will provide the individual with a vivid and clear experience of the present moment. Furthermore, it should strive to be a non-judgmental self-awareness of the present moment. Thus, one should become aware of what is currently occurring inside and outside of your body, but not evaluate it as good, bad,

right, or wrong. Mindful awareness therefore merely requires awareness and no further action.

Conversely, mindful attention goes further where an individual is focused solely on the task at hand. Thus, not only will you become aware of what is occurring at the present moment, but you will also choose to pay attention to only that moment in time, and specifically the task that you are busy with at that moment. Due to this intense awareness and focus on the current moment in time, mindfulness techniques applied to your life will result in mindful responding instead of mindless reacting to various life events. Mindlessness will be discussed in the next section (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010).

## 2. Mindlessness

In order to understand the concept of mindfulness it is appropriate to consider the opposite concept, which is mindlessness. Mindlessness is when an individual firstly does not acknowledge internal experiences, external stimuli or bodily sensations at the present moment in time, and secondly does not attend to the present moment task-at-hand. The individual is subsequently unknowingly influenced by this unawareness and inattentiveness to the present moment. As a result, an individual goes through life in a habitual or automatic mode. A mindless state is characterised by behaviour that is familiar and unchanged, and occurs with scant or nearly no conscious awareness of what is occurring in that present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Langer, 1992).

### 2.2.3.2 Acceptance versus Avoidance

#### 1. Acceptance

The concept of acceptance includes the recognition that many internal experiences, external stimuli and bodily sensations, both positive and negative, are typical of the human condition. Thus, athletes will firstly observe and notice these experiences through mindful awareness (see 2.2.3.1) and secondly move on to accept these internal experiences, external stimuli and bodily sensations. Acceptance should

occur whether these experiences are positive or negative. Thus, athletes should display a willingness to accept and fully experience these occurrences (e.g. stress before a big event) without feeling the need to interfere with or change them (e.g. apply skills to get rid of the stress). This is important because when athletes learn to accept; it will allow them to focus on the performance task at hand instead of their cognitive processes and constant need to change unpleasant experiences (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Hayes, 2004; Moore, 2009).

## 2. Avoidance

An alternative option to acceptance is avoidance. Avoidance is the athlete's attempt to control, change or eliminate any internal experiences, external stimuli and bodily sensations that cause discomfort. Athletes become aware of these uncomfortable experiences through mindful awareness (see 2.2.3.1). However, they do not move on to acceptance, but rather follow the urge to get rid of the discomfort. These avoiding techniques are usually a temporary solution to situations or experiences. Attempting to avoid these unwanted experiences (mostly typical of the human being, e.g. anxiety) could have the paradoxical effect, and increase their occurrence, instead of eliminating the experiences. Thus, leaving the athlete more focused on his or her attempt to control his or her internal experiences, external stimuli and bodily sensations than on the task at hand. In MAC terms, the athlete lost his or her ability to apply mindful attention to the task at hand (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Hayes, 2004; Moore, 2009).

### 2.2.3.3 Commitment versus Motivation

#### 1. Commitment

Within the MAC approach commitment can be viewed as an ongoing devotion, and consistent engagement in actions and activities that will guide athletes towards their performance goals. These actions are known as values. Thus, if an athlete is committed, he or she will show a readiness to commit to performance values. Also, the athlete will accept and show a willingness to experience occasional discomfort (within the mind or body) in order to attain these goals. Thus, commitment is the

ability to maintain mindful attention to a task at hand, in spite of occasional discomfort in terms of internal experiences, bodily sensations or external stimuli. Even though the athlete will become aware of the discomfort through mindful awareness, he or she will not act on it, as behaviour will be value-driven instead of emotion-driven. Commitment is not simply a desire to achieve a goal, but rather consistent acting and displaying of behaviour that will allow the athlete to obtain his or her goals (Gardner & Moore, 2004a, 2006, 2007; Hasker, 2010; Hayes, 2004).

## 2. Motivation

Motivation is the desire to achieve, whereas commitment is regular and consistent acting in service of your performance values in order to attain your goals. Therefore, motivation focuses on desire while commitment focuses on action. Motivation is mainly emotion-driven, while commitment is mainly value-driven. It is maintained that most athletes are motivated, and have the desire to perform optimally. However, only a few athletes are committed to their values and goals, and who show consistent value-driven behaviour in spite of difficult internal experiences, bodily sensations or external stimuli (Gardner & Moore, 2007).

### 2.2.4 Research

It appears that over the past 30 years PST has been the dominant approach to performance development in sport (Gardner & Moore, 2004a). However, the MAC approach has been introduced as an alternative approach to performance development within the last ten years (Gardner & Moore, 2006). It is therefore still a relatively new approach with a scarcity of studies conducted. I performed a literature search between 2003 and 2013 using different search engines (PsycINFO, SPORTDiscus, and ScienceDirect). “Mindfulness acceptance commitment MAC approach” and “mindfulness-acceptance-commitment MAC approach in sport” were used as search terms. In this section I give an overview of these articles.

Eleven articles were detected, dated between 2004 and 2011 (Aherne, Moran, & Lonsdale, 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo, Kaufman, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2009; Kee &



Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson, Kaufman, De Petrillo, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Research on the MAC approach has been done in the United States of America (De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010) with one study conducted in Ireland (Aherne et al., 2011), one in France (Bernier et al., 2009) and one in Singapore (Kee & Wang, 2008).

All research conducted on the MAC approach was done within the discipline of Sport Psychology (Aherne et al., 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Research on the MAC approach has been done with athletes from the sports of basketball, baseball, lacrosse, track-and-field, soccer, swimming, golf and archery (Bernier et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2011), field hockey and volleyball (Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010), springboard diving (Schwanhausser, 2009), long-distance running (De Petrillo et al., 2009), and a variety of sports including taekwondo, Malay martial arts, tenpin bowling, archery, soccer, rugby and dragon boating (Kee & Wang, 2008). Participants in the study of Aherne et al. (2011) were athletes from the sports of tennis, hockey, rugby and track-and-field athletics. From the overview of the literature, with the exception of two studies (Aherne et al., 2011; Hasker, 2010) no other articles included participants exclusively participating in the sport of track-and-field athletics.

Studies on the MAC approach included only athletes as participants (Aherne et al., 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Furthermore, most research was conducted with adult<sup>5</sup> participants (Aherne et al., 2011; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010), with one study including a 12-year old adolescent (Schwanhausser, 2009) and one using both adults and adolescent athletes (Bernier et al., 2009).

Regarding gender, the majority of research included both males and females as participants (Aherne et al., 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Thompson et al., 2011). However, two studies included only males (Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Schwanhausser, 2009) and one included only females (Wolanin 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010).

Research on the MAC approach has been conducted using the mixed method (Schwanhausser, 2009) in one of the studies, with the remaining studies working from a quantitative methodological perspective (Aherne et al., 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; De Petrillo et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Hasker, 2010; Kaufman et al., 2009; Kee & Wang, 2008; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). It appears that within the field of sport and exercise psychology there is a scarcity of qualitative studies, and therefore also a call for more of research using qualitative methods (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b; Dale, 1996).

The findings from the research above are mostly positive in terms of the success of mindfulness and the MAC approach in performance development (Aherne et al., 2011; Bernier et al., 2009; Gooding & Gardner, 2009; Kee and Wang, 2008; Schwanhausser, 2009; Thompson et al., 2011; Wolanin, 2005; Wolanin & Schwanhausser, 2010). However, some studies could not clearly state whether results on performance development were purely due to the facilitation of a mindfulness programme or due to other contributing factors (De Petrillo et al., 2009;

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<sup>5</sup> Adult athletes in this study refers to participants of 18 years old and older.

Kaufman et al., 2009). One study could not provide evidence for the MAC approach as an effective performance development intervention (Hasker, 2010).

### **2.2.5 Critique**

In this section I will discuss critically the existing research of the MAC approach as discussed above. The majority of studies have been conducted in the United States; with three studies being conducted in Ireland, France, and Singapore respectively (see 2.2.4). However, no previous research has been conducted in South Africa. Furthermore, with the exception of two studies (see 2.2.4), no further MAC-related research has been conducted specifically with track-and-field athletes. Additionally, no previous studies have presented a sport-specific track-and-field athletics MAC programme. Moreover, with the exception of two studies that included adolescent participants, all previous research was conducted on an adult population (see 2.2.4). In terms of the research method, no studies were conducted from a qualitative perspective, as the majority of articles remain within the quantitative methodological model (see 2.2.4).

It appears that within the field of sport and exercise psychology in general there is a scarcity of qualitative studies, and therefore also a call for more research using qualitative methods (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b; Dale, 1996). The proposed study will be qualitatively orientated, working from an interpretive phenomenological viewpoint, and thereby contributing to growing qualitative research within this field.

## **2.3 MINDFULNESS-ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT AS FOCUS OF THIS STUDY**

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 both the PST and MAC approach for performance development were discussed. Thus, after careful consideration the decision was made to use the MAC approach as the focus for this study. Except for the limitations in terms of MAC related research (see 2.2.5) the decision to use the MAC approach in this study was in addition based on the following arguments.

Participation in sport is known to be a valuable attribute in terms of character building, and specifically assists an individual with the establishment of moral values. It presumably enhances characteristics such as self-control, discipline, and adherence to rules, tolerance and determination. These characteristics are not solely bound to sport participation, but are also valuable attributes to life and society in general. Therefore, there is a need for an approach that focuses on the enhancement of performance in both life and sport, and does not limit the programme to the sports field (Guest, 2009; Romand & Pantaleon, 2007).

Furthermore, this study included adolescents as participants. Adolescent forms part of Ericson's (1986) developmental phase called Identity vs. Role confusion. During this phase adolescents are focused on finding their identity and exploring what they value in life. Thus, a programme like the MAC approach, which promotes a value-driven life-style, could facilitate adolescents in this integral part of their development. Moreover, growing up in a third world country such as SA, which is known for its high crime rate, violence, unemployment and corruption, adolescents could benefit from a programme which promotes a value-driven life style (Ericson, 1968; Gardner & Moore, 2006; Romand & Pantaleon, 2007).

In conclusion, there seem to be three main arguments for my decision to use the MAC approach. Firstly, due to the limitations in previous research studies, as pointed out in section 2.2.5, the current study would add to growing research in this field. Secondly, my participants are adolescents in their identity formation years, and a value-driven approach such as the MAC, could assist them in this phase. Thirdly, living in a third world country, the MAC approach seems appropriate in terms of providing these adolescents with an approach that can be applied to their life in general, instead of its being limited to the sports field.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter summarised the origin, the philosophy, and previous literature of two Sport Psychology approaches to performance development. PST, which is an established Sport Psychology technique, and secondly, the MAC approach, which is relatively new in the sport context. Both these approaches were discussed for the

purpose of displaying the history of performance development techniques in Sport Psychology, and also to highlight the differences between MAC and PST. The chapter ended off with a discussion regarding why the MAC approach was chosen as the focus of this study.

In the next chapter I will discuss the research inquiry. This includes the context of the study, the research position, the participants, the research process and the ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH INQUIRY

### Introduction

This chapter will focus on the research context of the current study and explore phenomenology, and specifically IP as the research position. Furthermore, the demographic details of the participants will be discussed. This chapter will also explore the research process that was followed which includes the permission gained for the study, the process of the MAC programme, and the quality of the study. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations involved in the study.

### 3.1 CONTEXT

In this section I shall discuss the sport context, as well as the academic context of the current study.

#### 3.1.1 Sport Context

The current study was conducted at the hpc, which is an internationally recognised sport facility. The hpc is situated at the University of Pretoria sport campus and consists of modern sport technology and facilities. A holistic approach to athlete training and development is followed by the hpc. This approach includes professionals from a variety of disciplines. Psychology is one of these disciplines, and consists of two resident Sport Psychologists<sup>6</sup> and a number of training psychologists (University of Pretoria, 2011).

#### 3.1.2 Academic Context

The academic context of this study was the Department of Psychology at the UP. The research was done in accordance with the guidelines of the Postgraduate Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the UP.

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<sup>6</sup> The term “sport psychologist” is used as a public term in South Africa. It is not an official Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) registration category. I will use this term to refer to a registered psychologist, irrespective of the HPCSA registration category, working in the sport context in SA.

## 3.2 POSITION

This study was conducted from a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology can be divided into two schools of thought, namely descriptive phenomenology (DP) and IP (Conroy, 2003; Dowling, 2005; Giorgi, 1992; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Oiler, 1986; Omery, 1983; Racher & Robinson, 2002; Ray, 1994).

According to Koch (1995, 1996) DP and IP are often confused in studies when the researcher is not aware of the fundamental differences. As a researcher it is essential to familiarise yourself with the philosophical and methodological discrepancies between DP and IP. It is therefore necessary to situate your study within one or the other. This section will focus on the differences between DP and IP with specific reference to origin, ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology and rhetoric.

### 3.2.1 Descriptive Phenomenology

#### 3.2.1.1 Origin

Edmund Husserl (1913/1983) a German philosopher, is considered to be the founding father of phenomenology. It was Husserl (1913/1983) who believed that all science is rooted in our everyday life and experiences (life-world). He furthermore contested the idea of positivistic research, and viewed phenomenology as a method for researchers to enter and revisit the subjective world and lived experiences of individuals. However, even though Husserl is known as the founding father of phenomenology, it was Amedeo Giorgi (1992) who initiated DP. The term “DP” relates to studies that focus and explore participants’ descriptions of lived experiences. It is through these descriptions that they gain entrance to the participant’s life-world. Thus, the researcher merely studies the descriptions of participants in order to gain an understanding of their experience. The researcher uses bracketing to ensure that the participants’ account is not influenced by his or her biases or previous knowledge (Lewis, 2010; Nakayama, 1994).

### 3.2.1.2 Ontology

Ontologically, DP studies the lived experiences of people. Thus, reality is seen as subjective and it exists inside a person's mind. It is a science of essences. "The results [of a DP study] reflect a careful description of precisely the features of the experienced phenomenon as they present themselves to the consciousness of the researcher" (Giorgi, 2009, pp. 130-131). Accordingly experiences of the participants are explored pre-reflectively, meaning without any interpretations exactly as they appear in consciousness. Additionally, DP does not view reality in context, neither does it take into account a participants' history. Thus, it merely accepts the given descriptions from the participant as these are presented. (Dowling, 2005, Giorgi, 1997, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### 3.2.1.3 Epistemology

With regard to epistemology, DP emphasises objectivism in the researcher-participant relationship. The relationship is seen as clinical and objective. Thus, the participant is not influenced by the researcher and/or vice versa, as it will affect the purity of the essence of the experience. In order to capture the true essence of an experience, a process known as phenomenological reduction is applied. This process eliminates subjective empirical judgments from the researcher that could stem from previous knowledge and/or bias. In order to accomplish this, the researcher should gain distance from personal biases and prior knowledge through a process known as bracketing. Bracketing allows the essence or true nature of the phenomenon to emerge (Ponterotto, 2005; Racher & Robinson, 2002).

### 3.2.1.4 Methodology

In general DP studies follow a qualitative methodology. In the following section I will discuss five specific areas related to the methodology of a DP study, namely: the question, literature, purpose, methods (data collection and data analysis), and outcome of a DP research study.



**Question:** DP uses open-ended and general questions to guide the aim of the study. These questions typically limit the influence of the researcher's biases and knowledge of the participant's experience of the phenomenon. Thus, they promote the process of phenomenological reduction, which allows participants to describe their subjective experience without being influenced by the researcher. This allows the essence of the experience to surface. Therefore, during the interview the participants are allowed to freely describe their lived experience, without being formally guided by the researcher's questions (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

**Literature:** No literature review is conducted prior to DP studies. This allows the researcher to stay objective when conducting the study. A study conducted from a DP position requires the researcher to explore the phenomenon objectively, without having preconceived ideas, which could influence the originality of the phenomenon being study. Thus, in order to explore the essence of a phenomenon, as described by a participant, it should be done without any pre-conceived ideas obtained from a literature search (Dowling, 2005; Giorgi, 1997; Lopez & Willis 2004).

**Purpose:** The purpose of a DP study is to explore the essence of an objective phenomenon. This is achieved through explorations of a participant's descriptions of their subjective experience of that phenomenon. The researcher will receive these descriptions without applying any interpretations, prior knowledge or biases, but merely accept them as they appear in the consciousness. Furthermore, a search for universal essences or similarities amongst participants' experiences is central to DP (Giorgi, 1997; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

**Methods:** Data Collection

The data collection process in DP generally includes interviews, pictures and written accounts. No formal format is followed during the data collection of a DP study, as the participant should be allowed to describe

his or her lived experience, as he or she perceived it. During the data collection process the researcher maintains an objective relationship with the participant (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### Data Analysis

Phenomenological reduction (epochè) is applied during data analysis to discover phenomena in their purest form, without interpretation, construction or explanation. This process allows the essence of the phenomenon to emerge. The ultimate aim of DP analysis is to generate universal essences of the phenomenon that is being studied. At the end of DP analysis, the researcher will collaborate with participants to ensure that his or her description of the phenomenon accurately captured the participant's true experiences. The Duquesne Phenomenological Research Method (DPRM) is an example of an analysis procedure used in DP (Giorgi, 1997).

**Outcome:** The outcome of a DP study allows readers to obtain information about an objective phenomenon through subjective experiences, as described by participants. The search for universal essences in DP allows for a generalised or universal description of the phenomenon. Human beings are interpreted to be free, or radically autonomous, and they are responsible for influencing their environment. Conversely, the influence of the environment on the human being is not considered in DP. Thus, the participants' specific context and the way that it may influence them are not taken into consideration when the data of a DP study is analysed and an outcome is determined (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

#### 3.2.1.5 Axiology

In a phenomenological study where there is personal involvement with the participants it seems inevitable that the researcher's values and biases are going to influence the research process. This is in contrast with the ontological and epistemological perspective of DP. Thus, in a DP study the researcher should be

aware of this, and apply phenomenological reduction. This is done through bracketing; where the researcher eliminates his or her values and biases during interaction with participants, in order to limit their influence on the study. In this way they have an opportunity of exploring a true, unstained understanding of the essence of the phenomenon (Ponterotto, 2005).

#### 3.2.1.6 Rhetoric

The rhetoric of a study is closely linked to the study's epistemological and axiological stance. Thus, the rhetoric of a study conducted from a DP paradigm will be scientific and formal due to the objective epistemology and the unbiased (bracketed) influence of values (Ponterotto, 2005).

### 3.2.2 Interpretive Phenomenology

#### 3.2.2.1 Origin

Phenomenology is considered dynamic and has therefore been subjected to various modifications. Heidegger (1927/1962), a student of Husserl (1913/1983) is acknowledged for the development of IP and contributed to these changes (Lewis, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Nakayama, 1994). He challenged Husserl's (1913/1983) ideas regarding phenomenology as a guide to meaningful inquiry. These changes led to the establishment of IP, which consists of hermeneutic or interpretive research practices (Cohen, 1987; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Spiegelberg (1976) defined hermeneutics as "...a process and method of bringing out and making manifest what is normally hidden in human experience and human relations" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728).

#### 3.2.2.2 Ontology

Phenomenology in general is based on the notion that reality exists in people's lived experiences. IP is ontologically concerned with people's interpretations of their experience of phenomena. Thus, how does a participant understand, or interpret, his or her subjective experience of a specific phenomenon. IP views reality in

context, as Heidegger (1927/1962) posits that a human being's lived experience is influenced by his or her specific cultural and historical background. Thus, one cannot distance participants' interpretations from their specific context. Therefore, when applying IP to a research study, it is vital to consider the historical, cultural and social contexts of the participant (Dowling, 2005; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### 3.2.2.3 Epistemology

IP requires a subjective epistemology, in which the researcher is not required to bracket previous knowledge and personal biases. However, it is seen as necessary for the researcher to reflect on the manner in which these biases and knowledge could have impacted the study. IP believes that it is impossible to separate oneself from previous experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. These factors are believed to invariably influence the study and can in fact be used to enhance an understanding of the participant's interpretations of his or her experience of the phenomenon. The relationship between participant and researcher is therefore vital to the study because of its interactive nature. The end result of an IP study is typically a combination of the interpretations of both the participant and the researcher and is called co-constitutionality (Lewis, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005).

### 3.2.2.4 Methodology

In general, IP studies follow a qualitative methodology. In the following section I will discuss five specific areas related to the methodology of an IP study, namely: the question, literature, purpose, methods (data collection and data analysis), and outcome of an IP research study.

Question: IP uses specific research questions to guide the aim of the study. In order to construct these questions the researcher uses prior knowledge of the phenomenon. IP utilises more specific research questions with the purpose of exploring diverse and subjective interpretations of participants' experiences of the phenomenon. The specific nature of

the questions allows for the unique contextual interpretations of the phenomenon being explored (Koch, 1995; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

**Literature:** A literature review is conducted prior to conducting an IP study to enhance the quality of the research and to focus the study. Previous knowledge of the phenomenon is therefore not denied, but used to co-constitute the findings in conjunction with the participant. The researcher will thus reflect on the manner in which his or her prior knowledge of the phenomenon could have influenced the study. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to conduct a detailed literature review prior to the study, in order to enhance his or her knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, as this may add value to the study (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

**Purpose:** Heidegger (1927/1962) posits that a person's reality is influenced by the world he or she lives in. He uses the term "being-in-the-world" to emphasise the notion that a person cannot separate himself from the world or context that they live in. Heidegger (1927/1962) agrees that human beings have freedom of choice, yet, only to a certain degree, and thereafter their existence becomes restricted or governed by their specific context and life situations. Therefore, the purpose of an IP study is to learn about participants' contextual (historical and cultural) and subjective interpretations of their experience of an objective phenomenon (Dowling, 2005; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

**Methods:** Data Collection

The data collection procedure in IP studies includes interviews, textual accounts and dialogues. The researcher uses a contextual framework to familiarise him or herself with the phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher's prior knowledge of the phenomenon is integrated to allow for richer interpretations. There is constant movement in between the participants' interpretations and the researcher's knowledge. This process is referred to as co-constitutionality (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

## Data Analysis

Analysis in IP studies views the data within context, as it is maintained that individuals are invariably influenced by their history and culture. The research procedure is seen as dynamic, with the researcher playing an active role in the process. During the analysis of an IP study, double hermeneutics is involved. This means that the researcher is trying to make sense of how the participants are making sense of the phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher attempts to interpret the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is one example of an analysis procedure used in IP (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Smith 2008).

**Outcome:** The outcome of an IP study is to capture subjective interpretations of a participant's experience of an objective phenomenon. IP studies are interested in the uniqueness of experiences, and how each participant within his or her specific context experiences the phenomenon. Thus, readers will gain access to the participants' interpretations of how they subjectively experienced a specific phenomenon from their personal frame of reference (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### 3.2.2.5 Axiology

There is a subjective relationship between researcher and participant in IP studies, and the outcome of the study is co-constructed. Researchers become aware of and reflect on the manner in which previous knowledge, values or biases could influence the study. It is therefore evident that previous knowledge and personal influences of the researcher permeate the research process. Thus, in terms of axiology, IP studies appear to be value-laden by researcher biases (Chilisa, 2011).

### 3.2.2.6 Rhetoric

As a result of the subjective epistemology and the influence of personal values in an IP study the rhetoric is known to be informal, personal, and written in the first person (Ponterotto, 2005).

### 3.2.3 Interpretive Phenomenology as Research Position for this Study

Within the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology there seems to be a scarcity of qualitative research, as most researchers in this field conduct their studies within the positivistic paradigm. Thus, there appears to be a need for more research using qualitative methods within the Sport and Exercise Psychology field (Dale, 1996; Smith & Sparkes, 2009a, 2009b).

Based on the statement above, the decision was made to conduct a qualitative study, situated within the constructivism paradigm. However, more specifically, the decision was made to use IP as the research position. As guided by various previous works in phenomenology, I carefully considered the fundamental differences in the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of both DP and IP. I reflected on my personal preferences as a researcher in terms of ontology, methodology and epistemology (Adolfsson, 2010; Conroy, 2003; Koch 1995, 1996; Lopez & Willis 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Upon reflection, the decision was made to use IP as the current study's research position. This decision was mainly based on the following arguments:

#### 3.2.3.1 Previous Knowledge of the Phenomenon

My previous experience with the MAC approach, as well as my familiarity with the participants, influenced my decision to undertake an IP study. I have been trained in the MAC approach, and have presented the programme on various occasions. Furthermore, I received continuous supervision on the topic. I have thorough background knowledge and an adequate framework from which to conduct the research study. Conducting this study from an IP perspective allowed me to utilise instead of deny (bracket) this knowledge. Furthermore, reflecting on my personal

ontological beliefs brought me to surety in my choice, as I am unconvinced of the practicality and effectiveness of bracketing, where one is required to distance oneself from previous knowledge (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### 3.2.3.2 Subjective Relationship with Participants

One year prior to the commencement of the current study I attended sport training sessions of the hpc athletes. Subsequently, rapport has been established between prospective participants and me. Applying IP to the current study provided the opportunity for a subjective, interactive relationship with the participants. This would not have been possible had I adopted a DP approach, where the relationship is seen as objective and clinical in nature (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005; Racher & Robinson, 2002; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

### 3.2.3.3 Contextual Factors

I am interested in five athletes' unique interpretations of their experiences of the MAC programme. Thus, working from an IP position allowed me to explore the subjectivity amongst interpretations. Thus, I was able to consider the individual contextual framework of each participant (Giorgi, 1997; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

## 3.3 PARTICIPANTS

### 3.3.1 Sampling Method

Purposeful sampling was used for this study. Thus, all participants had to meet specific criteria in order to be selected. In purposeful sampling the sample is selected on the basis of knowledge of the target population, while keeping the purpose of the study in mind. This selection procedure ensures a small and fairly homogeneous group of participants, which is in line with IPA requirements. (Babbie, 2005; Reed, Procter, & Murray, 1996; Smith & Eatough, 2007).



### **3.3.2 Sampling Criteria**

The following are the specific selection criteria that were set out for participants in this study:

1. The participants must be athletes at the hpc.
2. The participants must specifically participate in the sport of athletics.
3. The participants must compete competitively in the sport of athletics.
4. The participants must be between the ages of 12 and 18.
5. The participants must be classified within the PD classification category of the MCS-SP.

### **3.3.3 Selection of Participants**

Selection of participants for the current study was done in conjunction with a resident Sport Psychologist at the hpc. The selection process was initiated by sending information regarding the research study to all hpc athletes who participate in the sport of athletics. Additionally, the information was conveyed to their parents, since all potential participants were minors. Seven athletes responded and displayed an interest in partaking in the study. After examination it was concluded that all seven athletes met the required sampling criteria and they were selected to participate in the study. However, during the facilitation of the MAC programme, two participants withdrew, due to athletic responsibilities. Thus, in the end the study included five participants. A small sample size is seen as ideal when applying IPA as the method of analysis. It allows for an in-depth exploration of each participant's interpretations of his or her experience (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Table 3.1 portrays the demographic information of the five participants.

*Table 3.1*

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Participant	Age	Race	Gender	Track-and-field item
P1	18	Black	Male	Long Jump/Triple Jump
P2	15	Black	Male	Sprints
P3	14	Black	Male	Sprints
P4	16	Black	Male	Long Jump
P5	17	Black	Male	Sprints

It should be noted that there was no discrimination in terms of presenting the programme to hpc students, as all athletes of the hpc have exposure to a general MAC programme. However, only the five athletes selected as participants received a sport-specific MAC programme.

### **3.4 PROCESS**

This section depicts the research process, focusing on the faculty and organisational permission that was gained before the onset of the study. Furthermore, the development, facilitation and reflections of the MAC programme were discussed as well as the transcriptions and analysis of the current study. This section also explains how the quality of the current research study was enhanced.

#### **3.4.1 Permission**

Before the commencement of the current study, both faculty and organisational permission was received.

##### **3.4.1.1 Faculty Permission**

This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Postgraduate Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the UP.

### 3.4.1.2 Organisational Permission

The current study is part of a larger research project at the hpc of the UP. I therefore gained permission to conduct my study from both the CEO of the hpc and one of the resident psychologists at the hpc. Permission was obtained to conduct research with participants being affiliated with the hpc, and also to conduct the study at the hpc facilities (see Appendix B).

### 3.4.2 Mindfulness Acceptance Commitment Programme

In this section I will explain the development of the sport-specific MAC programme. Furthermore, I will discuss the facilitation of the MAC programme to the participants, as well as the participants' reflections on the programme. I will continue to explore the manner in which data-collection took place as well as the transcription process that followed. Then, I will discuss how the transcribed data was analysed.

#### 3.4.2.1 Development

Gardner and Moore's (2006, 2007) outline of the MCS-SP and the original MAC approach was used as a guideline in order to develop a sport-specific MAC programme for the sport of athletics (see Appendix C). The programme consists of five modules, including an introduction to the MAC approach, mindfulness, acceptance, commitment, and an integration of the MAC approach. The programme aimed to provide sport-specific examples and exercises. Resources used during the facilitation of the programme included a MAC student work booklet and a MAC power point presentation. Both the MAC student work booklet and the MAC power point presentation were compiled by me under supervision and guidance of my research supervisor, Prof. L. H. Human.

#### 3.4.2.2 Facilitation

This section includes three main parts; the facilitator training, the facilitation venue and the facilitation outline.

**Training:** In conducting this study, I fulfilled a dual role, namely the researcher and the programme facilitator. During my MA (Counselling Psychology) course I had one year of academic training on the MAC approach and additional practical experiences. At the end of my first year of the MA course I passed the examination on the MAC approach. I have presented the MAC programme on two different occasions. First, I presented the programme to the new group of MA (Counselling Psychology) students of the University of Pretoria to introduce them to MAC, and also to improve my skills in facilitating the programme. Second, I presented the programme to adolescent athletes at an alternative sport school to monitor the appropriateness of a sport-specific programme on an adolescent population. As a result of the abovementioned experiences, minor adjustments were made to the programme. This was done to ensure increased efficiency when it was presented for this study.

**Venue:** According to Smith and Osborn (2008) the location where a study is conducted is important. Participants are generally more comfortable and at ease in a familiar setting. The MAC programme as well as the semi-structured interviews were conducted at a venue provided by the hpc. The venue was well known to the participants and ensured adequate privacy. It was suitable for the presentation of the programme and the interviewing process.

**Outline:** The five modules of the MAC programme were presented to the participants over a two-day period. The following is an outline of the modules:

- Day 1:           Module 1 - Introduction to the MAC-Approach
- Module 2 - Mindfulness within the MAC-Approach
- Module 3 - Acceptance within the MAC-Approach
- Day 2:           Module 4 - Commitment within the MAC-Approach
- Module 5 - Integration of the MAC-Approach

Each of the modules mentioned above, except for module one, which merely acted as an introduction, followed a similar outline. Participants were provided with a definition of the specific concept for each module (without providing them with extensive theory). This was followed by a short reflection period, where participants participated in verbal reflections on personal experiences and interpretations of the concept. Thereafter, two activities were performed that provided them with real-life experiences of the concept. Another set of verbal reflections followed the activities. After each module, written reflections were recorded in the MAC student booklet.

The programme was facilitated through experiential learning. Experiential learning can be defined as reflecting upon experience (Fowler, 2008). In contrast to didactic learning, where an expert conveys knowledge to a student, experiential learning allows the student to gain knowledge through participation and experience of certain activities. Thus, participants reflect on an experience, and subsequently learn from this process. Therefore, learning takes place through doing (Human, 2008; Priest & Gass, 1997). In this study, participants were briefed on the MAC approach (each module independently), and given the opportunity to experience the process and finally reflect upon their experience.

### 3.4.2.3 Reflections

Throughout the MAC programme participants engaged in verbal reflections. They were also required to provide me with written reflections after each MAC module. These reflections were based on the following three questions:

1. Based on the description of mindfulness/acceptance/commitment, what did you learn about your own mindfulness/acceptance/commitment through your participation in the mindfulness/acceptance/commitment activities?
2. Based on what you learnt about your mindfulness/acceptance/commitment, how do you anticipate applying mindfulness/acceptance/commitment to the sport of athletics?

- 3 Based on what you learnt about your mindfulness/acceptance/commitment, how do you anticipate applying mindfulness/acceptance/commitment to your life?

The written reflections of each participant were used to compile a semi-structured interview for the data-collection process.

#### 3.4.2.4 Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews was the method of data collection in this study (see Appendix D). In accordance with the epistemological assumptions of IP, the participants' written reflections were used as a guideline to develop the interview schedules. A semi-structured interview is seen as a flexible instrument for data collection and is acknowledged as the main method of data-collection in IPA studies. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and furthermore permits the participants to provide valuable input during the interview. Questions are open-ended and allow participants to freely express their experiences. Thus, semi-structured interviews support the aim of an IP study, namely, to explore and obtain an in-depth understanding of the interpretations of the participants' experiences (Kelly, 2006; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). In addition, semi-structured interviews comply with IPA interview requirements, as discussed in the following paragraph.

During the IPA interview process the participant should take the lead in the conversation and the researcher should subtly facilitate and guide the process. Although the researcher will have a predetermined idea of how he or she would prefer the interview to occur, he or she should keep in mind the aim of an IP study, which is to enter the subjective world of the participant and explore individual experiences. Thus, the researcher should not come across as controlling, because this will place the participant in a one-down position. This could result in the participant having an inactive role in the research outcome. The aim of an IPA interview is not to control the data-collection process in order to gain desirable information. It is rather to facilitate rapport with the participant in order to establish

flexibility in the interview process and to gain in-depth data of the subjective experience of each participant (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The IPA interview includes questions that are broad and non-directive. This will allow the researcher to modify the questions and to probe for rich data. Thus, during the current study's interview process, the semi-structured interview schedule was merely used as a "prompt-sheet", which consisted of main themes. This interview sheet guided me through the interview and allowed for flexibility in the process. In accordance with IPA interview guidelines, I explored new topics that emerged during the discussion, and I was not hesitant to move away from the semi-structured probing list. The participants were leading the discussion during the interview. This led to improved rapport with the participants. Most of the information I collected was perceived as subjective and rich in nature (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

#### 3.4.2.5 Transcriptions

All interview recordings made during the data collection process were transcribed by me. This enhanced my knowledge of the data and it proved to be more cost effective. In accordance with IPA guidelines, transcriptions were conducted on a semantic level, thus, including all words, pauses, wrong starts, hesitations, and other worthy features (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

#### 3.4.2.6 Analysis

IPA, developed by Jonathan Smith (Smith, Harré, & Van Langenhove, 1995), was the method of data analysis in this study. IPA is a phenomenological data-analysis approach that explores subjective lived experiences of individuals. IPA is consistent with the research aims of the current study, as it explores and captures the complexity and in-depth detail of lived experiences. Furthermore, IPA highlights the active role of the researcher in the research process. The researcher obtains an insider's perspective of the participant's world. In IPA double hermeneutics is applied (a two-staged interpretation process). This allows the researcher to interpret

the participant's interpretations of his or her experience. Thus, in IPA it is acknowledged that the researcher's own conceptions are vital to the process of interpretation (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

IPA has no formal prescriptions for the data analysis procedure, and is often adjusted to fit certain aims or needs of the specific research study. However, it does provide valuable guidelines, which assist the researcher to comprehend the data (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Principles of IPA as described by Smith and Eatough (2007) and Smith and Osborn (2008) were applied in this study. The following procedure was followed:

1. Initial detailed readings of the data (transcripts).
2. Initial identifying of themes.
3. Examining the themes for connections and identifying thematic clusters.
4. Set up a summary table with the identified themes and illustrative quotations.
5. Continue the analysis with other cases.
6. Recording of the research results.

### **3.4.3 Quality**

The quality of this study was enhanced mainly through two means; keeping a reflective journal and regular supervision.

#### **3.4.3.1 Journal**

Keeping a reflective journal during this research project enhanced my self-awareness and subsequently increased the quality of my study. The continued awareness of the impact of my own background, values, and knowledge, on the study allowed for transparency on the process of co-constitutionality, which is typical in an IP study (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Ortlipp, 2008; Smith, 1999).



### 3.4.3.2 Supervision

During this study I received regular supervision sessions, which allowed for guidance, support, learning, and development to occur. The supervision assisted me in the research process and ensured that the study is theoretically sound and original (Carr, Lhussier & Chandler, 2010; Fleming & Steen, 2004).

## 3.5 ETHICS

In this section I will elaborate on the participants' privacy as well as the informed assent and consent that were gathered before the start of the study. I will also elaborate on the dual role that I played during this study. Additionally, this section will investigate support that was offered to participants, as well as the storage of research material.

### 3.5.1 Privacy

Privacy in terms of research studies includes anonymity, the right to refuse disclosure, and the right to confidentiality.

#### 3.5.1.1 Anonymity

The method of data gathering for this study presented difficulties regarding anonymity, as personal interviews exposed the participants' identity to me as the interviewer. However, participants' identities were only known to me, as all necessary measures were taken to ensure the privacy of personal information. All information and findings of this study were presented in a manner that prevented identification of the participants, through the use of pseudonyms. The aforesaid did not influence the outcome of the research study (Snyder, 2002; Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2007).

### 3.5.1.2 Right to Refuse Disclosure

Participants in this study had the right to privacy and were not obliged to disclose information that they were not comfortable with (Human, Tinsley, Muller, & Rutsate, 2009).

### 3.5.1.3 Right to Confidentiality

While anonymity, i.e. respect for the participant's identifiable information, forms part of confidentiality, it does not meet all the criteria under the right to confidentiality. Therefore, participants in this study had control over all the information that they shared with the researcher during the study, and whether it may be used in the research or not (Human et al., 2009; Wiles, et al., 2007).

## 3.5.2 Informed Assent

Participants in this study participated voluntarily. The participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Written informed assent was obtained from participant. This included: information regarding the researcher, the title and aim of the study, the exact procedure that was to be followed, and the different roles of the researcher, possible risks and benefits, the participants' rights, confidentiality, and storage of the data. The informed assent was written in language seen as appropriate for adolescents' understanding (see Appendix E).

## 3.5.3 Informed Consent

Participants in this study were between the ages of 12 and 18. Therefore, written informed consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians. The informed consent included the same information as the abovementioned assent (see Appendix F).

### **3.5.4 Dual Roles**

During the research process I assumed two roles, namely programme facilitator and researcher. Acknowledging the ethical dilemma that may result from confusing the two roles, I was constantly aware of my roles and possible influence on the participants. When the MAC programme was presented to participants, the role of the facilitator was in the foreground, and the researcher role was in the background. However, during the semi-structured interviews, the role of the researcher was in the foreground and the facilitator role in the background. In order to keep these two roles separate, I received regular supervision with my research supervisor, as well as peer-supervision. This process was clearly stated in both the consent and assent forms (Chew-Graham, May & Perry, 2002; Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001).

### **3.5.5 Support**

The study excluded any perceived physical or psychological risks to participants, as it was psycho-educational in nature and included no psychotherapy. However, debriefing sessions were made available to the participants should they feel the need to discuss their experience. The debriefing sessions were offered to the participants at no cost by the resident Sport Psychologist of the hpc (Chew-Graham et al., 2002; Orb et al., 2001; Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

### **3.5.6 Storage**

In accordance with global guidelines, research data will be stored for a minimum period of fifteen years in the Department of Psychology at the UP.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research process. The main themes of this chapter were formed by the context of the study and the position from which this study was conducted. Furthermore, it focused on the participants of the study and explored the exact process that was followed to conduct the research. This chapter concluded with a discussion on the ethical issues involved.

The next chapter will discuss the findings of Participant 1 (P1). The findings are divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were each then again divided into: learning, application, and transference.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### (Participant 1)

#### Introduction

This chapter will describe Participant 1's (P1) interpretation of his experiences of the MAC approach. His interpretations are grouped into Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Commitment.

### 4.1 MINDFULNESS

#### 4.1.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of learning about mindfulness by referring to:

1. his understanding of mindfulness,
2. experiencing conflict regarding mindfulness and
3. experiencing difficulty in distancing himself from old habits.

##### 4.1.1.1 Understanding

P1's general understanding of mindfulness seemed to be related to task-focused attention, interpreted as a person's ability to focus solely on the task that he or she is busy with at that present moment of time. This appeared clear from P1's interview where he mentioned that "...mindfulness is about focusing on one thing at a time...". This understanding of mindfulness appears to have been made clear mainly through the video clip shown during the workshop as P1 mentioned that "It's the second time I [he] heard about it [mindfulness], and this time it's more detailed and more things I've learned because of the inclusion of the video clip it makes it more clear."

#### 4.1.1.2 Conflict

Through the workshop P1 appeared to have learnt that mindfulness could be valuable, yet, at the same time difficult. In terms of it's being valuable, he said during the interview that "the workshop, ah, it opened my [his] eyes to much more, much wider things that mindfulness can lead you to". However, he furthermore seemed to perceive mindfulness as requiring a significant amount of effort compared to his old ways of doing things "...because for me [him] it's just, I do something, and then it's done. I don't focus on what I need to do, it's just; you run and jump".

#### 4.1.1.3 Habits

P1 appeared to perceive his old habitual manner of doing things as easy and effortless compared to MAC. However, he became aware of the fact that his old habits have limitations as he mentioned:

Well, for me it works, I wouldn't say all the time, but most of the time it works because you get so used to something that obviously it will... it will work for you because you've been doing it over and over and over... But, it... it didn't work all the time because there were some... some meetings where you just... because there were a lot of things going, you had school work, you had family, you had... but you had to do and you're at an athletics meeting but you're thinking about other things, you're not focusing on what you should do, your mind is just wandering and stuff like that, so.

Furthermore, from the interview it became clear that P1 seemed to perceive his old habits as standing in the way of his trying out new and alternative approaches to performance enhancement, such as the MAC approach. This was evident from the following comment from P1:

Well, the thing is, as an athlete you get used to doing one thing, so when... when... they introduce something new, you don't actually, like, when I say, you don't test it, you just go on on what you used to do and not changing what... what they telling you will work if you haven't tried it for yourself.

## 4.1.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of applying mindfulness to his sport by referring to:

1. areas where mindfulness could be valuable,
2. threats to mindfulness in athletics, and
3. PST in athletics.

### 4.1.2.1 Valuable

Mindfulness appeared to specifically be valuable in assisting P1 to firstly overcome distractions because:

through mindfulness, you [he], how can I say, you cut out the people that are talking, making a noise, the opponents and you focus on what, on what needs to be done in order to, to get through the, the jump you're going through.

Secondly, it appeared to have the potential to turn his focus to the task at hand instead of past or future requirements, for example:

...say you jump now you, you're not going to focus on the jump you did before that, you're going to focus on the jump at hand, not the next one, not the one after that, but what you need to be doing now.

### 4.1.2.2 Threats

According to P1, applying mindfulness to his sport seemed to include various pitfalls. He firstly asked the question of "say, you're very tired, you know you have to run 100 metres, but how, how you get yourself to, to do 100 metres if there, if your body's tired". Thus, P1 seemed to experience bodily sensations as a threat to mindfulness, or making mindfulness difficult to apply. Furthermore, external factors also seemed to complicate the application of mindfulness, because during athletic gatherings:

people are screaming, there's always lots of people at the track, always distracted by, by outside things, people walking over the track and stuff like that. Therefore it's not always easy to, to do what to, to apply mindfulness in that situation...

At times P1 appeared to experience some internal experiences that could in addition to the abovementioned factors create difficulties should he have attempted mindfulness as he mentioned that:

...internal factors as well, I'm [he's] not saying there's, there's no internal factors because you, they tell you something and then you, you get worked up because you're not getting it right, you're not, your body's not just telling you you can't do this, you can't, you can't.

Feeling unprepared before a competition appeared to be another factor that could hinder one's mindfulness during athletics as P1 noted "It won't always be easy, because some days you are ready to compete and other days you're not. Therefore, how do you get yourself to focus on that task if you're not ready?" A last factor that threatened the application of mindfulness according to P1 seemed to be the complexity of certain skills in athletics. P1 pointed out that:

...for me [him] as a long jumper, there's a lot of technical issues that you need to, ah, get right before you, in order to, to, when I say, to get a distance you want. Therefore if you do, if you do a small thing wrong, they would, they won't, how can I say, they won't give you the, the thing you did wrong, they would tell you everything in the process of what you did wrong.

Thus, it appeared as if P1 was suggesting that complex skills should to be broken down into steps. Subsequently one can be mindful of one step at a time instead of the skill as a whole.



#### 4.1.2.3 Psychological Skills Training

During the interview P1 reflected on his previous performance enhancement technique, which was Imagery, falling into the category of PST. P1 "...sat down at the, in front of the pit, looking at the runway and seeing myself [himself] really approaching the runway, like, visualising yourself. But, how can I say, ah, there was still the, the factors, outside factors...". Thus, P1 appeared to perceive the imagery technique as limited in terms of not assisting him to deal with external factors.

#### 4.1.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 seemed to have made sense of transferring mindfulness to his life by referring to:

1. being surprised about transferring mindfulness to life,
2. the value of mindfulness in his life, and
3. threats to mindfulness when transferred to life.

##### 4.1.3.1 Surprised

"The first time I heard, heard that you can apply it to life, I was shocked, I thought that you could only apply it to sport to improve performance...". The aforementioned statement displayed P1's initial perception of mindfulness as a skill that is limited to sport performance enhancement. Yet, he continued, saying "[I] gave it a bit of thought and realise that you can apply it to everyday life". Thus he showed insight into the fact that mindfulness and MAC is a lifestyle that one adopts instead of a skill that is applied in only a few selected areas.

##### 4.1.3.2 Valuable

After realising that mindfulness can in fact be transferred to life, P1 identified two specific areas in his life where mindfulness could be valuable. Firstly, it seemed that mindfulness could have a positive effect on P1's life in terms of improving his focus in general. According to P1:

...when I [he] thought about it, it, it actually opened my eyes to what, what is, what this does in your life actually because you're more focused on what, what needs to be done at that moment and not focused on what should, should have been done and stuff like that, so you're more focused on that specific moment in time.

Furthermore, P1 saw value in mindfulness in terms of enhancing the quality of his relationship with his girlfriend. He was of the opinion that:

...when you're [he's] with her, she's the main focus. There's if, if you're with her you mustn't, mustn't think about tomorrow's training, you must think about, when you, when you with her, you must think about her, not when you get back home, what is your mother going to say? What are you, what are you, what homework do you have? ...when you're with her, it's, it's only her that matters, nothing else.

P1's developmental phase of Identity vs. Role-Confusion confirmed that relationships were at that stage seen as an important area in his life. A key part of this phase involves the development of the adolescent's sexual identity (Ericson, 1968). Thus, it was significant for me to see that P1 could apply mindfulness to enhance this essential phase of his life.

#### 4.1.3.3 Threats

During the interview with P1, he appeared conflicted regarding the thought of mindfulness. P1 was aware of the value of mindfulness in his life, yet he additionally mentioned the perceived difficulties of transferring it to his life. "I [He] don't really know how to apply this to my life because there's always challenges that are faced, are faced, but faced simultaneously, not, not one at a time". Thus, having to come to terms with multiple responsibilities simultaneously seemed to threaten P1's ability to be mindful and created doubt whether he could apply it or not.

Additionally, P1 portrayed internal experiences to be a threat to his mindfulness. He specifically mentioned homesickness:

So therefore you sometimes forget that you're away from, you're away from your parents, but, but as the time, you, there are times where things, where, where your day gets quiet, can I say, you, you reflect on the day. ...I decided to come here, I know, I knew that there were going to be homesickness, there, the feelings were going to be there, but you also know that you have training. ...Therefore, I was really, can I say, really, It's difficult sometimes.

## **4.2 ACCEPTANCE**

### **4.2.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 seemed to have made sense of learning about acceptance by referring to:

1. factors that assisted his learning, and
2. the fact that acceptance could be challenging.

#### **4.2.1.1 Assisting Factors**

P1 appeared to have been exposed to the MAC programme before, however, "The, the first time I [he] heard about it was this, was like I said, it was vaguely. It wasn't in depth, but the workshop it went into detail, much more detail than what I'm used to...". Additionally, the video clip used during the facilitation of the MAC programme seemed to have made a significant impact on P1, as he mentioned that "the video also opened my eyes to see what it takes to accept situations...".

#### **4.2.1.2 Challenging**

From the information above one can assume that learning did indeed occur in P1 with regards to acceptance. Yet, from his personal point of view he appeared to perceive acceptance as challenging and something that requires continuous effort,

whereas avoidance seemed more natural. “It’s like, it becomes part of who you are. You just avoid situations. You don’t accept what, what needs to be done. You just carry on”. Thus, suggesting that at this stage he perceived avoidance as more straightforward and instinctive than acceptance.

Even though from the aforesaid it seemed clear that “for me [P1] it [acceptance] will be difficult”, he continued to say: “the willingness to try [to use acceptance] hasn’t failed me yet...”.

#### **4.2.2 Application**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of applying acceptance to his sport by referring to:

1. a perceived difficulty in terms of applying acceptance to his sport, and
2. consequences of avoidance.

##### **4.2.2.1 Difficulty**

P1 seemed to have identified a sport-specific difficulty with regard to acceptance, where he talked about wind as one of the external factors that he found very difficult to accept:

Therefore the, there will always be uh factors that will influence performance like the wind. The wind is the most, and people, the wind, the wind is the most definite thing that will influence you because if, if you have a certain amount of wind while you jump, there’s a wind reader, if there’s a certain amount of red it’s an illegal wind, illegal jump because the wind is too much from behind.

Thus, according to the MAC approach one needs to become aware of external factors, accept that they are there, and still commit by showing value-driven behaviour (Gardner & Moore, 2007). However, P1 appeared to experience great

difficulty in accepting the wind during his Triple Jump, as it could have an actual impact on his performance.

#### 4.2.2.2 Avoidance

In the past, P1 seemed to have dealt with distractions through avoidance. He appeared to be of the opinion that “avoidance is always the easiest thing to do because during competition you [he] don’t have, you’re not going to take the time to accept that people are screaming. You just going to avoid them and carry on”. Thus, avoidance seemed to have been habitual and more natural to P1. However, he showed awareness of the fact that there are some limitations to using avoidance:

Because if you avoid it, it would be, ha, you know, it’s there, always be there. But you will still have those, those feelings of anger because you, you never accepted them, ha, they’re just walking, just walking past you. That anger will be that if you, if you, if you’re not, if, if, if you don’t accept that they will, they will, they’ll walk past and you avoid it, if, if you don’t get your jump that you, that you wanted to, to jump.

Upon reflecting on the MAC programme, and after concluding that his previous approach of avoidance has its limitations, P1 became aware of acceptance as an alternative approach. He appeared to perceive it as a method that could assist him in terms of external factors. Moreover, he seemed to consider it as a valuable alternative to assist him in minimising the effect of the wind on his Triple Jump performance. In the following excerpt from our interview P1 explained how he will strategically go about coping with the wind by means of applying acceptance instead of avoidance to his sport:

It [avoidance] will, it would influence your performance in a bad way because if you don’t accept that there will always be wind you will, you would, you would just carry on with what, what you’re used to. Like if there’s a wind you would just run like you would when there’s no wind. You would just take it easy, uh, carry on with what you’re used to but the wind from the front, if you take it easy you will be off the board because the wind will push you back.

Therefore you need to push harder because if the wind pushes you from the front and you run easy you will, you will step say a metre away from the board and that would influence your performance and what you could have jumped if you, if you pushed harder through to the wind and ja, stuff like that.

Thus, accepting that the wind is an inevitable part of his sport could allow him to become more flexible and thus more prepared for different circumstances.

### 4.2.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 seemed to have made sense of transferring acceptance to his life by referring to:

1. the value of acceptance in his life, and
2. the difficulties of transferring it to his life.

#### 4.2.3.1 Valuable

P1 appeared to have been applying acceptance in his life unknowingly, and upon reflection he became aware of the benefits that it gained him. According to P1:

I [he] accepted the fact I'm gonna be here [hpc] for three months at a time, will not go home. And I accepted the fact that training is going to be hard. I accepted the fact that there is going to be schoolwork as well, including in everything you do. So if I didn't accept these three factors and then I wouldn't have achieved what I've achieved the past years I was, I've been at hpc.

Furthermore, P1 specifically referred to accepting criticism and intimidation, and how acceptance could assist him in achieving success. Thus, P1 showed awareness that:

...there will always be people that, that will discriminate. There will always be people that will try to bring you down. There will always be people that will intimidate you but if you, if you accept these people you will achieve greater

heights than if you just, how can I say, if you, if you just confront each one of them.

#### 4.2.3.2 Difficulties

Transferring acceptance to his life will be difficult for P1 in two instances. Firstly, when confronted with different power relationships, acceptance seemed to be difficult for P1, as he explained in the following excerpt:

...applying it to, to each step of that ladder would be very difficult because say you, you were at the bottom, you speak to your coach because you're competing tomorrow but yet again you still need to speak to your manager and ask her when is the next competition. If I can compete will there be a competition, will there be money involved, will there be, will it be licence numbers and stuff like that? Therefore in each, each, stage of the ladder would be very difficult because how do you accept the fact that you still need to speak to your manager but you just spoke to your coach. He said you can but the manager said you can't. So what, what do you do at that, at that situation? Do you accept that you can't jump there tomorrow or do you just carry on without them and, and how can I say, just throw away what your manager said, or and just carry on with what, what you want to do not what you manager thinks is best for you? Therefore accepting each factor would be very difficult.

Secondly:

...waking up every morning feeling, ha, again training, can't I sleep late? Ah, its, it won't be, it won't be easy because there will be some mornings you feel like I'm tired, it's been a, last night's home was too much. I need, I need more sleep, I need, ha, can't go to training.

Thus, bodily sensations, such as tiredness, seemed to be difficult to accept for P1.

## 4.3 COMMITMENT

### 4.3.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of learning about commitment by referring to:

1. motivation and commitment, and
2. the requirements of commitment.

#### 4.3.1.1 Motivation and commitment

From his experience of the MAC programme, P1 seemed to have learnt that motivation is not synonymous with commitment. P1 stated that “I [he] always thought that commitment and motivation is one”. Yet, he seemed to have perceived the two concepts as a twosome that work together sufficiently:

...if you're not motivated, motivated to do something, you won't commit to do it as well....you're motivated to go to training but you're not committed to go to training. You don't feel like it, so you go back to sleep. ...if you're not, if you're not committed to achieve and apply those, your values, to what, to what you want to achieve you will not be able to achieve that.

#### 4.3.1.2 Requirements

According to P1, if an athlete wants to achieve certain goals, it is important for him or her to have support and someone to encourage them. For P1 this person seemed to be his coach, as he explained:

if you [he] didn't have a coach you won't, you would go to training but you won't go to training with, with that thought in mind that you want, you want to achieve....there's no one to push you to achieve....you won't be committed to go to training every day, you will go today and tomorrow it's like, ha, there's no work there tomorrow so I'll just stay here, I'll stay here, sleep, sleep in and



go the next day. Therefore that extra person plays a big role in, in, in for me to, to help you to stay committed...

### 4.3.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of applying commitment to his sport by referring to:

1. motivation and commitment,
2. factors that can improve his commitment, and
3. areas where commitment could be valuable.

#### 4.3.2.1 Motivation and Commitment

In applying commitment to his sport, P1 seemed to be enthusiastic about commitment and motivation collectively, and not the one without the other. Even though P1 seemed able to perceive the two concepts as separate entities, he used the following metaphor of riding a bike to explain his argument:

Therefore, for me it was, I'm motivated, yes I'm motivated. But the motivation doesn't, doesn't work on its own. Motivation, it's, it's one handle. If we should grab the bike on one side you will go to one side. You won't go to the other side. You won't be on, on, in balance, to say that. Therefore for me it was motivation and commitment if I drove straight.

Thus, according to P1, in order for one to commit, you should first be motivated. Of importance was that he described how his opponents during a competition served as a motivational factor for him:

...how does he do it? How does he always win me, how does, what's the chances of me winning him? And for 2010, 2011, I started here at, at HPC. I got, I got the training, I committed and at the back of my head I know there's, there's always this guy. He's gonna be there tomorrow at this competition...

#### 4.3.2.2 Improving Factors

P1 seemed to be of the opinion that if one wants to apply commitment to your sport, you must first be willing and able to accept certain factors. Thus, P1 seemed able to integrate mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. Firstly, becoming aware of these factors, secondly accepting them, and thirdly moving on towards commitment:

...accept everything that's going to happen, injuries, people, internal factors, tiredness, stiff muscles, stuff like that. If, if, if you don't accept and commit to, to these factors, reaching your goal will, will be much harder than what you think it would have been.

#### 4.3.2.3 Valuable

After his experience of commitment during the workshop, it seemed as if P1 perceived it as a valuable attribute in terms of injury rehabilitation and prevention:

I had a injury for the whole, like the rest from the start of the season to SA's. ...but I was so committed to get to SA's that I did extra in the room when I, when I was lying there. I thought to myself, I stood up, I did something to get the muscles, the blood flowing, to get the muscles working. I committed, how can I say, I committed off the field... You would go to training, come back, do something else that, that would help you to, to, how can I say, not get injured again [prevention]. Ah, what is it again to, to recover faster [rehabilitation], to stretch, to always keep your muscles loose...

Through his explanations it appeared that P1 viewed commitment to be relevant and applicable when you are injured, and not only when you are fully functioning.

#### 4.3.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have made sense of transferring commitment to his life by referring to:

1. difficulties in terms of transferring commitment to life,
2. his solution: mindfulness,
3. areas where commitment could be valuable, and
4. factors that improve commitment.

#### 4.3.3.1 Difficulties

P1 seemed to experience some form of confusion related to commitment, and transferring it to his life. Firstly, he seemed to find it difficult to understand how “...one [can] commit to something, to something that you cannot do or won’t do, don’t want to do?” Thus, he appeared confused about how someone could transfer commitment to tasks that he or she did not enjoy or prefer. Secondly, P1 mentioned that:

...for me [him], ah, commitment to, to school work and training, it’s, the balance is not there. The one is higher than the other one. So how do, how do you find the balance... Therefore for me committing to both it’s very difficult.

P1 therefore appeared to find it challenging and confusing when commitment needed to be applied to more than one obligation.

#### 4.3.3.2 Solution: Mindfulness

Through his experience of the MAC programme, P1 appeared to have gained clarity on his above-mentioned confusion. The following excerpt explained the solution to his dilemma and confusion:

But yet again the workshop it was especially on that weekend that the week went horrible, terrible. And then, and then I, I heard again commitment... I saw that if I commit to what I need to be doing it would be much easier to go, to do that. Say, I, I go to school, I train in the morning, I commit to training, I don’t think about later I’m going to school. I, I train, I come back to my room. ...I have to go to school. At school you sit in class and focus on that period.

You don't think I have maths next period, ha, maths. You going to be there in that class focusing on business. And when business is done let's focus on maths. It's therefore for me, when the workshop was over, it opened my, my mind and my eyes to, to see that you, you can live a better life if you, if you commit to what's currently taking place and not what's, what has happened, what's going to happen. It's, it's, it's being mindful, it's being mindful on what you should be doing.

Thus, mindfulness or task-focused attention seemed to assist P1 in transferring commitment to his life.

#### 4.3.3.3 Valuable

P1 seemed to experience commitment as valuable if transferred to academics. More specifically, he pointed out that it could improve his concentration and subsequently keep him out of trouble:

If, if you're not committed to, to be there at school and, and the guy asks, asks, asks you a question about what he just said there in class, you would, the way you would, you will react to that question would be you are so nervous, because you weren't paying attention. You weren't there while, while, while he was explaining the things. Therefore when he asked you the question you were shocked. But if you were committed and you were listening to what he has to, what, what he has to say, what, what do you do here, what do you do there you would be, you would be able when he asks you that question you would be able to react in a positive way.

#### 4.3.3.4 Improving Factors

The support from parents seemed to be a significant motivational factor for P1, and keeps him committed to his sport. P1 noted that:

...my [his] biggest motivation is my parents, because they believed in me. ...they went everywhere I went. So if I, there's a competition today they go

with me. If there's a competition next week they go with me. Therefore for me it's, it's for me, for me it would be, not when I said, not paying them back for what they have done, done for me but just proving to them that they believed in me therefore I believed in myself. Therefore I'm committed to prove to them that, that I can achieve...

## **Conclusion**

This chapter elaborated on the research findings, specifically focusing on P1. The findings were divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into: learning, application, and transference. The next chapter will discuss the findings of Participant 2 (P2), following the same outline as the current chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **(Participant 2)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will describe Participant 2's (P2's) interpretation of his experiences of the MAC approach. His interpretations are grouped into Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Commitment.

### **5.1 MINDFULNESS**

#### **5.1.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of learning about mindfulness by referring to:

1. his confusion of the concept of mindfulness, and
2. him feeling conflicted with regards to mindfulness.

##### **5.1.1.1 Confused**

P2 seemed to have initially experienced the concept of mindfulness as somewhat confusing, as he appeared unsure of the meaning of the concept. He seemed to debate between two definitions of mindfulness. Firstly, mindfulness was seen in a concrete manner, where one had a full mind. Secondly, he mentioned task-focused attention, where one's focus was solely on the task at hand. This confusion was clear throughout the interview, as P2 mentioned that:

it was a bit confusing because I [he] didn't mean what you meant by mindfulness I thought that you meant like being all over the place mindful lot of stuff in your mind or thinking of the present moment. I was a bit confused between the two.

However, as the MAC programme continued P2 seemed to have reached a conclusion with regard to the meaning of mindfulness. He appeared sure of his understanding as he verbalised that “I [he] understand it like no one’s business else, and its actually means I know what it means now. It means that do not think of the future or the past, think of the very moment...” Thus, through his experience P2 seemed to have learnt that mindfulness could be defined as task-focused attention, where your focus does not drift to the past or to the future, but stays with the task at hand.

#### 5.1.1.2 Conflicted

Through the workshop P2 appeared to have learnt that mindfulness could be valuable, yet, at the same time not applicable to all situations. Thus, the fact that he was able to see both the negative as well as the positive aspects of the concept appeared to have left him feeling somewhat conflicted. In terms of the positive aspects, P2 seemed aware that mindfulness could be valuable to him, specifically in terms of improving his concentration. He displayed this by pointing out the consequences of mindlessness: “...it [mindlessness] will influence my performance very bad, in a very bad way it’s, it will make me slower and not concentrate on the actual race, ja”.

However, from the interview it became apparent that P2 occasionally perceived it necessary to think ahead. Thus, task-focused attention will not always be beneficial. He mentioned that:

I [he] do sometimes think ahead of what am I going to do and how am I going to do it but at the same time it’s a good thing because we do have to think ahead and try and think about what you going to do and how you going to do it...

#### 5.1.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of applying mindfulness to his sport by referring to:

1. his understanding of applying mindfulness to his sport, and
2. forward thinking.

#### 5.1.2.1 Understanding

P2 perceived mindfulness as task-focused attention (see 4.1.1.1) where one is “thinking of the present moment...”. However, this definition seemed to be a dilemma for him. As mentioned above, P2 perceived forward planning as a valuable attribute in his life and from the interview it appeared that P2 regularly thinks ahead. However, this tendency to think and plan in the future caused anxiety, and as he reported, it subsequently affected his mindful state. P2 talked about a previous experience where his forward thinking caused him to become anxious, and he:

...wasn't concentrating on the very moment, it was like my [his] first race and I was a bit scared, and you do get scared and think ahead and worry and worry and worry and think as if you wouldn't make it in this race...

Thus, P2 seemed aware that forward thinking caused anxiety, which in turn distracted him from his mindfulness, yet he perceived forward thinking as necessary. However, P2 found an interesting manner of combining mindfulness with forward thinking, which will be discussed in the next section.

#### 5.1.2.2 Forward Thinking

As mentioned above P2 perceived future thinking, or thinking ahead, as important. Yet, he was also able to see the value of mindfulness, which is a conscious focus on the current moment in time. However, his tendency to constantly think and plan ahead was preventing him from applying mindfulness. Thus, in trying to solve this dilemma, P2 seemingly wanted to apply mindfulness to his future thinking by being mindful while planning for the future. He mentioned that he could “...apply it [mindfulness] by thinking of ways to improve my, um sports careers and everything by adding mindfulness and thinking of the very moment and of what am I going to do for my future...” However, in essence, that would be defined as being mindless.



### 5.1.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of transferring mindfulness to his life by referring to:

1. threats to mindfulness when transferred to life,
2. feeling conflicted in terms of transferring mindfulness to his life, and
3. the consequences if mindlessness.

#### 5.1.3.1 Threats

In transferring mindfulness to his life, P2 appeared to anticipate three main difficulties. A new environment, internal experiences (thoughts), and his Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) diagnosis all seemed to be perceived as threats to his mindfulness.

Firstly, P2 seemed to anticipate difficulties in transferring mindfulness to his life when he is in a new environment, as he will not be able to focus solely on the current moment. According to P2 he would constantly think and long for his old environment, which will in turn distract him from his task at hand. He used the example of his being new at the hpc, and missing his old environment:

I'm at a boarding school in a different environment for my first time and it's a bit hard because now going to, I'm trying to cope with my, at this new school and new environment and also it, it's a bit tough because all my friends I left them away, alone and now thinking of the past things we did and the future things we, we, we were planning to do and sometimes yes it can be a good thing but on top of that it can be a bad thing because it makes you not think of the very moment...

Secondly, according to P2, internal experiences could be a threat to mindfulness. A busy mind, thinking about past and future events could be distracting when one was

attempting to maintain a mindful state. The following piece from the interview explained P2's concerns:

... it [his thoughts] goes all over the place it goes to sometimes it does, I do think of what am I going to do tomorrow, when is this class going to end um, this class is getting boring....in class you thinking of ok, now what am I going to do at training and not think of what your teacher is saying at the present moment, you think of lot of things, you think of what am I going to do after training, I'm hungry um, you want to get to lunch and then you get to lunch and then there's not nice food there, you get all angry and ja.

Thirdly, P2 spoke about his ADD, and how it could be a challenge for him in terms of staying mindful during a task. According to P2 his ADD would make it very difficult to keep his focus on one thing at a time:

Um, sometimes I don't focus, I'm an ADD so I don't try to, I, if I have a lot of sugar I go hyper so I don't think of the very present moment, I think ahead or like I'm daydreaming I'm in the middle of nowhere, I don't know where I am, I just, I just don't know how to explain it, it's just all over the place, and ja.

#### 5.1.3.2 Conflicted

As was evident in some of his previous comments (see 4.1.1.2), P2 appeared to feel conflicted when he considered transferring mindfulness to his life. However, he was able to identify the value of it when he mentioned that "I [he] would apply, um mindfulness to my life by trying to find a way in overcoming all these things and trying to be mindful and focused at the very moment...". Nevertheless, he perceived the opposite of mindfulness, which is past and future orientated thinking (mindlessness), as just as valuable. P2 explained this by using the example of going for a job interview, and how it would be to transfer mindfulness to that situation:

You have to think of what you learnt before, so it also goes with applying it at a job interview. You have to think of what you learnt at school and at university. In how to do the things that had to apply and getting, and going to

a job interview... You do have to have a CV, you do have to think of how you make one and how you do one and, a whole lot of stuff.

Therefore, it was necessary to consider past and future information, and not possible to solely focus on the current moment in time and task at hand.

### 5.1.3.3 Mindlessness

According to P2 the quality of a relationship could be affected if one is mindless in your interactions with others. He used the following example to explain himself:

Um, it's important in a relationship with your family....like if your mom is talking to you and you like not at that very moment you're thinking of what am I going to do at my social life. What am I going to do tomorrow? Am I gonna go to a party, am I gonna go the movies and your mom was giving you this lecture about okay your grades are not that good....and then come back to that very moment and think of okay guys calm down, calm down, I'm sorry, I'm sorry I'll try and fix it and then again then they call and then again you will think of what you're gonna do tomorrow...

## 5.2 ACCEPTANCE

### 5.2.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of learning about acceptance by referring to:

1. his understanding of acceptance and
2. areas where acceptance could be valuable.

#### 5.2.1.1 Understanding

During the interview, it became apparent that P2's experience of the MAC programme assisted him in understanding the concept of acceptance. He appeared

to have learnt that acceptance is the ability to face difficult situations in life, instead of avoiding them. According to P2 he would use what he has learnt about acceptance and "...try and find ways to get through life. Not try to dodge them and avoid them problems".

#### 5.2.1.2 Valuable

Through the learning that took place during the MAC workshop, with regard to acceptance, P2 appeared to perceive it as a valuable attribute in certain situations. During the workshop, the video clip assisted P2 to realise the value of acceptance. P2 used the example that he saw in the video to explain himself. He mentioned the:

...video where um this girl fell, she was doing 800 m I think and she fell at the last um, 400 m. She fell. She got up, the people had a gap and this was at like champs and everything, she got up, she ran, she ran the whole thing, she overlapped, she like went past the people. And she came first place.

Thus, she did not try to avoid or change her difficult situation; she accepted it and she pushed through.

Thus, P2 pointed out that he learnt that acceptance could be particularly valuable to him maintaining commitment to his goals. It would keep him going in spite of occasional difficulties. He specifically mentioned that he had to accept the fact that his current level of performance was below his desired aspiration. Accepting this fact would result in his working harder in order to achieve his goal. Furthermore, he mentioned that he has to accept that he will make mistakes. Accepting that mistakes are part of the sport would prevent P2 from becoming demotivated. It would instead keep him persisting through the tough times. An excerpt from the interview explained this in P2's own words:

Um, I have accepted the fact that I'm not good at this very moment in running. But yet if I work harder and um not give up I'll overcome all my discomfort, all my um discomforts and things that I'm not good at and I will make it through my athletics career.... Um, I've learnt about my acceptance that um, yes um,

we do make mistakes but you do have to accept them. So like let's say for example you um, running and you make a mistake. Or you hit your back, back of your heel or something and you fall and you trip, you do have to accept the fact that you fell or, and get up and carry on with that race and at least finish.

## 5.2.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of applying acceptance to his sport by referring to:

1. areas in athletics where acceptance could be valuable.

### 5.2.2.1 Valuable

After his experience of the MAC programme, and specifically learning about acceptance, P2 was able to identify three main areas in his sport where acceptance could be valuable. Firstly, and as mentioned earlier, P2 seemed to perceive acceptance as valuable in terms of accepting his current level of performance, and also that he will occasionally make mistakes during his performances (see 4.2.1.2). P2 said that he will:

...accept the fact that I'm [he's] not that fit and I'm not at the speed that I should be at. But yet, I'm going to try and apply acceptance into my athletics and, and accept that it, yes it's a learning, we do make mistakes but it's a learning curve for me.

Secondly, P2 seemed to occasionally experience difficult emotions, which tended to affect his performance. During the interview he specifically spoke about fear and hate. He pointed out that:

...losing does scare me [him] because um, before in grade seven and eight I was winning my races. I was coming first, coming first, now all the people

who used to be behind me are in front of me and I'm like I hate that, I hate that so much...

Learning to accept the fear could be valuable for P2's performance, as he mentioned that if he can accept it, he would be able to move forward and train hard in spite of the emotions.

Thirdly, accepting bodily sensations, and more specifically tiredness, seemed to be a challenge for P2. Yet, he was able to see the value in doing so, as he mentioned that:

...it's hard accepting that you have to go to gym because you're physically tired, your body is just done. It's like someone beat you up so badly you just can't walk. And you, you still have to go because the harder you work the better you get. So, you have to accept the fact okay I've got gym and go to gym..."

### **5.2.3 Transference**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 appeared to have made sense of transferring acceptance to his life by referring to:

1. the value of acceptance in his life.

#### **5.2.3.1 Valuable**

During the interview P2 provided limited information with regard to transferring acceptance to his life. He did however mention two significant areas where he anticipated applying the aforesaid. Firstly, P2 seemed to find it difficult to adapt to his new school environment. According to P2 he would:

...apply it [acceptance] in the change from an old environment to a new one and....try to not avoid the fact that I'm [he's] in a new environment and keep in communication with all my friends and family from the old environment...

Thus, P2 appeared to recognise the value in applying acceptance in a situation that was unfamiliar, or when he found himself in a new environment.

Secondly, it appeared that P2 saw value in transferring acceptance to his relationships. More specifically, he seemed to perceive it as important that one can accept the fact that people will always be different to you. P2 used the example of his hostel roommate and said "...I [he] do have to accept my roommate, that yes he can be a person who is like, he's not that clean and everything but yet I just have to accept...". He furthermore seemed aware of the reciprocal influence of his actions, if he did not accept diversity amongst people. P2 again used his relationship with his roommate to explain this: "...try not to make him, be mean to him because he is going to be my roommate for a whole year and he can do bad things to me if I'm being rude to him".

However, from some of P2's comments he still appeared to find it difficult and frustrating that other people such as his roommate, differ from him. Even though he seemed aware of the value of acceptance in that situation, comments such as the following still implied that P2 would rather change instead of accepting his roommates' behaviour:

...I have to try and find a way to make him do better and not be the way, the person he is....I have to accept the fact, yes he's not that clean but we have to find a way to make him clean.

## **5.3 COMMITMENT**

### **5.3.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 seemed to have made sense of learning about commitment by referring to:

1. his ability to commit, and
2. motivation and commitment.

### 5.3.1.1 Ability

After his experience of the MAC programme, and specifically the learning that took place with regard to commitment, P2 appeared to have gained self-awareness in terms of his own level of commitment. According to P2 “I [he] learnt that I’m going, that I am committed at this very moment...”. Thus, he became aware of the fact that his own level of commitment at present is adequate.

Furthermore, he perceived the level of his commitment to have improved since he ceased old habits:

I [P2] try to not, not slack back and not come up with excuses in which I have learnt that with excuses you’re not going to get anywhere... So I’ve tried to overcome those, those habits that I used to do.

Thus, from his comments, it seemed as if P2 used to make excuses and justify his lack of commitment in the past, which prevented him from achieving. However, currently he is trying to remain committed by changing his past habits. He mentioned that “I [he] am committed at this very moment, trying very hard to improve. I try to do extra, I try to work harder, I try to run with people who are older than me.”

### 5.3.1.2 Motivation and commitment

According to P2, he was previously unaware of the fact that there was a difference between the concepts of motivation and commitment. However, from his experience of the MAC programme, P2 appeared to have learnt that motivation is not synonymous to commitment. He now realised that where motivation was merely a desire, commitment was continuous action in order to attain that desire. Therefore, motivation alone would not assist him in attaining his goal. You need the commitment as well. The following excerpt explained this in P2’s own words:



I didn't understand it but now I do because motivation is just the verbal way of saying I wanna do something. Like I wanna go get, lose weight and you don't, you just eat more basically. And then you get committed where you just do everything, you just do everything that you know will improve your talent and improve what you have.

### 5.3.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, Participant P2 seemed to have made sense of applying commitment to his sport by referring to:

1. areas where commitment could be valuable,
2. factors that could improve his commitment, and
3. factors that could threaten his commitment.

#### 5.3.2.1 Valuable

According to P2 "I [he] can apply commitment to my sport by working harder, and not giving up and ja to find ways to get through my sports in a very strong way." Thus, if commitment was applied to his sport it seemed probable that P2 would display improved effort and persistence. P2 pointed out that this could be done in three specific areas in his athletics.

Firstly, he seemed to interpret commitment as applicable and valuable to both the off- and on-season of his sport. He mentioned that:

I [he] do have to be committed through on and off-season because if I'm not committed in on-season when we have races and everything then I won't make it. I won't, when I get to off-season I wouldn't improve that much because in the next season, the on-season I would be very slow and I wouldn't want that.

Thus, commitment seemed to be perceived as valuable during the peak athletics season, but also during the off-seasons of athletics. This could suggest that P2

interpreted commitment more as a life-style choice that can be applied continuously, instead of a skill that is only “switched on” when needed.

Secondly, P2 verbalised that commitment could be valuable when an athlete is learning a new technique. From his comments during the interview it seemed as if he would specifically apply commitment to improve his running speed: “I would also apply this by working on improving all of my techniques and try to get better and faster always in improving myself.”

Thirdly, commitment could be applied to develop his talent to the standard that he believed he could reach. Thus, in other words, assist him in reaching his goal. From his comments, it appeared that P2 experienced a lack of commitment in the past, which affected his performance negatively. However, applying commitment could assist him in regaining and shaping his talent, as he:

would like to get my [his] talent back like through commitment because I know I can do that. I have done it before, but I didn't make it to the fullest because of peer pressure. But I can do that because working harder and being committed makes me improve and get my talent back.

#### 5.3.2.2 Improving Factors

There appeared to be three main factors that could assist P2 in maintaining his commitment. Firstly, his coach seemed to play an important role in the level of commitment. During the interview P2 had the following to say about his coach:

...he is the one who can push me very hard. He can shout at me and your like okay let me work hard and push and sometimes yes he can, he is a very nice guy but sometimes he does have to shout at me and push me very hard because that's where the talent comes out...

Secondly, in order for P2 to commit and display a significant amount of effort, he needed to first accept his past and specifically certain past events. P2 indicated during the interview that:

I [he] try to work, I try to not give up basically. I try to not look back and, I have to accept the fact that I have done bad things, but I have to be committed and work hard and improve.

Thus, acceptance seemed to be another factor that would assist P2 in his commitment. The third factor that could assist P2 in his commitment seemed to be related to his school environment at the hpc. According to P2 the resources that were available to him at the hpc, compared to what he was used to at his previous school, was something that improved his commitment to his sport. He revealed that:

my [his] commitment compared to previously was much, it was hard. It was good but I didn't do it in the right way because I never knew how to do it because from the place I came from they didn't have the facilities that hpc has.

#### 5.3.2.3 Threatening factors

There appeared to be three main factors that could threaten P2's commitment to his sport. Firstly, P2 appeared to perceive peer pressure as a significant threat to his commitment. He mentioned during the interview that he had:

...a lot of peer pressure when I [he] was in grade 8 and 9 and I felt like I'm losing my talent. So I had to put, I had to put action towards it for example I was very sporty at my old school like I said, but yet my friends forced me to go to parties and do bad things, so I just lost my talent and I still do have a chance in getting it back, but it's just a lot of commitment...

Secondly, P2 seemed to experience frustration due to the fact that at the time his improvement in his sport was occurring slowly. Subsequently he became demotivated, which affected his commitment. During the interview he pointed out that "it affects my [his] commitment in a very huge way because I hate improving very slowly...".

Thirdly, P2 appeared to perceive family-related problems as a potential factor that could hinder someone's commitment to their sport. Thus, P2 explained that:

...family issues where there is like um your parents are divorced but my [his] parents are not divorced but yet I'm scared of them having a divorce, because they are a very good couple and then you, you wouldn't want, it will lose, it will make you not be committed because then you have a low self-esteem and, and you just feel bad about yourself and not want to do better and greater.

### 5.3.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P2 appeared to have made sense of transferring commitment to his life by referring to:

1. areas where commitment could be valuable and
2. difficulties in terms of transferring commitment to life.

#### 5.3.3.1 Valuable

Transferring commitment to life seemed to make sense to P2. During the interview he described it as working hard in life, because if you do not show effort in your life it loses its meaning. In his own words:

I would apply what I've learnt about commitment to my life by trying to have a good life and work hard in trying to be committed into my life, because if I'm not committed into my life, I wouldn't have a life basically...

P2 continued by naming two specific areas in life where commitment appeared to be valuable. Firstly, commitment seemed to be important in relationships. P2 explained how "I [he] would apply it by trying my best, trying to put it in my marriage and in my future and into my family and by being committed into enjoying the moment I have with them." Secondly, he mentioned the value of applying commitment to his schoolwork in an attempt to improve his academics. He would "...have to be

committed in trying my best in my schoolwork and working and trying to improve in, in different ways...”.

### 5.3.3.2 Difficulties

P2 was able to recognise difficulty in terms of transferring commitment to his life. According to P2 multiple responsibilities could create difficulty with regard to commitment. He seemed to find it difficult to grasp how one person can be fully committed to more than one area in life. Thus, if you are committed to your sport, how can you transfer it to life and be fully committed to that as well. His argument during the interview mainly pointed out that commitment to the one would threaten commitment to the other. He explains it in the following manner:

I am missing my parents but now I'm trying to not make that happen because that's gonna what, make me, it's going to make me want to go home and not train and not be, do anything, just be with family. And I do need training since I wanted to be committed in improving and having my talent back. So, now and then I have to go and see my family and not train and, even if I do go and see my family I still do have to train, I still do have to run, I still do have to go to gym...

### 5.3.3.3 Assisting factors

Thirdly, P2 made an interesting comment about how he perceived his ADD diagnosis to assist him in staying committed to life:

...my ADD makes me hyper, so it will make me hyper and get committed to my life and make it think good things because I'm hyped up and I would wanna explore a lot and explore how new things, explore new things and try and improve it.

Thus, P2 appeared to perceive his ADD as a source of energy that could assist him in staying committed to his sport. Yet, previously during the interview he mentioned that his ADD hinders his ability to stay mindful (see 4.1.3.1). Thus, it seemed that he

perceived his ADD as a threat to some components of the MAC approach, yet a valuable attribute to other parts.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter elaborated on the research findings, specifically focusing on P2. The findings were divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into: learning, application, and transference. The next chapter will discuss the findings of Participant 3 (P3), following the same outline as the current chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **(Participant 3)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will describe Participant 3's (P3) interpretation of his experiences of the MAC approach. His interpretations are grouped into Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Commitment.

### **6.1 MINDFULNESS**

#### **6.1.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 seemed to have made sense of learning about mindfulness by referring to:

1. his understanding of mindfulness,
2. threats to mindfulness, and
3. consequences of mindlessness.

##### **6.1.1.1 Understanding**

In our discussion about what P3 had learnt about mindfulness, he mentioned that "...you have to learn like the mental stability, it's to get focused on what you're doing and what you want and not on something else that's not what you want and what you're supposed to be doing". Thereby he appeared to understand mindfulness as task-focused attention, and seemed to perceive it as the ability to have a "stable mind". P3 went further and made it more personal, as he discussed how he has learned through the MAC experience that his own mindfulness is currently not satisfactory. P3 seems to have realised that "I [he] get easily disruptive and it's hard for me to get my mindfulness back and it's going to take some time for me to get it to concentrate."

### 6.1.1.2 Threats

Upon reflection after the workshop P3 appeared to have come to the conclusion that there were two main factors that he perceived as possible threats to his mindfulness. Both of these threats fell into the category of external factors.

Firstly, he started off by discussing how other competitors, or opponents could be a distraction to his mindful state. When asked for an example, P3 talked about a recreational cricket match that he played recently:

It was during the competition, the cricket competition, ja cricket match while other people, other fielders, are chirping the batsman. I was batting and I kept on listening to them instead of focusing on the ball and I got caught.

Secondly, environmental factors could also influence a person's ability to stay mindful, as P3 mentioned that "...if you're sitting at home studying and there's a car going past and it blow hooters or there's music playing you like get distracted from the music and the cars going around instead of studying". Thus, he seemed to perceive noise, or a busy environment, as a threat in terms of staying mindful.

### 6.1.1.3 Mindlessness

Through his experience of the MAC workshop, P3 appeared to have learnt that there are consequences to mindlessness, or to not being mindful. From our discussion it appeared that he was of the opinion that mindlessness mainly caused one to lose focus, as he noted that "...you lose concentration and you forget what you're doing and you're mindless".

## 6.1.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 seemed to have made sense of applying mindfulness to his sport by referring to:

1. his understanding of applying mindfulness to athletics,



2. areas where mindfulness could be valuable, and
3. threats to mindfulness in athletics.

#### 6.1.2.1 Understanding

According to P3 the application of mindfulness to athletics will mean that as an athlete one will have to "...concentrate on what you're doing, not what's happening around you or what's happening after". Thus, he seemed to interpret mindfulness in athletics as the ability of the athlete to focus solely on the task at hand, and not to pay attention to any other factors.

#### 6.1.2.2 Valuable

Mindfulness seemed to be experienced as valuable and applicable to both training and competitions by P3. He indicated that "...you can just like concentrate on what you're doing at training and for competition...". P3 explained this further by specifying exactly how he could use mindfulness during training, and how he could use it during competitions.

During training mindfulness could be valuable in terms of correcting P3's technique. He mentioned that during training he could "...concentrate on the technique and exercise that what I'm [he's] trying to do right in athletics". He continued and said that:

...while on training, you can feel when something is wrong. And when you're doing something wrong you do feel it and you have to find a way to correct it. Instead of asking people what's going wrong, what you're doing wrong, you have to know it, you're doing and how.

Thus, he seemed to say that while one is training, mindfulness could assist you in becoming aware of your mistakes, and you should react by correcting them. This could be an empowering technique, as you do not have to rely on others telling you what you are doing wrong, but can rather improve your technique through an intense focus on the task at hand.

During competitions, and more specifically during the actual race, there appeared to be three sub-areas where mindfulness could be important for P3: his start, getting out of the starting blocks, and the finish. These three focus points seemed to be important to P3 as he mentioned that:

...while I'm [he's] running all I want to concentrate on is just the starting and how to get out my blocks and to the finish line. Not to what's around me, what's happening, how, how dirty the place or how clean. I just have to concentrate on what I'm doing.

### 6.1.2.3 Threats

Even though the previous section displayed P3's perception of mindfulness as a valuable attribute to his sport, he also showed awareness of certain factors that could threaten his mindfulness. Firstly, certain bodily sensations could decrease one's level of mindfulness. In his comment where P3 mentioned that in order to be mindful one had to "just keep going and forget about being tired and when I'm sick". P3 additionally spoke about his asthma, and how it could affect his ability to stay mindful:

I have asthma so it's whenever I start running, like attacks come, asthma attacks during the night so it's kind of hard to get back to training 'cos I have to go to the doctor. And he gives me days off, then it's medication and I have to have a full week off training before I can compete and it takes quite a long time. Well all you're thinking about is why do I have asthma instead of OK, what am I going to plan ahead for training.

P3 seemed to suggest in the two aforementioned excerpts that the bodily factors could make it difficult at times to maintain his mindfulness during his sport.

Secondly, there appeared to be certain external factors that he perceived to be potential threats to mindfulness during his sport. P3 specifically mentioned critique from others to be a distracting factor. It seemed that P3 pays attention and gets

distracted by criticism, which meant he loses focus on the task at hand, or in other words, becomes mindless. He noted an experience where people were criticising his school and he became “...mindless because what I [he] thought about it is why are they saying this, instead of concentrating on the race”.

### **6.1.3 Transference**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 appeared to have made sense of transferring mindfulness to his life by referring to:

1. the value of mindfulness in his life and
2. threats to mindfulness when transferred to life.

#### **6.1.3.1 Valuable**

After learning about mindfulness through the MAC workshop P3 was able to identify two areas where mindfulness could be valuable if transferred to his life. Firstly, it could assist him to obtain and maintain a balance in his life, specifically between sport, school and his personal life. In his own words, he said that: “I can apply mindfulness in my life by helping me balance my sports and school work together with my personal life situations happening in my life and just try to do what I do for the best...”.

Secondly, P3 talked about how “mindfulness can help me [him] like to concentrate with what I’m doing at school and my personal life and with the family...”. Thus, mindfulness seemed valuable to P3 in terms of improving his focus in various areas.

#### **6.1.3.2 Threats**

P3 appeared to experience some conflicting emotions towards mindfulness as he was able to see the value thereof in his life (see 4.1.3.2). However, he was also able to identify certain factors that could make mindfulness difficult to transfer to his life. During the interview, P3 reflected on three specific factors that could threaten his mindfulness. Firstly, he mentioned that “...the social media addiction also causes a

lot of mindlessness of the things I [he] do”, and he used the following example to explain himself:

When your phone like when the red light goes on you just sort of get any reply, even if it’s during school, it’s during class while you’re talking to your friends. When you guys are just sitting there everyone is on their phone instead of like listening to each other.

Secondly, P3 suggested that if someone experiences family difficulties, he/she could also struggle to be mindful in their life. From the interview it seemed as if P3 was trying to say that if something was wrong in your family, it would distract you from your other obligations that require your mindful attention. P3 explained this in the following manner:

When this happens, when things happening when you are far away from home and they tell you all you’re thinking about is what’s happening to whom and what’s happening where you are so it’s a huge factor for being mindless, especially when it’s happening to your family.

Thirdly, according to P3, peer pressure or friends could have a significant effect on your mindfulness. He talked about a situation where:

...my [his] friend at home and he’ll call me there saying they’re having such a great time and I’m sitting here in the room and ah, I’m stuck in the hostel for the next three weeks, then I can only go home. So it’s quite hard. All you want to do is just like go home, not think about, OK, what’s going on here, I’m thinking about, OK, having fun. I’m sitting here bored, doing nothing, training day in, day out instead of like going and sitting with friends...

## 6.2 ACCEPTANCE

### 6.2.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 appeared to have made sense of learning about acceptance by referring to:

1. factors that assisted his learning,
2. the consequences of avoidance, and
3. showing awareness that acceptance could be challenging.

#### 6.2.1.1 Assisting Factors

P3's learning seemed to have been assisted mainly by two factors during the workshop. Firstly, he talked about the hoola-hoop activity that the participants had to perform during the workshop:

I had to accept that they were talking to me while I was hoola-ing so there was no use of giving up so I just had to like accept. I have to carry on doing what I can do and it's nice to accept a feeling of being over the negative...

Secondly, the video that was showed to the participants during the MAC workshop seemed to have enhanced P3's learning experience, as he used the video to explain acceptance to me during the interview:

...we were watching the video, I, um, like the lady which she fell while she was racing. She accepted that she fell and all she do she stood up and she ran. She even won the race. And the other guy who got attacked by the spectator, he accepted he got attacked and all he just did was carry on with the race and he came third. And the people, when they were running in the mountains they got tired, it was raining, it was hot, and all they just had to do was accept that they're hot and they're tired.

### 6.2.1.2 Avoidance

After learning about acceptance, P3 displayed the ability to identify consequences if someone applied avoidance instead of acceptance. He seemed to be of the opinion that it could primarily lead to a person giving up and thus fail. Therefore, according to P3, if people did not accept, “they would of gave up and they would of like just lost their concentration, just gave up and just did not accept that they’re tired, would of stopped what they were doing”. P3 continued and discussed the secondary consequences of not accepting, which seemed to be guilt. He mentioned that “if you like give up on what you’re gonna do, when you look back to it you can have guilt. When you feel guilty for giving up instead of just carrying on and accepting that it happened in life...”. Thus, from his experience of the MAC approach, P3 appeared to have come to the conclusion that if one did not accept, it could lead to quitting and failure, which would subsequently lead to guilt.

### 6.2.1.3 Challenging

From the above sections it seemed clear that P3 had a positive experience of acceptance during the MAC workshop and that he was able to see the value thereof. Yet, on the other hand, he pointed out the fact that it will not always be easy to accept:

Well I accepted that they were talking to me and the hula hoop sometimes didn’t want to go and my hip was tired so, and people walking around, friends were there looking at us, laughing. It’s hard to accept that. Well, sometimes it’s easy, or most of the time it’s easy and then you get time, other things where it’s hard.

## 6.2.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, Participant P3 seemed to have made sense of applying acceptance to his sport by referring to:

1. his ability to apply acceptance in his sport,

2. areas in athletics where acceptance could be valuable, and
3. consequences of avoidance.

#### 6.2.2.1 Ability

After his experience of the MAC programme, P3 was able to reflect on his ability to apply acceptance to his sport of athletics. He came to the conclusion that he had an adequate ability to accept, which was clear from the following excerpt: "...I found it [acceptance] quite easy. Because you're not always, like, every race you can't always win every race. For you to win every race you going to have to be perfect and no-one is perfect".

#### 6.2.2.2 Valuable

During our discussion of acceptance, and how it can be applied to the sport of athletics, P3 mentioned three areas where he perceived acceptance to be valuable. Firstly, acceptance seemed to be valuable when an athlete is injured. According to P3 "I'm [he's] going to have to accept that you're going to have injuries at times...". He continued by making it personal, and provided information on an experience that he was currently going through with regard to an injury, and how he can apply acceptance: "I have to accept to that I have shins and couldn't do anything about it so I'm just going to accept the problems I have and carry on with it until my foot is strong enough...".

Secondly, P3 seemed to view acceptance as valuable when an athlete is experiencing failure in his/her sports career. He said that:

I [he] have to accept, I have to accept that one cannot always win but also lose so, in that fact we all have our days when we win and sometimes but not always. There are hard times and easy times.

Thirdly, acceptance seemed to play an important role for P3 in terms of his busy and intense training schedule. At the hpc the athletes were confronted with intensive

training programmes. According to P3 one needed to accept this if you wanted to achieve in your sport. He commented on his programme by saying:

...you have to wake up every morning at five then you have to go to training for two hours and at seven you come back, shower, eat breakfast, go to school, come back from school, go back to training, come back, eat supper then you have to study for an hour then we have 30 minutes to relax, then it's bedtime, wake up again at five the next day. So you have to accept the fact that it's either every two days or every day you have to wake up at five every morning.

#### 6.2.2.3 Avoidance

After P3 commented on areas where acceptance could be valuable in the sport of athletics, he discussed the perceived consequences if someone did not apply acceptance to their sport, and specifically in terms of an injury. According to P3 if acceptance was not applied in the case of an injury, one could end up hurting yourself even more, thus worsening your condition:

So all you have to do is just accept that you have the injury and it's happening. ...if the training load pressurise and when it hurts you have to stop, at all, stop everything you're doing so not to force your injury more, just go as it is, but when it just starts to injure or in pain you have to stop everything.

#### 6.2.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 appeared to have made sense of transferring acceptance to his life by referring to:

1. the value of acceptance in his life,
2. his ability to accept his new environment, and
3. consequences of avoidance.



### 6.2.3.1 Valuable

Moving from his previous school environment to a new one seemed to have been a challenging experience for P3. When asked to reflect on how acceptance could be transferred to life, he mainly discussed the manner in which he could use it to overcome this challenge. P3 specifically mentioned three things in his new environment where acceptance could be valuable.

Firstly, P3 needed to display acceptance for his new school's discipline system and routines. This seemed to differ significantly from his previous environment. Previously P3 was schooled from home, whereas currently he is in the school hostel. P3 explained this in the following manner:

Well, at first, for the first two days, it was kind of hard because here, you don't like, you have, like, a bedtime and it's half-past nine. At home, you stay up as long you want, some you don't even sleep, just wake up, go to school, come back, then you can only sleep. Here you have to sleep, get some rest for the next day competition or a practise.

Secondly, the fact that P3 had to leave his home and family behind seemed to be difficult for him and he appeared to experience homesickness at times. However, he showed insight in terms of the applicability of acceptance in this situation:

Well like, family like, some days you'd like miss your parents, miss your siblings. You have to accept that they're not here or whenever you're going to see them. You see them when you go back home but you're not always going to see them every day. So you have to accept that in life that not every day you see the people, family.

Thirdly, the new school environment required of P3 to also make new friends, which could be challenging at times. However, on asking him if acceptance could be helpful in that situation P3 responded by saying:

I [he] just have to accept that coming to a new school, starting a new life, I have to make new friends. After your first friend you're going to make about three more in one day so just have to carry on.

#### 6.2.3.2 Ability

P3 appeared very aware of the fact that he would experience difficulties throughout his life, for example moving into a new environment. However, he seemed to perceive his ability to accept these difficulties as adequate, as he mentioned:

I do accept the fact that I have left home and all my friends while I show that I can accept that I have left home, but still able to survive without seeing any family or friends. I am accepting leaving my old school and starting a new complete life with all the new people I don't know and have a good relationship with people at school.

#### 6.2.3.3 Avoidance

P3 displayed an awareness of the consequences if acceptance was not transferred to life. He specifically mentioned the consequences that he would probably be left with if he did not accept the fact that he was now in a new school environment. According to P3, you would primarily experience homesickness, which would also affect your focus. Upon asking him how it would look if someone did not accept his environment, he commented:

Well you start missing home and some people say you start getting homesick and everything just falls apart. You forget where you are. All you want to do is just go back home, relax, see family again, go see your friends instead of just carrying on to carry on.

## 6.3 COMMITMENT

### 6.3.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 appeared to have made sense of learning about commitment by referring to:

1. his understanding of commitment,
2. motivation and commitment, and
3. a threat to commitment.

#### 6.3.1.1 Understanding

The MAC workshop seemed to have left P3 with the notion that commitment is seen as continuous hard work and effort. Thus, in his words, he learnt that commitment is “...to do things like that and to keep trying 'til the end and showing that nothing is achievable without hard work...”. Furthermore, he seemed to have gained a positive perception of commitment, as he mentioned that:

...you have to be committed to the things, like, be committed to do something. Without commitment, you won't achieve what you want to do. It's going to be extremely hard for you to achieve what you want to do without commitment.

Hence, from his experience of the MAC workshops he seemed to have gained that commitment is synonymous to consistent hard work and that it is a prerequisite for success.

#### 6.3.1.2 Motivation and Commitment

From his experience of the MAC workshop, P3 evidently learnt that motivation is not equivalent to commitment. The MAC workshop appeared to have pointed out to P3 that where motivation is merely a desire, commitment is the action that will take you to that desire. He explained his understanding of the two concepts by using an example of a previous sporting event in his life:

In hockey, I think it's two years back in Free State hockey, I was motivated to play hockey but I was not committed to play hockey. I'd go to some practice but not play fully then I'd only be in the Northern Free State team. Then either way, I had to be committed to get in the team instead of just being motivated not committed.

### 6.3.1.3 Threat

From the interview it seemed that P3 perceived certain bodily sensations as threatening to an athlete's ability to stay committed and he specifically spoke about tiredness. According to him it took effort to be fully committed to your sport. He mentioned his training at the hpc and how he:

...gets tired at the end of the week. All you want to do is just sleep. Some days you don't want to do anything, you don't want to even wake up for breakfast. That's how tired you are. So you have to be committed to wake up and go to breakfast and go to lunch, wake up stretch, just keep fresh instead of just lying in bed...

Thus, it appears that when one is extremely tired, it will become increasingly difficult to stay committed.

### 6.3.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 seemed to have made sense of applying commitment to his sport by referring to:

1. his understanding of commitment in athletics,
2. application in training vs. in competition, and
3. motivation and commitment.

### 6.3.2.1 Understanding

In terms of applying commitment to his sport, P3 seemed to be of the opinion that commitment is driven by future goals. In his comments, he seemed to perceive commitment to athletics as continuous determination and actions that will in the end lead you to your goal. He made it personal by saying that:

...to be committed in my [his] sport, I have to wake up every morning and go to training, just be committed to be at training and when I'm at training, I just give hundred per cent. When I come back I can rest, study, do everything. To be committed in what I want in the future.

### 6.3.2.2 Training vs. Competition

Well, being committed at training, you're giving hundred per cent. Competition, you're going to give more than a hundred per cent. You're going to give everything you have. All you want to do is win the race, come the best out of three. That's all you're going to do at competition, like, training, you're just giving hundred per cent to get ready for competition.

The above excerpt could be used to display P3's opinion with regard to commitment during training compared to commitment during competitions. He seemed to perceive the level of commitment in the two situations to be different. In summary, he seemed to interpret a competitive situation as requiring more commitment than a training situation.

### 6.3.2.3 Motivation and Commitment

P3's perception of motivation and commitment did not oppose each other, but rather worked together in order to reach success. He suggests that a prerequisite for commitment is to have goals, which was also mentioned earlier (see 4.3.2.1). In his words, he stated that: "I need to just start with settling my goals first then I will show my commitment." Thus, he is saying that you first need to desire something, which can be defined as motivation, before you can get committed to getting it. In that way,

he appeared to suggest that motivation and commitment work together to get you to your goals.

P3 used the following example to explain how he has experienced motivation and commitment to work together in his sport:

Well, my motivation is to go the African Champs and for me to get to the African Champs, I have to be committed to get to the specific times I need and do what I want at training and do what I need to do to get to African Champs and to win African Champs.

### **6.3.3 Transference**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P3 seemed to have made sense of transferring commitment to his life by referring to:

1. goals in life,
2. difficulties in transferring commitment to life, and
3. his past vs. present commitment.

#### **6.3.3.1 Goals**

The theme of “goals” surfaced at various times during interviews with P3. In terms of transferring commitment to life, he appeared to be of the opinion that no matter where commitment is used, you first have to set goals. Personally, he mentioned that with “...commitment in my [his] life, I will have to set goals for my life...”. Thus, after goals have been set, commitment comes in and assists you in achieving those goals.

During the interview P3 disclosed a specific goal in his life, and how commitment can be transferred in order to reach his objective. He firstly mentioned that “I [he] set an engineering goal. I want to go to a course in America, a practical course at a college in America.” He seemed committed to that goal because “I [he] am working on my

science and maths and engineering and the cars, because I'm busy learning how to fix a car, which part is which part in the engine and everything".

### 6.3.3.2 Difficulties

Being committed to both school and to sport seemed to be perceived as necessary, yet challenging, by P3. He mentioned how his parents expected of him to be successful and committed to both areas: "...they [parents] also want me to have a great job and show what I can do in athletics. Not just in athletics or in school doing what, so I have to be committed for school and sports." P3 furthermore mentioned that it is "...hard balancing it out, and now I'm still working on the balance".

Thus, it came across as if P3 was aware of the fact that his commitment to school and sport is not yet in balance and that it is something he finds difficult to do. He admitted that "...I'm [he's] only committed to, like, sports more than school. I'd be committed to some classes in school, not every class in school".

### 6.3.3.3 Past vs. Present

P3 appeared to perceive his present level of commitment in his life as improved compared to the past. After the MAC workshop indicated to P3 that there is a difference between motivation and commitment, he was able to reflect on his past by saying that "...in the past I'd be, like, motivated but not committed but now I'm motivated and committed, so they are going to see a difference between now and the past". Thus, in retrospect he was able to realise that he was merely motivated in the past, whereas currently, he displays both motivation and commitment in his life.

## Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the research findings, specifically focusing on P3. The findings were divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into: learning, application, and transference. The next chapter will discuss the findings of Participant 4 (P4), following the same outline as the current chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **(Participant 4)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will describe Participant 4's (P4's) interpretation of his experiences of the MAC approach. His interpretations are grouped into Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Commitment.

### **7.1 MINDFULNESS**

#### **7.1.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of learning about mindfulness by referring to:

1. his understanding of mindfulness and
2. a personal reflection on his own mindfulness.

##### **7.1.1.1 Understanding**

P4's general understanding of mindfulness appeared to be related to task-focused attention, and the ability to resist distractions. This is a person's ability to focus solely on the task that he/she is busy with at that current moment despite various distracting factors. He explained this by saying that athletes "...should let that [distractions] out of their sight and then focus on what they should do now rather than listen to other people telling them about the past or telling them how the future's gonna be".

The learning that took place with regard to mindfulness seemed to have been assisted by the activity that was done during the MAC workshop. According to P4 "...the hula hoop activity that we [the participants] did about two days ago actually is



a good way um, that, it explains the concept of mindfulness very well...”. Thus, P4 seemed to have benefitted from experiential learning.

#### 7.1.1.2 Personal Reflection

After the MAC workshop, P4 appeared to have gained insight in terms of his own mindfulness, and during the interview he reflected on two areas. He firstly appeared to perceive his own ability to be mindful but inconsistent. Yet, he seems to believe that “...if one practises he or she can perfect their mindfulness”. By saying practise, P4 seemed to mean that a person should allow him/herself intervals of mindlessness, instead of attempting a continuous mindful state. He used the following example to explain his argument:

...if I had to listen to the teacher fifteen minutes and took a, take a break, like five minutes, and then go another fifteen minutes, take a break, go another fifteen minutes, eventually I will want to go thirty minutes without being distracted.

Secondly, P4 reflected on his own mindfulness by pointing out that he experienced increased levels of mindfulness when he engaged in pleasant activities. Thus, when P4 was interested in a certain activity, or when he enjoyed partaking in the specific activity, he was able to show enhanced levels of mindfulness. He provided a personal reflection about how he is able to be mindful during certain school subjects:

...if it's something like Math, then I put my full concentration because, I think it's because I love Math....I, working out a, like a sum, I'm, I'm always there in class. I always try to get the sum right. If I get it wrong then I'll do it again and again and again and again. So I focus all my attention on what I'm doing now if it's a sum.

#### 7.1.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, Participant P4 seemed to have made sense of applying mindfulness to his sport by referring to:

1. threats to mindfulness in athletics, and
2. consequences of mindlessness in athletics.

#### 7.1.2.1 Threats

From the MAC workshop P4 seemed to have learnt that there are certain factors that can threaten your mindfulness in athletics, specifically during training. During the interview, P4 mentioned one main factor that caused him to become mindless during training. At various points throughout the interview he noted that the constant talking amongst training partners was a major contribution to his becoming mindless during training

...in training specifically I'd start training and my coach would tell me what to do. Because we're in a group we are distracted very easily because we talk to each other. I might stand in front of the runway and my coach would tell me to give me, well to give him a 75% sprint towards the board but then as he tells me this I turn around and talk to my partners before I could actually start running.

The aforesaid focused on threats to mindfulness during training. However, P4 furthermore discussed threats to mindfulness during competitions. There appeared to be three main factors affecting P4's mindfulness during competitions. Firstly, spectators:

...the crowd makes a lot of noise so I can't really concentrate. When I try to calm myself down I'm thinking about the noise that they're making. You'll hear people in the background say "Oh well, he's going to win" and then the other one says "No, he's not going to win" and you're concentrating on them rather than, okay, focusing on what you should be doing now, doing it correctly and placing a good jump and let's see how things go.

Secondly, P4 seemed to occasionally experience the emotion of anger during competitions, due to various reasons. However, this anger seemed to be a

significant threat to his mindfulness. Upon asking P4 about how the anger affects his mindfulness, he responded with: "...it destroys it completely because I lose, I lose focus...".

Thirdly, the PST skill known as visualization that requires future-orientated thinking appeared to be a significant threat to P4's mindfulness. This seemed specifically relevant when P4 was on the runway, ready to make his jump. According to P4 he was able to maintain his mindfulness while he was standing and preparing for his jump. He mentioned that:

On the runway of my [his] long and triple jump I am very focused and I think of what I'm going to do before I jump but as I start running towards the board I lose concentration which either causes me to slow down or to do something wrong.

Upon asking him what the reason was for him to lose focus or become less mindful in that situation, he answered:

... when I was in primary school I was taught that, I was taught to stand, um, straight and then visualize of what I'm going to do, like think in my mind or just imagine myself doing it before I actually run or jump, so I stand straight, think about what I'm gonna do and then as I start running I'm thinking of what I should be doing but then I kind of like lose it because I'm thinking to myself, OK, OK, left leg, left leg, left leg and when I get there I'm on the right leg and everything is disastrous.

#### 7.1.2.2 Mindlessness

P4 showed awareness of the consequences of being mindless during training. There appeared to be three main consequences. Firstly, an athlete would lose concentration if mindfulness was not applied. P4 reported to "...lose focus completely because I'm [he's] not doing what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm not focused enough because they're distracting me all the time". According to P4, a second consequence was that you would not get the full value out of the time that

you spend at training, because you are wasting time. He used the following example to explain his viewpoint: "...what I was supposed to be doing was taking the run 75 metre, um 75%, and then getting to the long jump board. Instead I take ten minutes before I actually run to the board".

Thirdly, P4 appeared to experience technical errors in his sport as soon as he became mindless during training. He talked about how mindlessness can cause "...bad distances, you don't get, you're not, well you're not on the board, you're over the board, you don't jump right, your technique is off, your landing is off, so that's one of the consequences that you will face...". Thus, from his comments it seemed that P4 perceived mindfulness to be valuable when applied to his training sessions.

### 7.1.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of transferring mindfulness to his life by referring to:

1. threats to mindfulness when transferred to life, and
2. consequences of mindlessness.

#### 7.1.3.1 Threats

In discussing the transference of mindfulness to life, P4 was able to name four factors that he perceived as threats to mindfulness. Firstly, emotions, more specifically feeling stressed. He explained how he thought over questions during tests or exams and how that "...led to stress, causing me [him] to wander off to another world". Secondly, social media appeared to be another factor that was experienced as threatening in terms of remaining mindful. This seemed particularly true with regard to interpersonal relationships, as P4 mentioned that:

I [he] have a cousin that's always on my phone for some reason because I have a Blackberry and I'm connected to Facebook, BBM, WhatsApp and Mixit at the same time. Now he opens all those applications and I can speak, I can repeat a sentence like ten times and he still asks what, what I said. And if I'm

on the phone my mother would also talk to me. She would literally talk for like five minutes and I wouldn't be listening because I'm on my phone the whole time. So that social media is really bad.

A third factor mentioned by P4, is when one entered a new environment. Staying focused and mindful in life while you are in a new environment could be challenging. This seemed true mainly because you missed the old environment and thoughts and memories caused you to long for the past. Thus, your focus was more on the past than on the present moment. During the interview P4 spoke about being in a new environment and how this can be:

...a distraction because you're used to the old, the past... So I [he] lose concentration. I want the old environment back where I can't even have it back because I'm in a new environment. So it kind of messes up my concentration and my mind...

Fourthly, mindfulness transferred to academic responsibilities could possibly be threatened by friends. This was explained by the following words of P4:

...if I'm trying to study in the, like during the weekends they'd [friends] come and they'd be like ok can I borrow your laptop, let's play some FIFA, and then I start playing FIFA for like two hours and then I realise that there is only one hour left and then another friend pops in, talking about soccer. And then I'm like ok let's go and play soccer for a while, thirty minutes. And then I go outside, thirty minutes passes, two hours again and then I realise that I don't have enough time to study for my tests. So friends are really, really a big distraction.

#### 7.1.3.2 Mindlessness

If someone's mindful state is threatened by one of the threats mentioned above and one enters a mindless state, there could be certain consequences according to P4. One of these perceived consequences was a decrease in concentration. P4 noted that when he became mindless during exams "...it's very bad, really bad because

there's, I lose my concentration". Thus, the first consequence that one can experience due to mindlessness seems to be decreased levels of concentration.

P4 furthermore mentioned that "...it [mindlessness] creates an unhealthy relationship because they're putting their trust in me to listen to them and you don't so they might even get angry at you...". It therefore appears that by being mindless during interaction with others could negatively affect the quality of your relationships. On the other hand, P4 mentioned that if you are mindful in your interactions with others, it could lead to improved empathic understanding, and thus, high quality relationships. He explained that "...it [mindfulness] would be good because let's say you've had, you have a friend that is, well, soft hearted. You would, you would understand what the person is going through and you would give your support to the friend...".

## **7.2 ACCEPTANCE**

### **7.2.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, Participant 4 (P4) seemed to have made sense of learning about acceptance by referring to:

1. his understanding of acceptance, and
2. factors that assisted his learning.

#### **7.2.1.1 Understanding**

P4 explained to me during the interview that he had learnt about the inevitability of distractions, and that one needed to accept them. If you are able to accept them, it could have positive outcomes for you. Thus, according to P4 the MAC workshop helped him understand that:

...there will always be distractions whether if it's a person, if it's people passing by or making a noise. I've accepted that they'll always be there and

once I've accepted that the distractions are always there I was better focused on what I was doing.

In the abovementioned excerpt, P4 spoke about the experiential activity that he had to perform during the workshop. This will be further discussed in the following section.

#### 7.2.1.2 Assisting Factors

After explaining to me what he has learnt about acceptance during the MAC workshop, P4 continued by describing his experience of the hoola-hoop activity. He discussed how the activity confirmed and improved his understanding of acceptance. It furthermore seems to have assisted him in understanding the practicality of acceptance, and that it is more than just theory.

P4 first described how the activity confirmed what he has learned by explaining his experience of the hoola-hoop activity to me:

...my teammates are trying to distract me all the time and if I didn't accept that they were there I would let the hoola hoop fall, pick it up again let them distract me again and not accept that they're there and then it would fall and then I would pick it up and then I'd start doing, the process would go on and on and on and on. So I, I accepted that X was going to talk, or X was going to do some funny dance and as I was a part of it though and as I got used to it, it was actually funny to me that they actually tried to distract me and I got past it and I would, I was able to do what I was doing.

P4 continued by saying that "the activity, the hula-hoop activity, helped because I have an idea on how to deal with such issues when it comes to my sport and life". Thus, facilitating the programme in an experiential manner appeared to have improved P4's learning.

## 7.2.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of applying acceptance to his sport by referring to:

1. areas in athletics where acceptance could be valuable, and
2. the consequences if avoidance instead of acceptance is applied.

### 7.2.2.1 Valuable

When P4 talked about applying acceptance to his sport, he named three main areas where it could be valuable; accepting critique, accepting injuries, and accepting failure.

P4 often appeared to experience critique or unwanted advice from spectators during competitions. He explained how this used to anger him, and how it would distract him:

I was really angry because someone just came up to me, popped out of nowhere and told me that I should keep my shoulders square and I didn't know what that meant and the person told me that I should always jump looking forward and keeping my leg down and all these kind of things... It kind of made me angry because the person kept on telling me this after every single jump I made...

However, P4 mentioned that he now realised that he needed to accept these kinds of distractions as part of his sport, instead of fighting against them and letting them influence him:

...I've accepted that there's always going to be people telling me that I'm going to lose....I've accept that there are parents or coaches that are going to tell me things that I'm not supposed to be hearing or telling me that I'm doing something wrong rather than my coach telling me himself.



Acceptance was furthermore perceived as valuable in terms of injuries. P4 has had a personal experience with an injury, and from the interview it seemed that he found it difficult to accept this. He pointed out that:

It's very hard, my [his] injury is going to take, it took about like four months and it's still healing, I'm doing rehab now, so it's really hard for an athlete to accept that he or she is injured because it takes such a long time for the athlete to get back onto the track.

Yet, even though he admitted that it was difficult, he still saw the value of acceptance in that situation and therefore he would apply it. P4 discussed his current situation and mentioned that "the injury is still affecting me now and South African champs are come, coming up soon. But if that means that I should stay out then eventually I'll keep, I'll accept that I'm not yet ready to compete."

It is almost inevitable that an athlete will experience failure in his/her life, and therefore P4 seemed to be of the opinion that this was another vital area in athletics where acceptance could be valuable. P4 seemed aware of the reality that he could not always win, yet, this seemed to be an area where he personally found it very difficult to apply acceptance. He made it clear that:

I [he] can't accept the fact that I'm not always going to get a gold medal or get into the top three....it's fine for me if I lose but then I can't really accept the fact that I lost, I always want to win.

#### 7.2.2.2 Avoidance

P4 was able to reflect on the consequences that would possibly follow if one applies avoidance instead of acceptance to your sport. He was of the opinion that one will stagnate in your level of performance and not progress in your sport career. In his own words he said that "acceptance helps an athlete to move forward because if you don't such things [difficulties] will hold you back".

### 7.2.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of transferring acceptance to his life by referring to:

1. the value of accepting vs. avoiding death,
2. the value of accepting vs. avoiding diversity amongst people, and
3. the value of accepting socio-economic status.

#### 7.2.3.1 Death: Acceptance vs. Avoidance

Transferring acceptance to life appeared to be perceived as valuable according to P4. One of the areas where acceptance could be applied was with the concept of death. However, having to accept death seemed to leave P4 feeling somewhat conflicted. He was able to reflect on the reasons why he perceives it as valuable, and necessary, yet he found it difficult. P4 acknowledged that “I’ve [he] accepted that every one of us is going to die someday although it isn’t something good to talk about but us as humans are not made to be immortal.” However, “It’s really hard because let’s say you are one of those people that are very close to your family and you treasure these people and one of them pass away, it’s, it’s very heart breaking...”.

If one avoided the reality of death, or in other words, if you can’t accept the inevitability of death, there could be certain consequences. According to P4 a person would start living a reckless life if he/she cannot accept the fact that they will one day die. No one can predict death, and when it will happen, thus, someone who does not show acceptance towards this will want to live every day as if it’s their last, out of fear that they may die tomorrow. P4 used himself as an example when he said that:

If I hadn’t accepted this fact then I’d have stressed most of the time, I was going to do something idiotic, such as driving a car at the speed of 240 kilometres per hour, just to experience how it felt because I probably never had a chance like this ever in my life.

### 7.2.3.2 Diversity: Acceptance vs. Avoidance

Transferring acceptance to life could additionally be valuable in terms of accepting the fact that there is diversity among people. P4 appeared to believe that different people have different mannerisms and characteristics. In the following excerpt P4 explained his argument by using a personal example of how he and his roommate at hostel differ:

...some of my roommates have big speakers so they always making a noise and I've accepted that it, it's always going to be there because I also have my faults, well I, I can't do anything about it but then I know that I snore and I might wake them up in the middle of the night but then, I've just accepted that if I'm going to do what I do then I just let them do what they do and then everything will be, well, alright with us.

P4 furthermore mentioned that there would be consequences if someone avoided or challenged instead of accepting these differences among people. According to P4 "...it would be rude of me [him] to tell them that 'hey, I don't really like this' and so I don't want to start any fighting that's why I'd rather leave before anything worse happens". Therefore, it seems as if P4 saw it as important to accept different behaviours among people, because if you fail to do so it could end up in an argument or conflict.

### 7.2.3.3 Socio-economic Status

According to P4, acceptance could be valuable in terms of making peace with your socio-economic status. P4 saw it as necessary that people realise and accept the fact that they can not always get what they want in life, due to certain factors such as financial restrictions. P4 used the following scenario to explain himself:

...if I was from a very poor background I was, I was going to want things that I couldn't get, like if I had a rich friend who has play stations and this best Blackberry he bought last week and it just entered on the market two weeks

ago, I would want all those things but then I know that my parents don't have such, kind of um, my parents don't have the kind of money to buy me all those things and that's one of the things that I've accepted even though I'm not from a poor background I know that there's things that I can't get.

## 7.3 COMMITMENT

### 7.3.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of learning about commitment by referring to:

1. his understanding of commitment,
2. factors that assisted his learning, and
3. his own ability to commit.

#### 7.3.1.1 Understanding

From his experience of the MAC workshop, P4 seemed to have come to the conclusion that commitment is synonymous to continuous hard work, in spite of certain distractions, in order to reach a goal. During our discussion he mentioned that:

I've learnt that even if you take a rest or stop at some point; if you are really committed you'll continue from where you left off. I've also learnt that hard work is one of the factors that I have to look at when coming to commitment. This includes, tiredness, weaknesses, etc., etc. I cannot let such factors influence my commitment towards my sport and my life.

#### 7.3.1.2 Assisting Factors

The facilitation of the MAC programme was done through experiential learning, and one of the methods included an activity where participants could practise commitment. According to P4 "the activity we [the participants] did with the hula

hoop was a great way to explain the commitment concept”. The activity seems to have allowed P4 to experience commitment in a real life situation. Through his experience he seems to have realised that commitment requires hard work and persistence and that there are certain factors that could threaten one’s commitment to a task or goal. P4 explained his experience as:

Yes, um, we were in a group of about six... five sorry and we did the hula hoop for, we had to do it for 15 minutes. I grew tired every single five seconds, but then we had... we had a rest in between. But even though after that rest I still had to get that hula hoop on my hips and turn it around until the 15 minute, um, the finish of the 15 minute has... has reached. I still had to push hard and continue with the hula hoop.

#### 7.3.1.3 Ability

Upon reflecting on his own level of commitment, P4 came to the conclusion that his commitment to his sport of athletics was adequate. Nevertheless, there was a time when he experienced doubt in terms in terms of his commitment to athletics, and specifically long-jump, as he actually wanted to participate in sprinting. Yet, he seemed to have reached a stage where he had accepted that he was doing long jump and he was committed to that. P4 mentioned that his commitment was:

...quite good, but then, I’m a long- and triple jumper, but I’ve always loved, um, doing the hundred metres because I looked... I looked at Usain Bolt as a role... as a role model, but then even if I’m not doing the hundred, I’m quite happy where I am by the long and triple, because I have a good coach and he’s showing me... he’s showing me around with the long and triple and he’s helping me improve. So I’d... I’d say my commitment... commitment is quite good.

### 7.3.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 appeared to have made sense of applying commitment to his sport by referring to:

1. his understanding of commitment in athletics, and
2. the value of commitment in athletics.

#### 7.3.2.1 Understanding

P4's understanding of applying commitment to athletics seemed to be associated with athletes' ability to be persistent in their effort to achieve their goals. This persistence should continue in the midst of difficulties that one could expect in the sport of athletics, for example injury. P4 claimed "...commitment is more like not giving up even if you're injured like I am now". Thus, to be dedicated to your sport even though you experience occasional difficulties.

Upon asking P4 about his own personal commitment to the sport of athletics he responded positively and appeared to perceive his own commitment to athletics as sufficient. He stated that "I [he] think my commitment is quite good because I've just came back from an injury and I'm fighting really hard to go back to the track....I want to see myself at the World, ah Youth Championships this year".

Furthermore, P4 repeatedly explained to me how it would look if he applied commitment to his sport. From his comments it seems that commitment to athletics will require him to put in additional training time, punctuality, and to steer clear of distractions. He explained this:

When I get back to training, I'm planning to show my... my commitment to the sport by putting in extra hours to make sure that I'm ready for the qualifiers that will take me through to the... to South African Champs. Um, I think I should be more punctual, try to get to training 30 minutes earlier or before the training session, so I would have more time for a proper warm up and not be distracted by other training partners. Warming up properly, you will also prevent injuries.

### 7.3.2.2 Valuable

As the interview with P4 progressed, he seemed to grow increasingly positive in his comments, as he explained that commitment could be a valuable attribute to his sport. He mentioned that a lack of commitment could result in failure, whereas the application of commitment in his sport could result in success and achievement. P4 stated that:

...it [commitment] can do a lot because if you're not committed then you'll probably lose all your events because you're not showing any fight in the... in training sessions or competitions. But if you are really committed then your commitment will, um, reflect through your sport in what you do, you'll probably be South Africa's number one.

### 7.3.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P4 seemed to have made sense of transferring commitment to his life by referring to:

1. commitment to academics,
2. commitment to family relationships, and
3. commitment to the discipline system of the school.

#### 7.3.3.1 Academics

P4 seemed to believe that commitment can be transferred to his academics as he mentioned that:

...I [he] should study more and do my part in class and not expecting the teacher to spoon... spoon feed me all the time and I should read ahead to understand other concepts in certain subjects to show my commitment to the subject. This also includes me doing my homework.

Furthermore, he showed insight into the consequences that could follow if he was not committed to his academic responsibilities. Firstly, it could negatively affect his future:

...if I'm [he's] not committed to school, I'll only count on my sport, and counting on your sport is not really a good thing because if you get injured you have no education to fall back on, thus meaning that you can't work anywhere and you won't be able to support your family.

Secondly, P4 seemed to feel that he should be committed to his schoolwork to avoid being a disappointment to his family. He stated that "...both of my [his] parents are teachers, so if I don't really study or, um, work hard at my schoolwork it will be ironic to many people because my... I have such high qualified, um, teachers in my family". Thirdly, if he did not show commitment towards his academics, it could result in difficulties and conflict with teachers, as they would develop a negative attitude towards him. P4 explained this with the following scenario:

...doing my homework to other teachers would actually show that I'm committed to their subjects because if I didn't it would be a whole other story of, P4, okay, I'm not going to offer you extra classes because you're not doing my work and you're not doing your part so why... why should I bother helping you because you're not even doing your homework? So it would be that kind of clash in class.

### 7.3.3.2 Family

According to P4, commitment could be valuable if transferred to his family relationships. In particular, P4 verbalised a need to apply it in his relationship with his brothers. According to P4 he would need to commit by improving the communication between them:

At home, ah, being a good brother. I should communicate with my little brothers more because I'm at school and I don't really have much time. I should call them more, um, once in a while just to hear from them.



Committing to his relationship with his brothers would not always be easy, and may require sacrifices from P4, however, he seemed to be aware and accepting of this:

...I don't really like playing on the Playstation, but then I just have to stick with it. I've... I've refused a lot of times to play with my brother on the Playstation and then that's something I need to work on, when it comes to building the relationships between my brothers. And sometimes both of my brothers argue a lot, so I have to take the lead and show them, this is wrong or right...

### 7.3.3.3 Discipline

P4 pointed out that "...following the hostel rules and regulations will show that I'm [he is] committed to being here". Thus, from his comments during the interview it seemed that P4 perceived commitment to be valuable in his school environment, and specifically in terms of the discipline system of the school. P4 discussed an experience where he was not committed to follow the school's rules and regulations, and the consequences that followed:

...there was a... ah, the day where I had jeans on and then my pants was kind of low, and I got into trouble. And then I did it again, I got into trouble, and then they called my parents. And then I started being committed to the rules and regulations of hpc...

## Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the research findings, specifically focusing on P4. The findings were divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into: learning, application, and transference. The next chapter will discuss the findings of Participant 5 (P5), following the same outline as the current chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### FINDINGS

#### (Participant 5)

#### Introduction

This chapter describes Participant 5's (P5's) interpretation of his experiences of the MAC approach. His interpretations are grouped into Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Commitment.

### 8.1 MINDFULNESS

#### 8.1.1 Learning

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of learning about mindfulness by referring to:

1. his understanding of mindfulness, and
2. threats to his mindfulness.

##### 8.1.1.1 Understanding

P5's general understanding of mindfulness appeared to be related to a person's ability to control his/her own mind, which he seemed to perceive as difficult and almost impossible. He mentioned that "I've [he] learnt that being mindful is actually a lot of work to do. And I think no one is able to control their mind". P5 continued, by explaining his argument:

...the reason why I say I think no one is able to control your mind, their minds is because whenever you do something, it's probably your mind that's telling that you're doing it and if there is another distraction by the side then probably your mind is eventually going to jump into a thing so you lose focus on what you were doing before and you go into that thing. So for me I just go with what my mind tells me.

Thus, it appeared that P5 was of the opinion that one has no control over your mind, and that certain distractions will make it difficult to try and maintain focus on the task at hand. These distractions will be discussed next.

#### 8.1.1.2 Threats

Through his experience of the MAC workshop, P5 seemed to have come to the conclusion that it is not easy to become mindful. He stated that “I’ve [he’s] learned that being mindful actually, it’s something that happens now, and you find it very hard to be focusing on that thing right now, because there is so many distractions that you think about.” During our discussion, P5 mentioned three factors that he felt would distract him from maintaining a mindful state.

Firstly, P5 suggested that his girlfriend could be a threat to his mindfulness. He explained himself:

I’m currently in a relationship that tends to be a lot of my distraction. I’ll think about my girlfriend, I would be with her over the weekend or maybe she called me, or maybe BBM’d me and I couldn’t reply because I was writing something and then I thought about it, so that kind of distractions usually come through me a lot.

Secondly, P5 mentioned that he would find it difficult to focus and to remain mindful in an environment where he is surrounded by many objects. He used the following example:

...lets say I’d have a picture on my wall and I’m busy studying, or cell phone will be there off, but still it’s there right next to me. Or food could be there on the table, so it turns out to build up a lot, being a lot of things and then you keep on thinking about them, then keep on thinking about them.

Thirdly, P5 appeared to find mindfulness challenging when he was confronted with more than one responsibility at a time. He provided the following scenario:

... you've got maths, you've got LO, you've got English like that so you need to focus on each and every one of them every time. If you can't understand this work you want to jump into that one. If this is hard you want to jump into that one.... that's why I'm saying it could be a lot of work.

### 8.1.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of applying mindfulness to his sport by referring to:

1. his understanding of applying mindfulness,
2. threats to mindfulness in athletics, and
3. Psychological Skills Training (PST) in athletics.

#### 8.1.2.1 Understanding

From the interview it appeared that P5 was able to anticipate how he could apply mindfulness to his sport of athletics. His understanding seemed to relate to task-focused attention. Thus, it was seen as an athlete's ability to focus on the task that he/she was busy with at the time, and not focus on anything else. Thus, P5 mentioned that in his sport he should "...try and focus more on what I'm [he's] about to do now and stop thinking about past events" for example "what I meant there was focusing now means if you're running the 100 m focus about running that 100 m".

#### 8.1.2.2 Threats

Applying mindfulness to his sport seemed to include various pitfalls according to P5. He identified three main threats that would make mindfulness difficult to apply to his sport. Firstly, P5 appeared to experience fear of failure. This fear apparently threatens his mindfulness and decreases his focus during a race. According to P5 he "sometimes find it very hard to concentrate when I [he] run because I would be afraid of losing...". Secondly, during competitions P5 appeared to experience intimidation from opponents, which leads to feelings of stress. This seemed to make it difficult for him to focus on the task at hand. He stated that:

When I [he] start running I thinking that this guy is faster than me, obviously it keeps on telling me that you're gonna lose, you're gonna lose, you're gonna lose. So I really think it really affects my mind. It really affects my mind and it's really not a good feeling.

Thirdly, P5 seemed to feel that emotional events could distract him from being mindful. He explained this by using a personal example where he was unable to stay focused on his performance during a competition, due to an emotional occurrence:

I remember this other time I was in such a situation when I lost my grandmother which was 2011. And then my grandmother was supposed to come and see me at SA's the week before running but she couldn't come because she was very sick and it ended up that she passed away. So events, past events like that really, I couldn't run SA's properly because she was so much looking forward for me, to see me win that gold medal. But the pressure of her leaving us was too much on that, so it keeps coming back every time when I go to SA's that she could have been there to see me run. So events like that really control your mind sometimes. Where you just lose focus and think you're not going to do it.

### 8.1.2.3 Psychological Skills Training

During the interview P5 reflected on his current performance enhancement technique, which involve pre-competition routines, arousal control, and self-talk, all falling into the category of PST. Firstly, P5 seemed to use music as a pre-competition routine. He said that "...on the racing day I would rather listen to, to the same music every time so that when I run I'll be able to keep that song in my mind which would actually help me".

Secondly, P5 also seemed to use music in terms of arousal control:

I really love music, like music really just, it makes me happy. It really makes me happy. Because I feel like music talks to people. So even though it depends on the kind of music you listen to, but I still think music has meaning every time you listen to it. So if I listen to a specific song, I wanna hear that story every time, every time so that I know that I'm focusing on that specific song which tells me something. So I'd rather keep that song in mind than think about any other things.

However, even though I interpreted the abovementioned two examples as part of PST, P5 interpreted them as being part of mindfulness. According to P5 he could use his music to enhance his mindfulness, as the music helped him deal with the distractions:

Yes there is distraction at times while you're listening to that song, but I feel like I can avoid that stuff while I'm listening to this specific song all the time. So it really does help me a lot until, until I'm told that I should take off everything and get ready for my race. I think music really helps me a lot.

Thirdly, P5 appeared to confuse mindfulness with positive Self-Talk. He explained how he would talk to himself in a positive manner in order to improve his mindfulness; yet, due to certain distractions it became difficult. P5 mentioned that:

...I [he] usually try to be mindful, telling myself that I want to win this race. I'm going to try and win this race. But then because of the people outside your opponents that you are running with, it gets very difficult to think about that.

P5 seemed unaware that he was at times confusing MAC with certain PST techniques.

### **8.1.3 Transference**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 appeared to have made sense of transferring mindfulness to his life by referring to:

1. his understanding of transferring mindfulness to life, and
2. feeling conflicted about transferring mindfulness to his life, and
3. the value of mindfulness in his life.

#### 8.1.3.1 Understanding

P5s understanding of mindfulness seemed to comprise a combination of MAC and PST concepts. He firstly mentioned that to be mindful, one needed to have task-focused attention, which is in line with the MAC approach. On the other hand, he described concepts of imagery and controlling negative thoughts which links to PST. P5 described mindfulness in his life as: "...try and focus on one thing that I'm doing. Allow myself to think first before doing something, which will lead me to doing it correctly. Try and avoid all the negative thoughts of past events that will distract me."

#### 8.1.3.2 Conflicted

P5 verbalised being aware of the value and need for mindfulness in his life, yet on the other hand, he perceived it as difficult to transfer to life. This seemed to leave him somewhat conflicted in terms of his opinion with regard to transferring mindfulness to life. Thus, during the interview he stated that "to my [his] life mindfulness is very....very hard to apply... Because for me, for me for the person that I am I just do things, I just do things and then I'll think about it after doing it". Yet, on the other hand, he mentioned that "mindfulness can assist me [him] with that by thinking before doing that specific thing, especially if it's wrong".

#### 8.1.3.3 Valuable

P5 mentioned his relationship with his parents to be a specific area where mindfulness could actually be valuable. More specifically, it could assist in his relationship with his father:

My parents are my biggest problems especially when I'm in trouble. Like my dad is a very talkative person. Like he's very talkative and he shouts a lot

when he's very angry. So I've learned that whenever he says something to me, I just have to listen to him, pay attention to him and just listen to what he says. I've never disrespected him in any way by back chatting him or lying at times.

If he neglected being mindful in a situation where his dad reprimanded him, his dad may "...think that I'm [he's] not paying attention to him....or I'm probably thinking about other stuff. So in my dad's situation I think, I think he will get very upset, very upset, so, and I wouldn't want that."

## **8.2 ACCEPTANCE**

### **8.2.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of learning about acceptance by referring to:

1. his understanding of acceptance, and
2. his personal perception of acceptance.

#### **8.2.1.1 Understanding**

From the MAC workshop, P5 seemed to have learnt that in life there will always be difficulties that could distract you from reaching your goals. A person needs to accept these distractions in order to achieve. P5 stated that: "I [he] have accepted that there will always be distractions, external, internal and bodily sensations wherever I go" and furthermore that "I [he] have to accept things that happen to me".

In the abovementioned excerpt P5 spoke about distractions in general. However, throughout the interview he focused mainly on external factors. People talking around him, as well as social media appeared to be two of his main threats to mindfulness. The following excerpt from the interview explained P5's dilemma:



...lets say you're in class, you're doing your homework or you're having to pay attention to whatever the teacher has to say to you. And then someone just calls you and tells you that, lets say asks for a, a rubber or a ruler or something....you get distractions this side....so, for me, accepting that I have this kind of distraction like external distractions, like people calling me or whatever situation it could be. My BBM and my phone would vibrate, now I have to accept that.

#### 8.2.1.2 Personal perception

From his personal point of view, P5 appeared to perceive acceptance in a negative light. Furthermore, according to P5, it seemed unfair that he needed to accept certain things in his life. P5's perception was portrayed in the following passage:

I've learnt that accepting something that you're doing currently or whenever, is really not the easiest thing to do. I, I really can't accept that I have to do my homework now. I really can't accept that I'm going to run now. It's really hard to accept that because you keep on asking yourself why, why me. Why do I have to accept this. Sometimes I think accepting things is, it's unfair to me because what if I don't want to do this, but I just have to accept it.

P5 also reflected on his own ability to accept, and he appeared to perceive it as inadequate. Some of his comments during the interview even made it sound impossible. For example, P5 stated that:

I've learnt that I can't accept. I, I've learned that I can't accept, even though I think I'd need to go through a lot of practice maybe if I have to put it that way, then maybe something might happen. But I've learnt that I can't accept. Even, I mean, even through the most painful time being at a funeral or losing a friend, at that funeral, as soon as something in my pocket or anyone just calls me, it just distracts me. Like I just can't accept.

## 8.2.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of applying acceptance to his sport by referring to:

1. areas in athletics where acceptance could be valuable, and
2. his preference for avoidance instead of acceptance.

### 8.2.2.1 Valuable

P5 seemed more accommodating towards the concept of acceptance, if it were to be applied to his sport. He mentioned that:

accepting in my [his] sport is, I think that's the part where it changes a bit for me coming to accept. It's very different in life and in my sport. In my sport I've learnt that it's something that I've been doing for so long....so accepting when coming to athletics for me is, it's just, I won't say easy, but it's something there is other parts where I'd be able to accept that I have to do this. So having to apply acceptance to my sport is not really something that I worry about a lot.

P5 appeared to perceive acceptance as important and valuable specifically in terms of dealing with distractions in his sport. In order for an athlete to perform during a competition he/she needs to accept an array of distractions. These distractions mainly appear to be in the category of external factors, and include opponents, strict training programmes, critique, family and friends. P5 explained this:

By accepting that one day there will be someone that's gone, that's going to run faster than me. And that I shouldn't give up. I have to accept that I will have to wake up 6 am in the morning every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to gym, just so I can reach my goal. I accept that there will always be spectators demotivating me and trying to put pressure on me by telling me that I'm not probably good enough at what I'm doing and I will have to accept

that family and friends will try to motivate you even though you don't want them to be there at every competition that you compete in.

### 8.2.2.2 Prefers Avoidance

Even though P5 verbalised the value and necessity of acceptance, for example when he said that "...you have to accept that there are always going to be people trying to motivate you all the time, even though it's demotivating...", he still seemed to rather apply avoidance in his sport. Thus, avoiding distractions instead of accepting them seemed to be more comfortable for P5. "So when friends start making a noise before you start running it really becomes a distraction, that's how I [he] just want my music with me all the time, so that I avoid that kind of stuff."

### 8.2.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of transferring acceptance to his life by referring to:

1. the value of acceptance in his life, and
2. consequences of avoiding.

#### 8.2.3.1 Valuable

As the interview progressed, P5 appeared to become increasingly accommodating towards acceptance. In terms of transferring it to his life, he seemed to be of the opinion that one would need to accept that life involves certain difficulties. More specifically, P5 mentioned that he needed to accept that he will not always reach his goals, he will have to accept his parents' behaviour, and also accept diversity amongst people.

According to P5, there will be some goals in life that you will not reach, and the reason therefore is unclear. However, a motivational speaker once talked to him and made him realise that it is necessary to accept that we don't always get what we want. "He [the speaker] said that he accepted that he couldn't get to where what he

wanted to be. Maybe because God had plans for him in another way and he couldn't reach that."

Furthermore, even though P5 did not always understand his parents' behaviour, he seemed to feel that he had to accept it. The behaviour that his parent's display occasionally created a lot of anger in him, and he perceives that acceptance can help in these situations. However, this seemed to be challenging for P5 to accomplish. According to him "I [he] can't accept that my parents are always on my case and want me to do things that I don't like to do. But I know that I have to do it, just so I earn respect from them".

The last area where P5 perceived acceptance to be valuable in his life, was in terms of accepting the differences amongst others. People are not all the same, and even though he did not always understand this, he felt that he needed to show acceptance for it. P5 explained himself:

...you get people that have different perspectives and think differently than you and you're gonna have to accept that we're all not the same. So you're gonna have to accept that this kind of person likes this. This kind of person wants to do this. It's not your choice to make.

#### 8.2.3.2 Avoidance

P5 continued to discuss the consequences if one avoids rather than accepts the abovementioned challenges. From his comments, it appeared as if P5 perceived one of the consequences to be that of negativity and bitterness in a person. He explained this by saying that:

For not accepting, it will, it will actually eat you up if I have to say that... That's really, that's really going affect you, it's going to make you something else that you don't want to be, so cause I know a lot of people that, that just don't understand why their life is like this and they tend to mess it up because their plan was to do this but it didn't happen because of a certain reason and then that, that literally just changes who they are. Some of them lose their integrity,

they'll, have no respect for themselves, they just don't care about life anymore. Just because of one stupid little thing that you want to reach, you couldn't reach it and then you want to turn into something really, something really, that you don't like.

On the other hand, P5 mentioned that if one accepted instead of avoided, you would be able to move forward and not get stuck with that specific difficulty. He also seemed to interpret it as being less rigid in one's approach. P5 mentioned that "...for me [him] I just say that rather accept that this happen and try something else, that's my perspective".

## **8.3 COMMITMENT**

### **8.3.1 Learning**

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of learning about commitment by referring to:

1. the requirements of commitment, and
2. an internal locus of control.

#### **8.3.1.1 Requirements**

From his experience of the MAC programme, P5 came to the conclusion that there were certain requirements in order for one to be able to commit to something. Firstly, P5 seemed to be of the opinion that commitment was easier if he did something that he enjoys. In his own words he said that "...commitment to me means I'd have to do that thing because I love it. Commitment is more about doing something that you won't be regretful about at the end of the day."

Secondly, he mentioned that commitment required certain sacrifices. However, P5 was unclear in terms of the specific sacrifices that one had to make, and just mentioned "I [he] believe that I have experienced a lot of commitment during my lifetime where I had to sacrifice a lot of things just so I can reach my short term goal."

Lastly, P5 appeared to have learnt that commitment requires certain values. He explained that “hard work needs a lot of commitment, which, which is also including a few values in life like discipline, integrity, respect, loyalty, etc., sportsmanship”.

### 8.3.1.2 Internal Locus of Control

In the past P5’s commitment seemed to have been mainly driven by an external locus of control, where currently, it appears to be internal. For example, P5 commented that in the past “...I [he] only did athletics because I want the girls to see me, I’m honest”. However, moving from his old school to the hpc meant that he lost his female spectators, who used to be his motivation to commit to athletics. Thus, he came to the realisation at hpc that he needs to accept the fact that they are not going to be there cheering him on. Subsequently, his commitment to athletics seems to have become increasingly internal. P5 mentioned that after moving to hpc he:

...ended up showing commitment. Even though it was difficult at first because there was no girls, that I [he] would like to see all the time, seeing me running but I accepted that... there is... it’s not gonna be like my old school. So, I did show commitment to this, and it actually helped a lot.

### 8.3.2 Application

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of applying commitment to his sport by referring to:

1. the value of commitment in athletics,
2. the requirements of commitment in athletics,
3. factors that threaten commitment, and
4. factors that improve commitment in athletics.

### 8.3.2.1 Valuable

Applying commitment to athletics could be valuable according to P5, as he felt that it could lead to achievement of goals. P5 stated that an athlete “...won’t reach that goal if you’re not committed to, to whatever you do”.

### 8.3.2.2 Requirements

P5 displayed an awareness of certain requirements in order for an athlete to commit to his/her sport. According to P5, time-management was an important requirement. Thus, if athletes wanted to be committed to their sport, they had to consider “...being on time for training and having a set time management, allowing myself [themselves] to do the right things at the right time...”.

Moreover, P5 mentioned another requirement of commitment, which is values. P5 explained this by saying that “I [he] think respect counts the most in a person’s ability to do something and I think that is more of showing integrity, discipline, being honest, etc., that will lead you to whatever goal you would like to reach.”

### 8.3.2.3 Threats

An external factor that appeared to be a significant threat to his commitment to athletics, was P5’s girlfriend. P5’s girlfriend apparently compared him to other sportsmen, and compared athletics to other sport types which made him doubt his commitment to athletics at times. He explained that:

...if my [his] girlfriend tells me that... uhm, I would say play soccer, I like guys who play soccer. I know that I don’t play soccer but she tells me that she likes guys that play soccer. Even though she doesn’t mean it in that way, I would put in a different way. So, if I take... to watch TV and I see the soccer players I’ll be like but my girlfriend wants me to play soccer, or she wants, she likes guys that play soccer. That could also be, that could also be an influence to your sport actually.

#### 8.3.2.4 Improving Factors

P5 mentioned in the previous section that certain external factors threatened his commitment, however, he seemed to view certain internal factors as aids to his commitment. Thus, commitment needed to come from within according to P5:

It's about being committed, it's about doing it because you love it. You can't just do something because you wanna, you wanna prove someone wrong or anything. It's because you love it, you're doing it for the love, that's why you have to show commitment to, to, to that sport that you're doing.

This conclusion that was reached during the MAC workshop seemed to have empowered P5, as he realised that he did not have to be influenced by his girlfriend or other external factors any more. P5 stated that his girlfriend:

...knows what I [he] do best. Doesn't, it's nothing wrong with me and her going to watch soccer, but she knows I've told her that I don't like soccer and she has to accept that, otherwise, she can go date a soccer player...

### 8.3.3 Transference

Through his participation in the MAC programme, P5 seemed to have made sense of transferring commitment to his life by referring to:

1. motivation and commitment, and
2. areas where commitment could be valuable.

#### 8.3.3.1 Motivation and Commitment

From the interview P5 seemed aware that motivation is similar to desire. From his comments, he appeared to be motivated by external factors, as he mentioned that "motivation is people or things. I [he] have been motivated by family and friends, because I see them driving nice cars, beautiful houses...". Thus, he had certain



desires in life, which appeared to be his motivation to commit and be successful in his goals.

On the other hand, P5 appeared to perceive commitment as the action and hard work that were necessary for the abovementioned desires. P5 explained his interpretation of commitment as: "...commitment is: "I want it, what do I do? What will I have to do to get that? That's what it is."

### 8.3.3.2 Valuable

P5 seemed to experience commitment as valuable if transferred to his life, and specifically in two areas: relationships and academics. P5 used the example of how he applied commitment in his relationship with his girlfriend. In order to show his commitment to her, he needed to show certain behaviour. P5 pointed out that:

I'm [he's] committed to the fact that I am in a relationship with her, I show commitment, I don't lie to her, I don't, I don't, how can I say this? I, don't, I don't cheat on her, stuff like that, so, that shows the commitment I have in our relationship...

Additionally, P5 mentioned that another area to which commitment could be transferred, was his academics. He made it clear that "...right now matric is the most important thing for me [him]". However, he seemed aware that merely having that goal and being motivated to get his matric will not be sufficient in terms of getting him there. He needs to commit and show the hard work that it requires. P5 gave a short description of how he anticipated it would look if he showed commitment to his goal:

...doing your homework, studying hard. Well for me it is really hard to study too long, but I know I make a timetable every time, 30 minutes for this, a break, maybe grab a snack, drink or something, chill outside for a while, come back again. So that could be my goal, doing my homework, asking questions in class which will get help from people, even friends, even parents as well. That could be the first step to life.

## Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the research findings, specifically focusing on P5. The findings were divided into three broad categories: mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. These three categories were then divided into: learning, application, and transference. The next chapter will portray the findings of the current research study, as well as limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The current study involved three primary research questions; what have athletes learnt about the MAC approach, how did they apply MAC to their sport, and how did they transfer MAC to their lives. This chapter will explore the findings on these questions by taking into account all five participants' responses.

Initially it was planned that this chapter would divide themes from the findings into two categories: common themes and unique themes. However, out of all the data, only one theme surfaced that was similar in all five participants' reflections (see 9.3.2). Thus, this chapter will mainly portray themes that were similar amongst some of the participants, as well as individual themes. A summary of the findings will follow, focusing specifically on new data discovered through the study. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the limitations of this study.

### 9.1 FINDINGS ABOUT LEARNING

Primary research question one: What did adolescent athletes experientially **learn** about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment through their participation in a MAC programme?

This section includes a summary of the research findings of all five participants. The findings are divided into mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. This was done to address not only the abovementioned primary question, but also the secondary research questions (see 1.3.1).

#### 9.1.1 Learning: Mindfulness

Through their experience of the MAC programme, P1, P2, P3, and P4 all appeared to have learnt that mindfulness can be defined as task-focused attention, which is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.1). P1 and P4 both

mentioned that experiential learning assisted them with the learning process, and resulted in an improved understanding of mindfulness. This is not reported in previous literature (see 2.2). Furthermore, P1 and P2 stated that the MAC workshop left them feeling somewhat conflicted in terms of mindfulness. This because they were able to see the value of mindfulness, but also the difficulties related to it. The aforementioned are not evident in previous literature as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2).

After the MAC programme, P3 and P4 reflected on their own level of mindfulness, which they concluded was not on a satisfying level. This is not included in previous literature as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2). P3 and P5 noted as well that external factors could be a significant threat to mindfulness, which is supported by previous literature (see 2.2.3.1). Moreover, both P2 and P3 pointed out that mindlessness has negative consequences, which is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.1).

After his experience of the MAC workshop, P1 learnt that his old, habitual manner of doing things, which appeared to be more related to mindlessness, was easier and more productive. This is inconsistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.1). Furthermore, P5 seemed to have gained an understanding of mindfulness as a person's ability to control his/her mind. This is inconsistent with literature (see 2.2.3.1). Moreover, P2 appeared to understand mindfulness as having a full mind, which is more of a concrete and literal interpretation of the concept. This is not reported in literature (see Chapter 2). P2 also seemed to perceive future thinking as necessary while he conducted a task, which is inconsistent with MAC literature and task-focused attention (see 2.2.3.1).

P4 mentioned that he had learnt that his level of mindfulness and his ability to stay mindful would increase if he was performing pleasurable activities. This is not stated in previous literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2). According to P5 he had learnt that being confronted with multiple responsibilities, could threaten his ability to be mindful. This was new to literature (see 2.2).

### **9.1.2 Learning: Acceptance**

P2, P4, and P5 seemed to have learnt that acceptance was the ability to confront difficulties instead of avoiding them. This is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.2). Experiential learning appeared to have improved P1, P2, P3 and P4's understanding of acceptance. This was not reported in previous literature (see 2.2). Furthermore, P1 and P3 seemed to have learnt that acceptance could be challenging and required effort, which was consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.2).

From the MAC programme, P2 appears to have learnt that acceptance could be valuable. This is confirmed by literature (see 2.2.3.2). In addition, P3 pointed out that he has learnt about the negative consequences of avoidance, which is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.2). P5's experience of the MAC programme seemed to have left him with a negative perception of acceptance, and he appears to perceive it as a concept that is almost impossible to utilize. This finding is inconsistent with MAC-related literature (see 2.2.3.2).

### **9.1.3 Learning: Commitment**

Through their experience of the MAC programme, P1, P2, and P3 all appeared to have learnt that motivation is not synonymous with commitment. This is consistent with MAC literature (see 2.2.3.3). According to P1 and P5 certain requirements are necessary before one can commit. For P1 the requirements include support, and for P5 it is enjoyment, sacrifices, and values. This is not reported in MAC literature (see 2.2), except for the requirement of values, which is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.3). Furthermore, P2 and P4 reflected on their own abilities of commitment to be adequate. This is not noted in literature, as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2).

P3 has learned through the MAC programme that commitment equals hard work and effort in order to reach success. P4 seemed to have gained a similar understanding; however, he furthermore learnt that the hard work and effort should be present regardless of difficulties. This is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.3). According to P4 his understanding of commitment was enhanced by the use of experiential learning throughout the MAC programme. This is not found in

previous literature (see 2.2). Furthermore, P3 seemed to have learnt that bodily sensations could be a threat to commitment, which is consistent with previous literature (see 2.2.3.3).

## 9.2 FINDING ABOUT APPLICATION

Research question two: How did adolescent athletes **apply** what they learnt about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment?

This section includes a summary of the research findings of all five participants. The findings are divided into mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. This was done to address not only the abovementioned primary question, but also the secondary research questions (see 1.3.2).

### 9.2.1 Application: Mindfulness

P2, P3 and P5 seemed to view mindfulness in athletics as the ability of an athlete to display task-focused attention. This is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.1). Upon reflection P1, P2, P3, and P4 all mentioned that they perceive mindfulness as valuable if applied to athletics. This is consistent with MAC related literature (see 2.2). P1, P3, P4 and P5 pointed out that external stimuli could threaten their mindfulness in athletics, whereas P1, P2, P4, and P5 mention internal experiences to be a potential threat. Furthermore, P1 and P3 revealed that they perceive bodily sensations as an additional threat to mindfulness. All three aforementioned threats are consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.1).

According to P1, a very complex athletic skill could challenge an athlete's ability to remain mindful. This is new to literature (see 2.2). Visualisation, which is a known PST skill, is also experienced as a threat to mindfulness by P4. This is consistent with literature, where focusing on the past or imagining the future is referred to as mindlessness (see 2.2.3.1). Conversely, P5 seemed to prefer pre-competition routines and arousal control (PST skills). The control-driven skills appear to be more appealing to him. This is inconsistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2). On the contrary, P5 and P1 mentioned respectively that Self-Talk and Imagery (PST

skills) do not prove to be sufficient in terms of dealing with distractions. These statements are consistent with MAC-related literature (see 2.2).

Furthermore, P2 appeared conflicted about the application of mindfulness to his sport. This appeared to be true due to the fact that he views both mindfulness and forward thinking as important attributes to his sport. However, this is inconsistent with literature, as forward thinking contradicts mindfulness (see 2.2.3.1). Also, P4 indicated that mindlessness in athletics has negative consequences, which is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.1).

### **9.2.2 Application: Acceptance**

P2, P3, P4, and P5 viewed acceptance as valuable in application to their sport. This is consistent with MAC related literature (see 2.2.3.2). Additionally, P1, P3, and P4 mentioned that avoidance (which is the opposite of acceptance) in athletics could have negative consequences. This is consistent with MAC literature (see 2.2.3.2).

A theme unique to P1 is the fact that he finds it particularly difficult to accept the presence of the wind during competitions. The wind is an external distraction that seemed to have a significant impact on P1's long-jump performance. This is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.2). In terms of distractions, P5 appeared to prefer applying avoidance instead of acceptance. This is not reported in MAC literature because it is a personal reflection (see 2.2). Upon the experience of the MAC programme, P3 came to the realisation that he is satisfied with his ability to accept. This is not found in literature, as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2).

### **9.2.3 Application: Commitment**

Commitment in athletics appeared to be perceived by P3 and P4 as an athlete's ability to persist in actions that will lead to success. Their perception is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.3). Furthermore, P1, P2, P4, and P5 view commitment as valuable in application to athletics, which is consistent with the MAC literature (see 2.2.3.3). P1 and P3 however seemed to be of the opinion that commitment and motivation work together and are both necessary for success. This appears to be

inconsistent with literature; where motivation is portrayed as the opposite to commitment (see 2.2.3.3).

After the MAC workshop P3 came to the conclusion that commitment in training differs from commitment during competition. This is not reported in previous literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2). Furthermore, P5 seemed to believe that commitment requires two factors: time-management and values. The first is not reported in literature, the latter is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.3). According to P1 and P2 there are certain factors that can improve an athlete's commitment. Firstly, both P1 and P2 believe that acceptance could assist them with commitment, which is consistent with literature. Secondly, P2 mentioned that an athlete's coach and his/her training resources could be valuable in terms of staying committed. This is new to literature. Conversely, P5 and P2 mentioned respectively that external stimuli and internal experiences have the potential to threaten their commitment. This is consistent with MAC related literature (see 2.2.3.3).

### 9.3 FINDINGS ABOUT TRANSFERENCE

Research question three: How did adolescent athletes **transfer** what they learnt about mindfulness, acceptance and commitment to life?

This section includes a summary of the research findings of all five participants. The findings are divided into mindfulness, acceptance and commitment. This was done to address not only the abovementioned primary question, but also the secondary research questions (see 1.3.3).

#### 9.3.1 Transference: Mindfulness

P1, P2, P3, and P5 all mentioned during the interview that they perceived mindfulness to be valuable if transferred to life, which is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.1). However, P1, P2, P3 and P5 were also able to perceive the negative aspects of mindfulness, which appeared to leave them feeling conflicted. The aforementioned are not reported in previous literature as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2). Consistent with literature, P2 and P4 stated that



mindlessness in life could result in negative consequences (see 2.2.3.1). Moreover, internal experiences (P1, P2, P3 and P4) and external stimuli (P2, P3, and P4) were named as threats to mindfulness in life. This is supported by literature (see 2.2.3.1).

P5's understanding of mindfulness in life seemed to be inclusive of both MAC and PST concepts, which is inconsistent to literature (see 2.2.3.1). Furthermore, P1 verbalised that he was surprised by the fact that mindfulness can be transferred to life. This is not portrayed in MAC-related literature as it is a personal reflection and indicates new learning for P1 (see 2.2). P1 furthermore spoke about multiple responsibilities, and how that could be a threat to one's mindfulness in life. P1's comment is not reported in literature (see 2.2). Another threat to mindfulness, according to P2, could be his diagnosis of ADD, which is not revealed in previous MAC-related literature (see 2.2).

### **9.3.2 Transference: Acceptance**

A common theme among all five participants seemed to be the belief that acceptance is valuable if transferred to life. This is consistent with MAC-related literature (see 2.2.3.2). In addition, P3, P4 and P5 pointed out that avoidance (which is the opposite of acceptance) has negative consequences, which can be linked to literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.2).

P1 appeared to experience difficulties in transferring acceptance to his life. He mentioned two specific factors that make acceptance difficult: external stimuli and bodily sensations. This is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.1). Furthermore, P3 reflected on his ability to transfer acceptance to his life. He concluded that he has realised after the workshop that he has an adequate ability to utilise acceptance in his life. This is not reported in previous literature, as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2).

### **9.3.3 Transference: Commitment**

P1, P2, P4, and P5 all appeared to experience commitment as valuable in their lives, which links to literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2.3.3). P1, P2, and P3

furthermore cited that when they are faced with multiple responsibilities in life, commitment becomes challenging, as they have to be committed to more than one area at a time. This is not reported in literature (see 2.2.3.3).

However, P1 suggested that mindfulness could be the solution to the abovementioned dilemma. His suggestion is to be task-focused on every individual task and to not let the one task interfere with the other. This is consistent with literature on the MAC approach (see 2.2). P1 furthermore indicated his parents to be a significant factor assisting him with staying committed to his goals in life. This is not mentioned in literature (see 2.2). Moreover, P3 seemed to perceive it necessary to first set goals in life before one can become committed. This can be linked to MAC related literature (see 2.2.3.3).

P5 showed an awareness of the differences between motivation and commitment in life. Motivation relates to desire, whereas commitment links to action. This is consistent with MAC literature (see 2.2.3.3). Additionally, P3 concluded that in the past he was merely motivated to gain success in his life, whereas currently he is motivated and committed. This is not reported in literature, as it is a personal reflection (see 2.2). P4 has indicated that one can expect negative consequences if commitment is not transferred to life. This is consistent with literature (see 2.2.3.3).

#### **9.4 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The abovementioned research findings portrayed the various themes that surfaced during the data collection process. Some themes proved to be similar amongst participants and some unique. However, one theme was found to be similar among all five participants (see 9.3.2). This could possibly display the diversity and subjectivity of experiences that were captured during this study.

Furthermore, there were several themes that were found to be consistent with literature, and others that were inconsistent. Additionally, some themes arose that have not been reported in literature before and can arguably be seen as new literature in terms of the MAC approach. These themes will be discussed in this section.

### **9.4.1 Learning**

The following data relates to the question of what athletes have learned about the MAC approach. This data has not previously been reported in MAC literature:

1. Experiential learning seemed to have improved participants' understanding of all three the MAC concepts, mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment. Thus facilitating the MAC programme in an experiential manner seemed to have been beneficial to the participants' learning process.
2. After learning about the MAC programme, certain participants felt conflicted about the concept of mindfulness. This was mainly because they were able to see both the value and the difficulties related to mindfulness.
3. After learning about the MAC programme, some participants were able to recognize that they have adequate levels of mindfulness and commitment.
4. Mindfulness was understood as having a full mind. Thus, a very concrete understanding of mindfulness was gained.
5. Mindfulness increases with pleasurable activities.
6. Multiple responsibilities can be a threat to mindfulness. Participants do not know whether they will be able to provide task-focused attention to multiple tasks.
7. Support, enjoyment and sacrifices are requirements for commitment.

### **9.4.2 Application**

This section relates to the question of how athletes can apply what they have learned about the MAC approach to athletics. The data below have not previously been reported in MAC literature:

1. Difficult and complex techniques in athletics can challenge an athlete's ability to remain mindful.
2. Commitment applied during training is different to commitment applied during competitions.
3. Commitment requires time-management.

4. Two factors that could possibly improve an athlete's commitment to his/her sport: the coach and the training resources.

### 9.4.3 Transference

This section relates to the question of how athletes can transfer what they have learned about the MAC approach to their lives. The following data have not previously been reported in MAC literature:

1. The thought of transferring mindfulness to life left some participants feeling somewhat conflicted. This was mainly because they were able to see both the value and the difficulties related to mindfulness.
2. The idea of mindfulness transferred to life was found strange by a certain participant. He was surprised that mindfulness is applicable to life as well, and not limited to sport.
3. Multiple responsibilities can be a threat to mindfulness and commitment. Displaying task-focused attention, and commitment to more than one responsibility seemed to be difficult.
4. A diagnosis of ADD can pose a threat to mindfulness in life, as task-focused attention is difficult to utilise.
5. A personal reflection of one participant portrayed his recognition that he has an adequate ability to transfer acceptance to life.
6. Parents improve and help you maintain commitment in life.
7. A personal reflection of one participant portrayed his insight into the fact that he was merely motivated in the past, where currently he is motivated and committed in his life.

## 9.5 LIMITATIONS

In this section, I will discuss critique of this study. Critique will firstly focus on the sample of the study, and secondly on the decision to use athletics as the preferred sport of interest for this study.

### **9.5.1 Sample**

A limitation of this study was that no females were represented in the sample. Females included in the study could have resulted in a different interpretation of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the sample only included participants of the African (black) race. It is possible that the inclusion of different race groups could have increased the subjectivity of the obtained research data. It would have been valuable to explore the different interpretations of different race groups, and how culture could have affected their understandings.

### **9.5.2 The Sport of Athletics**

This study focused on the sport of athletics and a main part of the study included the development of a sport-specific MAC programme for this sport. Reflecting on the process I came to realize that even though the programme focuses specifically on the sport of athletics, it could possibly have been even more specific. The reason was that athletics consists of a variety of different track-and-field items. Thus, a sport-specific MAC programme for long jump could greatly differ from a programme specific for the use of long-distance runners. It could have been more beneficial, and possibly increased the applicability of MAC if the programme was developed and presented for a specific athletics item, instead of for athletics in general. Thus, even though the current programme proved to be more in-depth and focused than the current generic MAC programme at the hpc, I believe it could become even more specific.

## **Conclusion**

This research study aspired to explore the experiences of athletes who underwent a sport-specific MAC programme. This chapter portrayed the research findings of all five participants, and provided a summary of new information that has not been reported in previous literature. The limitations of this study were described at the end of this chapter.

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# APPENDIX A

## RESEARCH PROJECT



8 November 2011

The Chair  
Prof. John Sharp  
Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria

RE: Research in Sport Psychology at the High Performance Centre of the University of Pretoria

Dear Prof. Sharp,

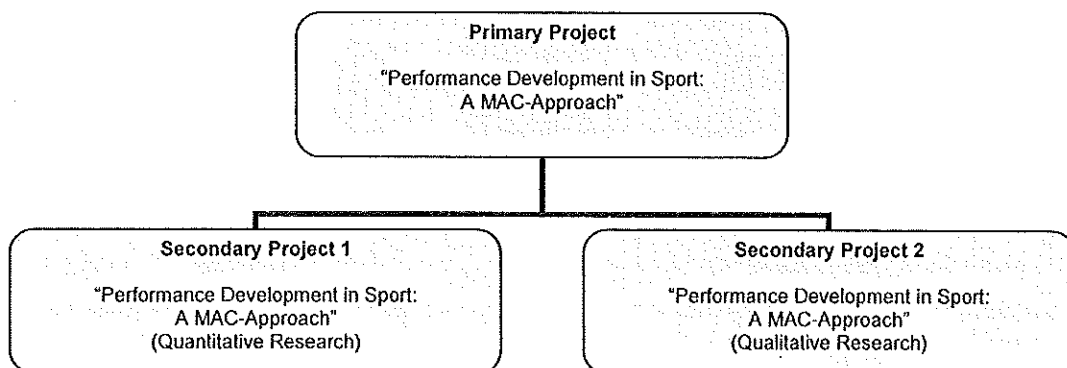
I am writing to you regarding a research project on performance development at the High Performance Centre of the University of Pretoria.

1. Request:

- 1.1 At a workshop held on 28 January 2011 Prof. de la Rey requested Mr. Toby Sutcliffe, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the High Performance Centre that research is done at the High Performance Centre of the University of Pretoria.
- 1.2 Based on the request by Prof. de la Rey, Mr. Sutcliffe approached me with reference to possible research. I initiated a sport psychology (performance development) research project, which entails both quantitative and qualitative research. The title of the project is "Performance Development in Sport: A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach," which falls within the "Psychology and Wellness" focus area of the Department of Psychology.

2. Project:

- 2.1 The primary project consists of two secondary projects, which can be depicted as follows:



- 2.2 The MAC-approach to performance development was developed in the last decade by Frank Gardner and Zella Moore, two clinical sport psychologists in the United States of America. They also developed the Multi-Level Classification System for Sport Psychology (MCS-SP), which allows sport psychologists<sup>1</sup> to work on

<sup>1</sup> Although "sport psychologist" is not an official registration category of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), I am using it in this letter to refer to psychologists working in the sport context, irrespective of their registration category.

different levels with athletes. These levels are "Performance Termination" (L1), "Performance Impairment" (L2), "Performance Dysfunction" (L3), as well as "Performance Development" (L4), the level on which the MAC-approach to performance development is situated.

- 2.3 In society at large performance development is often performed according to the "emotion-principle" by important role players (e.g., coaches, parents). This can usually be seen in the aggressive behaviour of role players who scream at athletes with the intent of enhancing their performance. However, the effect of this aggressive behaviour is often detrimental to the well-being of athletes, as they can become resistant towards training and competition due to extreme anxiety caused by the aggressive behaviour of role players, with the end result often being early retirement from sport.
- 2.4 In the field of sport psychology, Psychological Skills Training (PST) has been the dominant approach to performance development in sport over the past 30 years. The PST-approach to performance development is guided by the "control-principle", which postulates that athletes need to obtain an ideal performance state before they can perform optimally. Athletes obtain this ideal performance state through controlling their thoughts, thereby controlling their emotions and behaviour. The controlling of athletes' thoughts is done by teaching them mental skills through PST-programmes. Currently, there is a lot of critique against PST-programmes in the research literature.
- 2.5 In the last decade the MAC-approach to performance development has emerged on the horizon of sport psychology. It has established itself in the United States of America, Europe (e.g., France) and Asia (e.g., Singapore). In contrast to performance development being performed according to the "emotion-principle" (See: 2.3) or "control-principle" (See: 2.4), the MAC-approach is guided by the "value-principle". In brief the MAC-approach can be depicted as follows:
  - a. M: Mindfulness: Mindfulness is a way-of-being, where an athlete's body and mind needs to be at the same place, on the same time, focused on the same task (sport), with the purpose of enhancing the athlete's performance during training and competition.
  - b. A: Acceptance: An athlete is discouraged to try and control bodily sensations (e.g. heart beat), internal experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions) and external stimuli (e.g. spectators, referees), as this leads to task-irrelevant behaviour where the athlete is not focused on the task (sport), but at controlling bodily sensations, internal experiences and external stimuli.  
  
Instead, an athlete is encouraged to accept bodily sensations, internal experiences and external stimuli in a non-judgemental way (not attempting to change the bodily sensations, internal experiences and external stimuli); therefore allowing his/her body and mind to be at the same place, on the same time, focused on the same task (sport).
  - c. C: Commitment: Commitment is the process where an athlete's behaviour is continuously informed by values during training and competition that will contribute to an athlete's performance development. Therefore, an athlete's performance development behaviour is not driven by the "emotion-principle" and/or the "control-principle", but by the "value-principle".

### 3. Secondary Project 1:

- 3.1 Dilemma: The MAC-approach to performance development is delivered at the High Performance Centre within different time frames, which are usually determined by clients (e.g., sport academies, sport federations). These time frames can range from a one-hour time slot, to a half-a-day time period, to a seven week time frame. At present no research has been done at the High Performance Centre on the effectiveness of delivering the MAC-programme over different time frames.
- 3.2 Purpose: The purpose of this secondary project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the MAC-approach to performance development, as delivered by the sport psychologists at the High Performance Centre over different time frames. This will allow the High Performance Centre to give feedback to clients regarding the appropriate time frames for delivering the MAC-programme.
- 3.3 Participants: The participants in the secondary research project will be athletes in the various High Performance Centre academies, as well as provincial and national athletes that make use of the sport psychology services at the High Performance Centre. All the necessary research procedures and ethical guidelines will be adhered to when working with the athletes.

- 3.4 Methodology: The MAC-approach will be delivered by the High Performance Centre sport psychologists over different time periods, for example a one-day programme or a seven week programme. The effectiveness of the MAC-approach to performance development will be done by employing a quantitative methodology to understand its effectiveness in relation to different delivery periods.
- 3.5 Students: At present there are no postgraduate psychology students working on this secondary project. However, students doing the MA (Counselling Psychology/Sport Psychology)<sup>2</sup>, MA (Psychology) and PhD (Psychology) degree, can work on this project.
- 3.6 Supervisor(s): The following supervisors will be involved in this secondary research project: Prof. David Maree (Department of Psychology), Prof. Lourens Human (Department of Psychology), Ms. Monja Human (Sport Psychologist: High Performance Centre) and Mr. Maurice Aronstam (Sport Psychologist: High Performance Centre).
- 3.7 Contribution: Research on the MAC-approach to performance development has been done in the United States of America, Europe (e.g., France) and Asia (e.g., Singapore) primarily with athletes. No research has been conducted on the MAC-approach with any athletes in South Africa (SA). This research project will therefore address this limitation in the existing literature, as it will focus on developmental, semi-professional and professional athletes.

#### 4. Secondary Project 2:

- 4.1 Dilemma: The delivery of sport psychology services takes place within a relationship between a sport psychologist and an athlete. This often causes a dilemma, as important role players (e.g., parents, coaches, sport scientists) often undo the work of sport psychologists through being “emotion-driven” and/or “control-driven” in their approach to performance development. Furthermore, the ratio between sport psychologists and athletes at the High Performance Centre is 1:125, which excludes all external clients that make use of the sport psychology services at the High Performance Centre. This implies that the sport psychologists spend limited time with athletes, which can influence the quantity and quality of the sport psychology services.
- 4.2 Purpose: The purpose of this secondary project will be to educate athletes, as well as these role players at the High Performance Centre in the MAC-approach to performance development through a process of experiential learning. In doing so, the sport psychologists, athletes and role players will work within the same performance development approach. Furthermore, parents, coaches and sport scientists who spend much more time with athletes than sport psychologists, can become extensions of the sport psychologist’s performance development work.
- 4.3 Participants: The participants in the secondary research project will be athletes in the various High Performance Centre academies, parents who have athletes in the High Performance Centre academies, coaches at the High Performance Centre, as well as sport scientists at the High Performance Centre. All the necessary research procedures and ethical guidelines will be adhered to when working with the athletes and role players.
- 4.4 Methodology: The MAC-approach will be delivered to athletes, parents, coaches and sport scientists by students doing the MA (Counselling Psychology/Sport Psychology), MA (Psychology) and PhD (Psychology) degrees. Participants will be educated in the MAC-approach to performance development through experiential learning. They will also reflect on (1) what they learnt about performance development from the experience through participating the MAC-programme and (2) how the learning can be applied to the athletes’ sport, as well as to the relationships between parents-athletes, coaches-athletes, as well as sport scientists-athletes. The reflections will be done from an interpretive phenomenological position.
- 4.5 Students: At present the following students (research proposal phase) are involved in this secondary project:
- |                   |     |            |                 |
|-------------------|-----|------------|-----------------|
| Monja Human:      | PhD | Psychology | Cricket Coaches |
| Maurice Aronstam: | PhD | Psychology | Golf Coaches    |

<sup>2</sup> The term “MA (Counselling Psychology/Sport Psychology)” is used to refer to those students doing the MA (Counselling Psychology) degree who take the Sport Psychology (Elective) module at the University of Pretoria.



Theo Bezuidenhout:	PhD	Psychology	Golf Parents
Rozanne Breedt:	MA	Psychology	Sport Scientists
Ellie Dykema:	MA	Counselling Psychology	Athletes
Ile Schutte:	MA	Counselling Psychology	Athletes
Lauren Leon:	MA	Counselling Psychology	Athletes

4.6 Supervisor(s): The following supervisors will be involved in this secondary research project: Prof. Prof. Lourens Human (Department of Psychology), Prof. Dave Beyers (Department of Psychology) and Prof. Ben Steyn (Department of Biokinetics, Sport and Leisure Sciences).

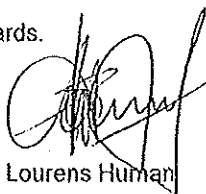
4.7 Contribution: The MAC-approach to performance development has not been done on coaches, parents and sport scientists anywhere in the world. As these role players spend much more time with athletes than sport psychologists, this research aims to empower these role players through the research project by educating them in the MAC-approach thereby becoming an extension of the sport psychologists' performance development work.


**5. Support:**

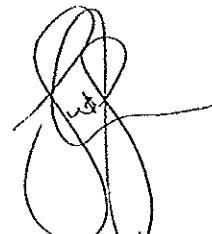
5.1 This research project has the support of Mr. Sutcliffe, the CEO of the High Performance Centre.

5.2 This research project also has the support of Prof. Niek Grové, the Registrar of the University of Pretoria.

Regards.

  
 Prof. Lourens Human

  
 24/11/2011

  
 24/11/2011



## **APPENDIX B**

### **RESEARCH PERMISSION**

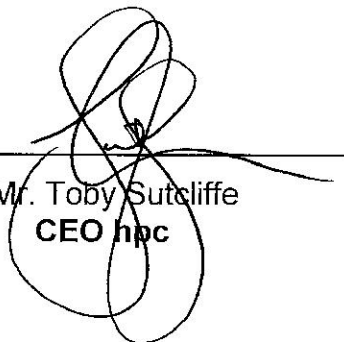
27 February 2012

### Consent Letter

I, Mr. Toby Sutcliffe (CEO, High Performance Centre) hereby grant permission to Ellie Dykema (student no: 26026504) to use the youth athletes affiliated to the High Performance Centre (hpc) for her research study. I grant her permission to make use of the premises of the hpc to present the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) workshop and to conduct the relevant interviews needed to complete her MA Counselling Psychology research project with the proposed title of:

**Performance development of youth athletes: A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach.**

For any inquiries please feel free to contact me on 012 362 9800.



Mr. Toby Sutcliffe  
CEO hpc

*A DECADE OF EXCELLENCE IN SPORT, SCIENCE, KNOWLEDGE*

TuksSport (Pty) Ltd. t/a hpc | Reg. No. 2001/020098/07 | Burnett St. | Pretoria | P.O. Box 14622 | Hatfield | 0028  
Tel: +27 (0) 12 362 9800 | Fax: +27 (0) 12 362 9890 | E-mail: info@hpc.co.za | www.hpc.co.za  
Directors: A. M. de Klerk | N.J. Grové | C. Koornhof | S. Vil-Nkomo

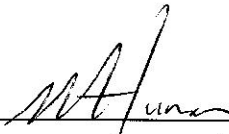
27 February 2012

### Consent Letter

I, Mrs. Monja Human (Resident Psychologist, High Performance Centre) hereby grant permission to Ellie Dykema (student no: 26026504) to use the youth athletes affiliated to the High Performance Centre (hpc) for her research study. I grant her permission to make use of the premises of the hpc to present the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) workshop and to conduct the relevant interviews needed to complete her MA Counselling Psychology research project with the proposed title of:

**Performance development of youth athletes: A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach.**

For any inquiries please feel free to contact me on 012 362 9850.



---

Mrs. Monja Human  
Resident Psychologist hpc

*A DECADE OF EXCELLENCE IN SPORT, SCIENCE, KNOWLEDGE*

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## **APPENDIX C**

# **SPORT SPECIFIC MINDFULNESS-ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT (MAC) PROGRAMME**

## Sport Psychology

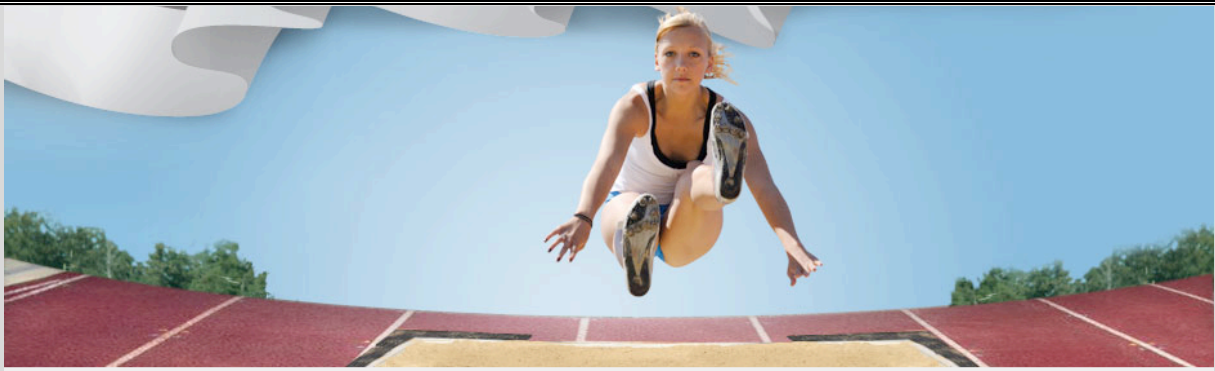
Performance Development  
through the:

# MAC APPROACH

(Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment)



Compiled and facilitated by:  
Ellie Dykema, MA (Counselling Psychology), University of Pretoria



**This workshop will include the following:**

- ① Multi-level Classification System for Sport Psychology
- ② Mindfulness
- ③ Acceptance
- ④ Commitment
- ⑤ Integration of the MAC Approach

MODULE 1

# Multilevel Classification System for Sport Psychology (MCS-SP)



## 1. OUTCOME

The outcome of this module is:

- 1.1 To understand the **MCS-SP**.
- 1.2 To experience the **MCS-SP** through activities.
- 1.3 To reflect on your learning regarding the **MCS-SP**.
- 1.4 To identify your **MCS-SP** category (i.e. Performance Development) and the intervention (i.e. the MAC approach) best suited for your category.





## 2. CONCEPTS....

### When to visit your Sport Psychologist!

The MCS-SP is a classification system for sport psychologists to distinguish between the different reasons why athletes come to them for help.

#### Four Main Reasons:

<b>MCS-SP</b>	<b>1. Performance Termination (PT)</b>	PT - I
		PT - II
	<b>2. Performance Impairment (PI)</b>	PI - I
		PI - II
	<b>3. Performance Dysfunction (PDy)</b>	PDy - I
		PDy - II
	<b>4. Performance Development (PD)</b>	PD - I
		PD - II

Lets look at each category of the  
**MCS-SP!**

#### *DEFINITION!*

#### 2.1 Performance Termination is the category for...

Athletes who need help from a Sport Psychologist when their sport career is terminated, or has stopped.

### *Discuss!*

- Can you describe one **Performance Termination** experience from your (or someone else's) *sport career*?
- **Go to page 6!** and do the role-play activity and reflections in order to distinguish between the two types of **Performance Termination (PT – I & PT – II)**.

### *DEFINITION!*

#### **2.2 Performance Impairment is the category for...**

Athletes who need help from a Sport Psychologist when they have mental or behavioural problems that might stop them from participating in their sport.

### *Discuss!*

- Can you describe one **Performance Impairment** experience from your (or someone else's) *sport career*?
- **Go to page 8!** and do the role-play activity and reflections in order to distinguish between the two types of **Performance Impairment (PI – I & PI – II)**.

### *DEFINITION!*

#### **2.3 Performance Dysfunction is the category for...**

Athletes who experience personal (inside yourself) characteristics and/or interpersonal (between people) life events that have an impact on the athlete's performance. Thus, personal can be something like extreme perfectionism and interpersonal can be for example the divorce of parents.

### *Discuss!*

- Can you describe one **Performance Dysfunction** experience from your (or someone else's) *sport career*?

- **Go to page 10!** and do the role-play activity and reflections in order to distinguish between the two types of **Performance Dysfunction (PDy – I & PDy – II)**.

### *DEFINITION!*

#### **2.4 Performance Development is the category for...**

Athletes whose main need are to improve their athletic performance, no matter at what level they are competing.

### *Discuss!*

- Can you describe one **Performance Development** experience from your (or someone else's) *sport career*?
- **Go to page 12!** and do the role-play activity and reflections in order to distinguish between the two types of **Performance Development (PD – I & PD – II)**.



### 3. ACTIVITIES.....

#### 3.1 Performance Termination Role-Play Activity

##### Activity

1. There will be two role-plays.

Role-play 1: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Mark (played by a participant).

Role-play 2: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Chanel (played by a participant).

##### Role Play 1:

**Joan:** Welcome Mark, what would you like to talk about today?

**Mark:** Hi Joan, yesterday was the worst day of my life, I just feel like I can't go on, my dreams are shattered and I don't know what to do...

**Joan:** Why don't you tell me about it Mark.

**Mark:** Well....I'm an athlete, I am the South-African (SA) champion in the 200m hurdles, and...yesterday...yesterday I fell and broke my ankle (emotional). The doctor said I will not be able to perform competitively again in my live. I cannot live without my sport Joan, there's nothing else left for me...I don't know what to do!

**Joan:** I am so sorry to hear that Mark, this must be very hard for you to talk about.

## Role Play 2:

**Joan:** Welcome Chanel, what would you like to talk about today?

**Chanel:** Hi Joan...I'm here today because I struggle to continue with my life after...well after a major life change. I'm just not motivated in life anymore.

**Joan:** Why don't you tell me about it Chanel.

**Chanel:** Well, Joan, I'm not sure how much you know about the sport of Javelin, but I represented SA in the last two Olympic games. Javelin was my life. But after the last Olympics I realised that my time to shine has passed, and that it might be time for me to retire from the sport. It was my choice, I know, yet I feel so de-motivated in life, there's nothing that excites me anymore, it feels like a little part of me has died... I know it must sound strange, but I struggle Joan, I miss the excitement, the training, the pressure, all of it. Life just seems pointless without it.

**Joan:** Chanel it seems to me like you are going through an extremely difficult time in your life.

### *Discuss Again!!*

- What did you learn about the two different types of **Performance Termination (PT)** from this activity?
- What do you think the Sport Psychologist can do to help Mark and Chanel?

***Now go back to p. 4 for the next category, Performance Impairment!***

## 3.2 Performance Impairment Role-Play Activity

### Activity

1. There will be two role-plays.

Role play 1: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Liz (played by a participant).

Role play 2: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Bobby (played by a participant).

### Role Play 1:

**Joan:** Welcome Liz, what would you like to talk about today?

**Liz:** Hi...I don't really know...I hate my life. (Pause) My coach told me to come. And my mom (sigh).

**Joan:** Do you know why they wanted you to come see me today Liz?

**Liz:** They say I'm depressed. But they don't understand me. I'm not like them, or anybody else. I hate everything in my life, I wish I could just stay in bed the whole day and not face anybody or do anything.

**Joan:** Is that also why your coach wanted you to come see me?

**Liz:** I suppose. (Pause) I can't even get myself to get up in the mornings...how am I suppose to...to go to stupid trianing! It doesn't mean anything to me.

## Role Play 2:

**Joan:** Welcome Bobby, what would you like to talk about today?

**Bobby:** I HATE YOU AND DON'T WANT TO BE HERE!

**Joan:** So then what makes you be here even though you don't want to Bobby?

**Bobby:** My coach forced me! I hate him too!! (Pause) But I love my sport, so I'll sit here...but I'm not talking!

**Joan:** Well that's okay. We don't have to talk about anything you don't want to... Why don't you tell me what type of sport it is that you love so much?

**Bobby:** I'm a 200m sprinting athlete....and I'm damn good! But my coach suspended me!! Now I'm sitting here, instead of on the field!!

**Joan:** Well that must be terribly hard for you Bobby. Why would your coach do that?

**Bobby:** Well...he says I have anger issues....in my last race I pushed around one of my competitors. It's all screwed up...because my coach also caught me drinking! Now I'm out for the season, can you believe that!!!

### *Discuss Again!!*

- What did you learn about the two different types of **Performance Impairment (PT)** from this activity?
- What do you think the Sport Psychologist have to do to help Liz and Bobby?

**Now go back to p. 4 for the next category, Performance Dysfunction!**

### 3.3 Performance Dysfunction Role-Play Activity

#### Activity

1. There will be two role-plays.

Role-play 1: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Jack (played by a participant).

Role-play 2: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Alice (played by a participant).

#### Role Play 1:

**Joan:** Welcome Jack, what would you like to talk about today?

**Jack:** Hi Joan, my coach sent me to you. I really don't think this is necessary.

**Joan:** Well, that's okay Jack, do you maybe know why your coach sent you here today?

**Jack:** Well, yes I guess I know why... (Sign) I've been struggling with my athletics performance lately; I'm a professional high-jump athlete. I'm actually quite good, but lately, things are difficult for me, mostly because my coach doesn't understand me! I just need things to be perfect before I'll be able to perform well, but he thinks I'm being silly. He just doesn't get me!

**Joan:** What do you mean with "things needs to be perfect before you'll be able to perform well" Jack?

**Jack:** Well you know, things needs to be exactly the way I want them to be before I can attempt a jump! For example, my steps needs to be perfect, and I need to check them three times, then I need to stretch for at least 10 minutes, my spikes needs to be equally tightened on



both sides, the mats need to lie exactly where I plan to fall etc. And my coach doesn't understand this! I mean, is that too much to ask.

Like, I want him to stand on the left side of the pole when I jump, if he doesn't, I know that it's going to distract me and then even before I jump I know in my head that I won't clear the jump. And then he says I'm being cheeky, but it was his fault that I could not jump! Maybe he should be the one seeing you today!

## Role Play 2:

**Joan:** Welcome Alice, what would you like to talk about today?

**Alice:** Hi Joan.. (emotional) I'm here because things are not going so well with my athletics performance. I'm a long-distance athlete. My best item is the 1500m's. But lately it's hard for me to cover any distance..

**Joan:** Alice it seems to me like you are going through a really tough time. What does your coach say about this?

**Alice:** Yes, I am going through a rough time Joan (emotional). But my coach understands, he knows the reason why it has been hard for me for the last month. But lately, he wants me to get back to normal again. I think he gets a bit tired of me being this way.

**Joan:** Alice what do you mean when you say "he knows the reason why it's hard for me"?

**Alice:** Well I guess I have to tell you... (emotional, almost crying), my cousin passed away a month ago. We were very close. I still can't believe she's gone, it was all so sudden. Ever since then I can't seem to focus on anything. Whenever I need to train, or work hard, or compete, all I can think about is that she's not here anymore, and then nothing else seems important to me.

### *Discuss Again!!*

- What did you learn about the two different types of **Performance Dysfunction (PDy)** from this activity?
- What do you think the Sport Psychologists have to do to help Jack and Alice?

***Now go back to p. 4 for the next category, Performance Development!***

### 3.4 Performance Development Role-Play Activity

#### Activity

1. There will be two role-plays.

Role-play 1: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Linda (played by a participant).

Role-play 2: Joan the Sport Psychologist (played by Ellie) and Michael (played by a participant).

#### Role Play 1:

**Joan:** Welcome Linda, what would you like to talk about today?

**Linda:** Hello Joan. I've decided to come to you today because I need some help with the mental side of my athletics training. A year ago I started at the hpc Tuks Sport School, and my performance has improved a lot since then. However, there's still a lot that I need to learn, and many hours of training before I'll be ready for the season. My goal is to get selected for the Gauteng-North squad. I've heard about your services and I think it's important to not only train physically, but also prepare yourself mentally. Will you be able to help me with that Joan?

**Joan:** Of course I will Linda! I have various ways of working with athletes who wish to focus on the mental side of training. But today I have a new approach that I'm going to tell you about, called the MAC approach. Are you up to it?

**Linda:** Yes lets start!

## Role Play 2:

**Joan:** Welcome Michael, what would you like to talk about today?

**Michael:** Hello Joan. I've decided to come to you today because I need some help with the mental side of my athletics training. I have been to a Sport Psychologist before, because I've been in the sport world for a long time now. I have been chosen for the South-African Olympic squad and want to do everything possible to make sure I'm ready. Will you assist me with that Joan?

**Joan:** Of course I will Michael. I have various ways of working with athletes who wish to focus on the mental side of training. But today I have a new approach that I'm going to tell you about, called the MAC approach. Are you up to it?

**Michael:** Definitely! Lets do this!

### *Discuss Again!!*

- What did you learn about the two different types of **Performance Development (PD)** from this activity?
- What do you think the Sport Psychologist have to do to help Linda and Michael?

## REFERENCES

Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). The Multi-Level Classification System for Sport Psychology (MCS-SP). *The Sport Psychologist, 18*, 89-109. Retrieved from <http://0-web.ebscohost.com.innopac.up.ac.za/ehost/>

Gardner, F. L. & Moore, Z. E. (2006). *Clinical sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

## MODULE 2

# MINDFULNESS



## 1. OUTCOME

The outcome of this module is:

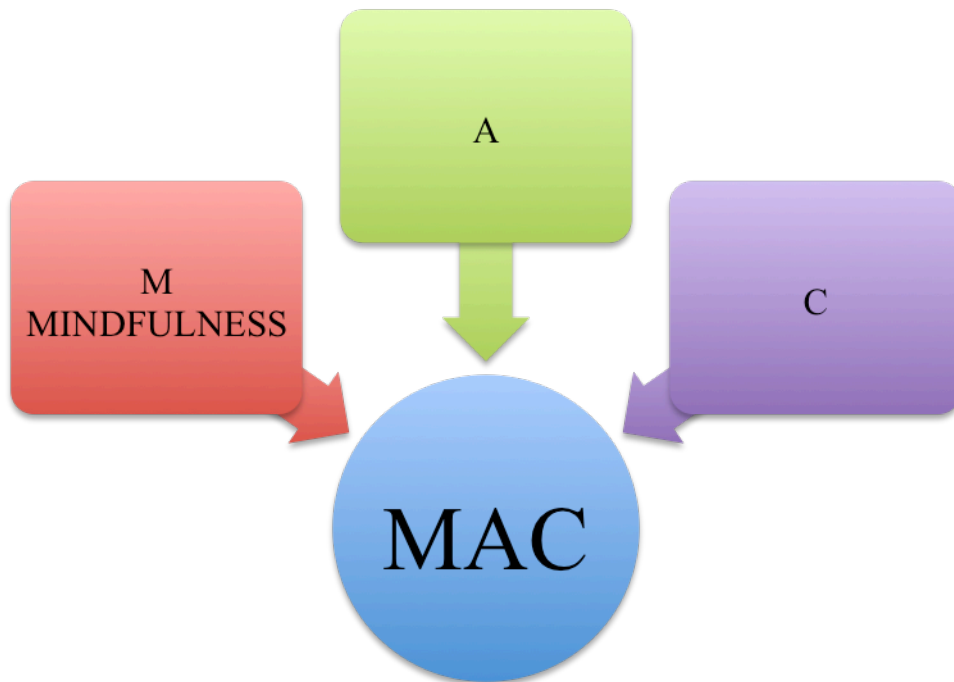
- 1.1 To understand the concept **mindfulness**.
- 1.2 To practice **mindfulness** through activities.
- 1.3 To reflect on your learning regarding **mindfulness**.
- 1.4 To reflect on your application of **mindfulness** to the sport of athletics.
- 1.5 To reflect on your application of **mindfulness** to life.



## 2. CONCEPTS.... (Mindfulness and Mindlessness)

### 2.1

### Mindfulness



### Mindfulness...

“The ability of an athlete to pay attention on purpose, to the current moment in time. Thus, not the past or to the future, but the present moment, and together with that, to be fully focused on the task that he or she has to perform in that moment. “

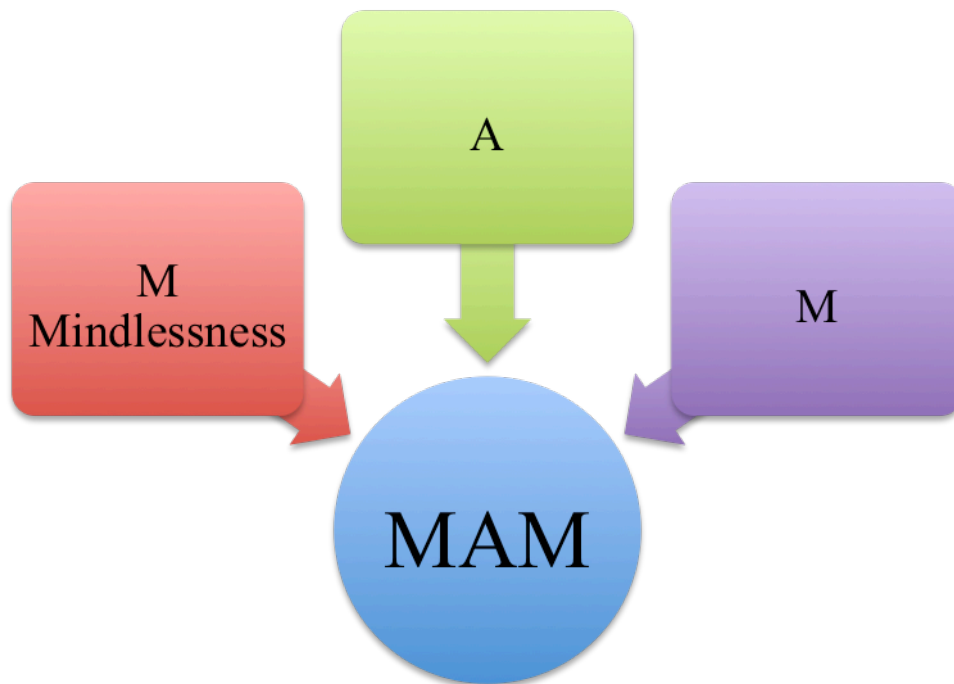
#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one **mindfulness** experience from your *sport of athletics*?
- Can you describe one **mindfulness** experience from your *life*?



## 2.2

### Mindlessness



Mindlessness... “Is when an athlete’s mind is wandering to past events, and imagined future events which causes him/her to loose attention of the current moment in time. Thus, he/she is not fully focused on the task that needs to be performed in the present moment.”

#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one mindlessness experience from your *sport of athletics*?
- Can you describe one mindlessness experience from your *life*?



### 3. ACTIVITIES.....

#### 3.1

### Mindfulness Activity 1

(Hoola-Hoops and Tennis Balls)

#### Activity

1. Participants stand in a circle while holding a hoola-hoop.
2. They'll get two minutes to practise swinging the hoola-hoop around their waists.
3. Once the two minutes is up, they should get ready, as the task is about to start.
4. When the facilitator starts the timer, and gives the go-ahead they should start swinging the hoola-hoop around their waists for one minute without the hoola falling down.
5. After one minute has past, stop them, and give the next set of instructions:
6. They should now pass a tennis ball to each other across the circle while still hoola-hooping. This will also go on for one minute (increase the time if necessary).
7. (If this is still achieved easily, they should now say the person's name out loud to whom they pass the tennis ball, also done for one minute.)
8. (If this is still achieved easily, bring in a second tennis ball.)

#### Equipment

Equipment used in this activity includes: - 5 Hoola Hoops  
- 2 to 4 Tennis Balls

#### Discuss!!

- What did you learn about your **mindfulness** from this activity?
- Watch the following video clip while considering what you have learnt about **mindfulness**.

## 3.2

### Mindfulness Activity

(Video Clip)



# Video

#### Discuss!!

- What did you observe and additionally learn about **mindfulness** from this video clip?
- Did your view of **mindfulness** change from the first to the second mindfulness activity?

## 4. REFLECTING ON MINDFULNESS



In this module **mindfulness** is described as ... “The ability of an athlete to pay attention on purpose, to the current moment in time. Thus, not the past or to the future, but to the present moment, and together with that, to be fully focused on the task that he or she has to perform in that moment.”

With that in mind, please reflect on the following three topics:

### 4.1

#### Learning Reflection

\*Name and Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Based on this description of **mindfulness** what did you learn about your own **mindfulness** through your participation in the “Mindfulness Activities”.

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## REFERENCES

- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) based approach to athletic performance enhancement: Theoretical considerations. *Behaviour Therapy*, 35, 707-723. Retrieved from <http://0-www.sciencedirect.com.innopac.up.ac.za/>
- Gardner, F. L. & Moore, Z. E. (2006). *Clinical sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2007). *The psychology of enhancing human performance: The Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach*. New York: Springer Publishing.

## MODULE 3

# ACCEPTANCE





## 1. OUTCOME

The outcome of this module is:

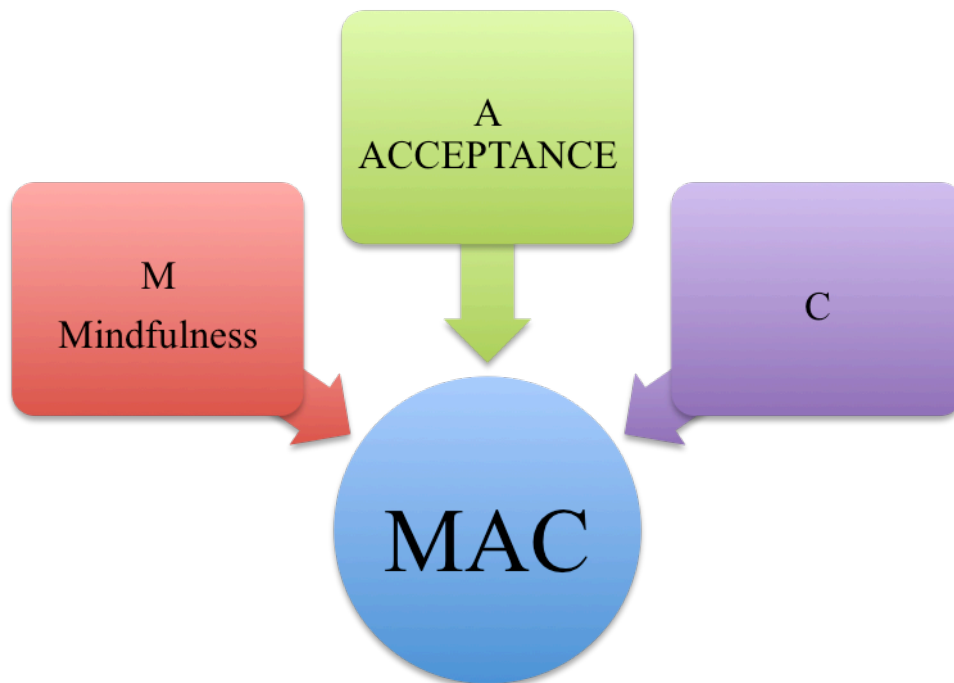
- 1.1 To understand the concept **acceptance**.
- 1.2 To practice **acceptance** through activities.
- 1.3 To reflect on your learning regarding **acceptance**.
- 1.4 To reflect on your application of **acceptance** to the sport of athletics.
- 1.5 To reflect on your application of **acceptance** to life.



## 2. CONCEPTS.... (Acceptance and Avoidance)

### 2.1

### Acceptance



### Acceptance...

“The ability of an athlete to experience discomfort, caused by bodily sensations (**B**), internal experiences (**I**), and external stimuli (**E**), without judging these experiences as good or bad.” Acronym: **B.I.E.**

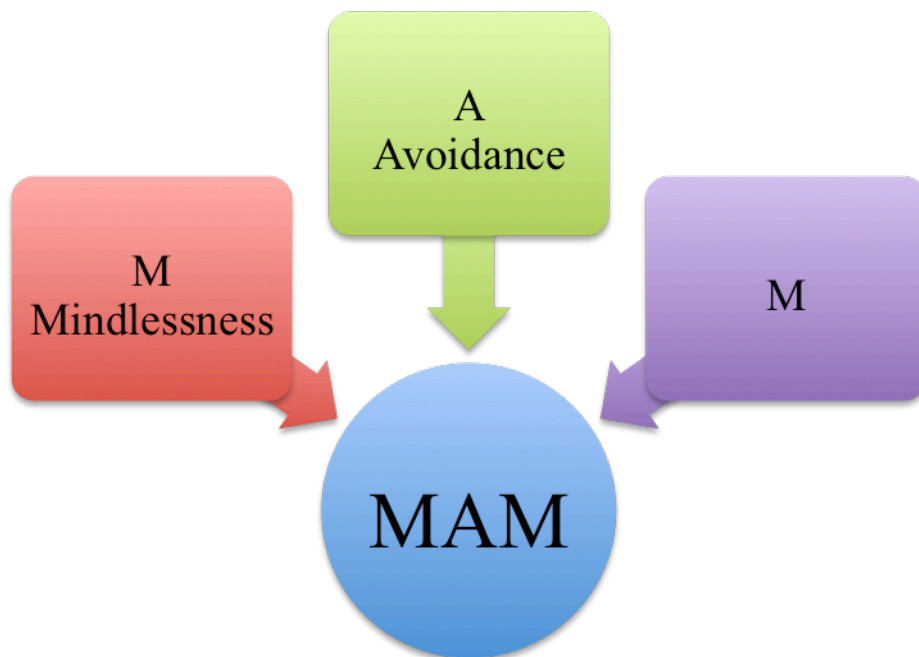
Examples of: **B** = tiredness, **I** = stress, **E** = spectators

#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one **acceptance** experience from your *sport of athletics*?
- Can you describe one **acceptance** experience from your *life*?

## 2.2

### Avoidance



Avoidance...“is when athletes experience discomfort, caused by bodily sensations (B), internal experiences (I), and external stimuli (E) and they judge this experience as “negative”. Because they see it as a negative experience, they try to avoid, change, or control it in order to get rid of the discomfort.

#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one avoidance experience from your *sport of athletics*?
- Can you describe one avoidance experience from your *life*?



### 3. ACTIVITIES.....

#### 3.1

### Acceptance Activity 1

(Hoola-Hoops and Tennis Balls)

#### Activity

1. This activity will be done outside where participants will most probably experience some environmental (external) influences.
2. Participants stand in a circle while holding a hoola-hoop.
3. They'll get 30 seconds to practise swinging the hoola-hoop around their waists.
4. When the facilitator starts the timer, they should again start swinging the hoola-hoop around their waists for one and a half minute without the hoola falling down.
5. When this is achieved, one tennis ball is brought in. They should now pass the tennis ball to each other across the circle while still hoola-hooping. This will go on until the facilitator tells them to stop (the idea is to create some exhaustion, i.e. a bodily sensation).
6. (If this is achieved easily, they should now say the person's name out loud to whom they pass the tennisball, otherwise, move to nr. 7.)
7. The facilitator will now start talking to the participants in a manner that will cause distraction.
8. The aim is for them to continue focussing on the task at hand. Thus, they have to keep the hoola hoop circling their waist, and keep the tennis ball going around in the circle while accepting all other distracting experiences.

#### Equipment

Equipment used in this activity includes: - 5 Hoola Hoops  
- 2 to 3 Tennis Balls

**Discuss!!**

- What did you learn about your **acceptance** from this activity?
- Watch the following video clip while considering what you have learnt about **acceptance**.

**3.2**

**Acceptance Activity 2**

(Video Clip)



**Video**

**Discuss!!**

- What did you observe and additionally learn about **acceptance** from this video clip?
- Did your view of **acceptance** change from the first to the second acceptance activity?







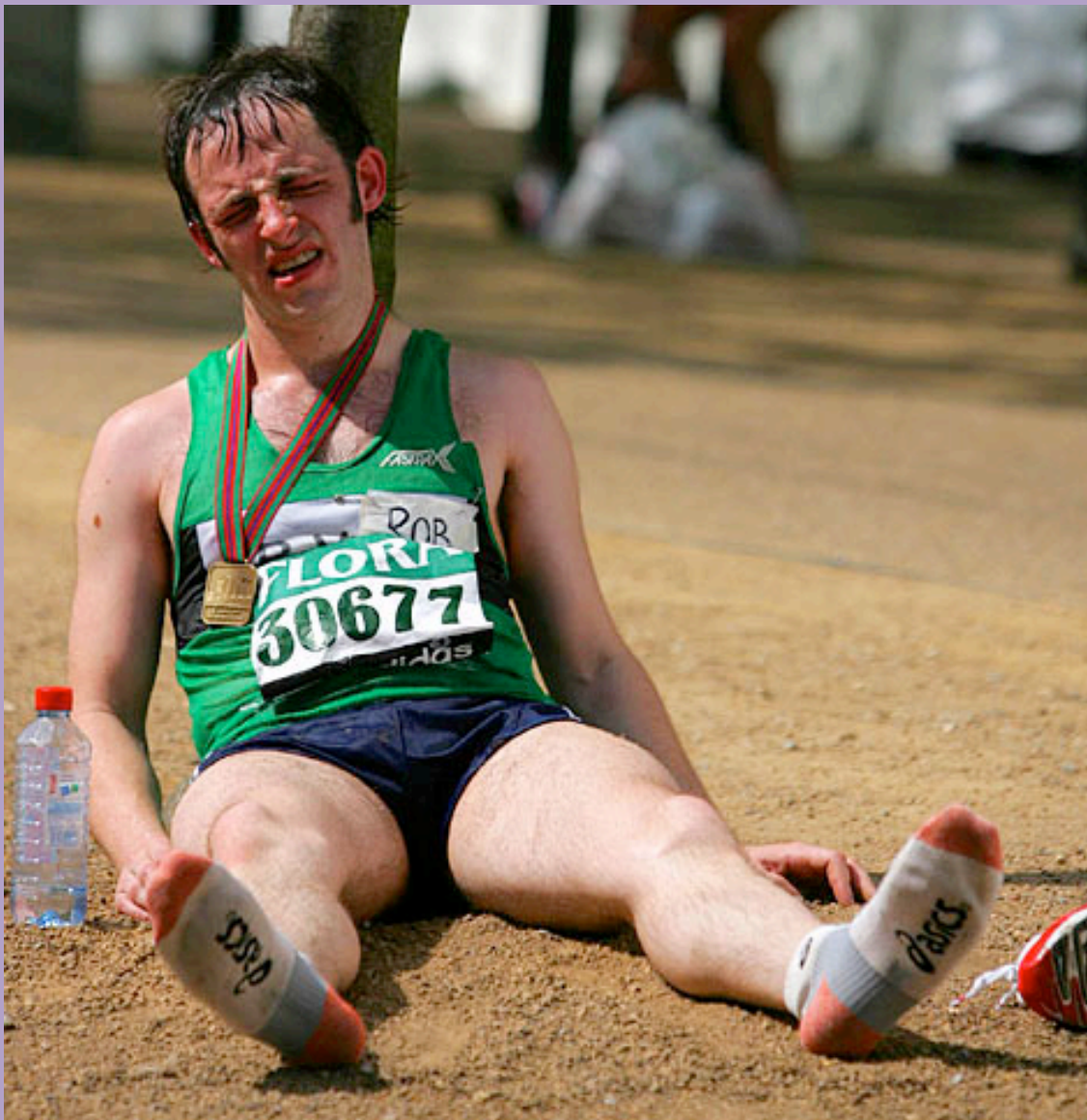


## REFERENCES

- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) based approach to athletic performance enhancement: Theoretical considerations. *Behaviour Therapy*, 35, 707-723. Retrieved from <http://0-www.sciencedirect.com.innopac.up.ac.za/>
- Gardner, F. L. & Moore, Z. E. (2006). *Clinical sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2007). *The psychology of enhancing human performance: The Acceptance-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach*. New York: Springer Publishing.

## MODULE 4

# COMMITMENT



## 1. OUTCOME

The outcome of this module is:

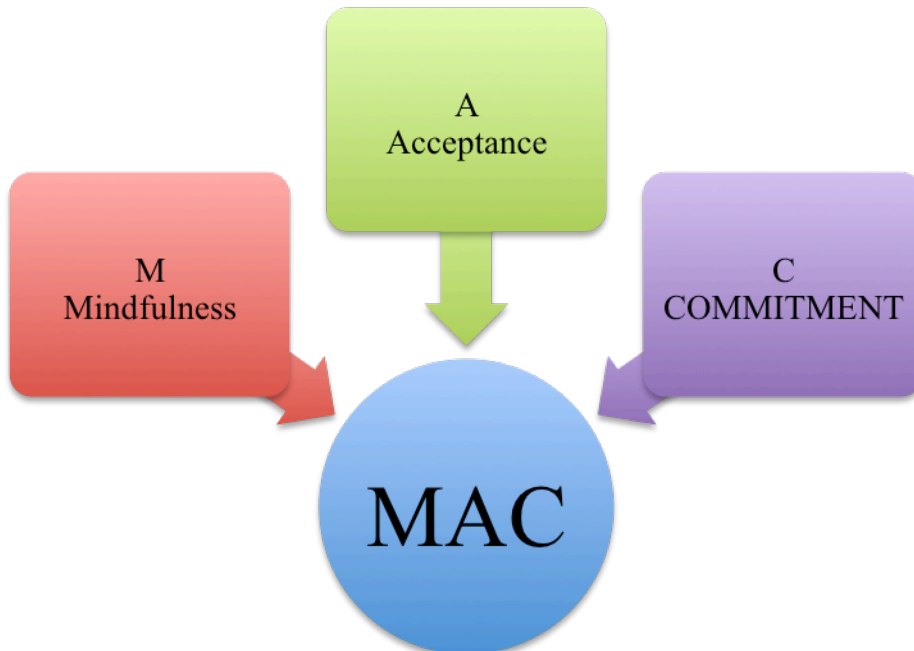
- 1.1 To understand the concept **commitment**.
- 1.2 To practice **commitment** through activities.
- 1.3 To reflect on your learning regarding **commitment**.
- 1.4 To reflect on your application of **commitment** to the sport of athletics.
- 1.5 To reflect on your application of **commitment** to life.



## 2. CONCEPTS.... (Commitment and Motivation)

### 2.1

#### Commitment



#### Commitment ...

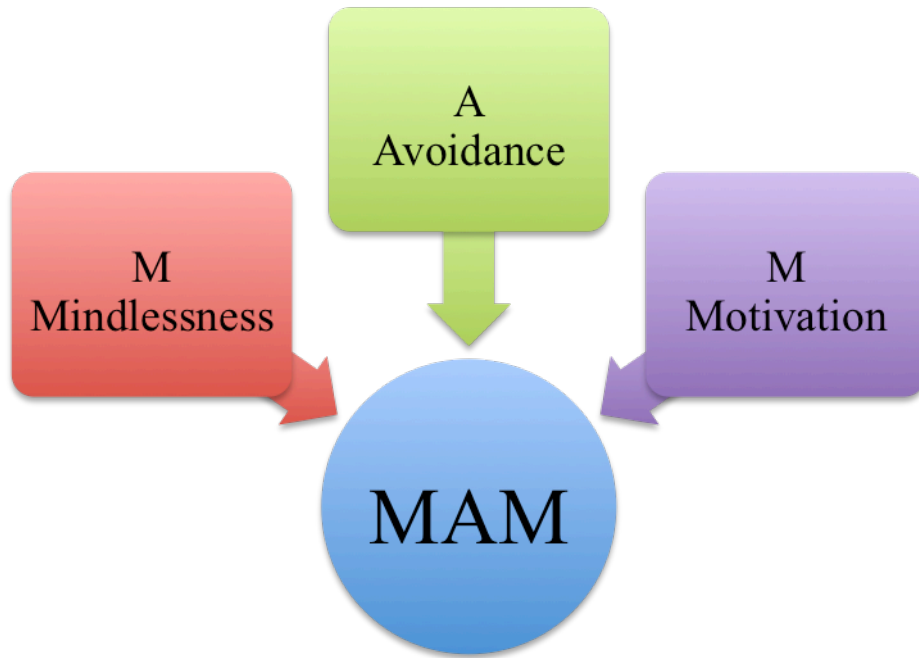
“The ability of athletes to continuously act out their values, in order to reach their goals. Values can be described as the behaviour that will take you to your goal. “

#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one **commitment** experience from your *sport of athletics*?
  - Can you describe one **commitment** experience from your *life*?
- (Hand out appendix A if necessary)

## 2.2

### Motivation



Motivation... “Is desire without action! It is merely an athlete’s desire to perform well without having a specific goal, and without showing the continuous value-driven actions and behaviour that will lead them to success.”

#### Discuss!!

- Can you describe one motivation experience from your *sport of athletics*?
- Can you describe one motivation experience from your *life*?



### 3. ACTIVITIES.....

#### 3.1

### Commitment Activity

(Hoola-Hoops and Tennis Balls)

#### Activity

1. The goal of the last activity is for the participants to keep the game going for 15 consecutive minutes, however, one person at a time can rest. Thus, they need to stand in a circle while spinning the hoola-hoops around their waist and passing the tennis ball to each other. When one hoola hoop or tennis ball falls, or more than two people at a time is resting, they'll have to start again.
2. Before this activity commence, they should sit together, and fill out Appendix B, in order to determine the certain values that will get them to their goal, i.e. to keep going non-stop for 15 min's.
3. This activity will be done inside, to exclude environmental influences, as the sole focus of this activity is to experience commitment to their values.

#### Equipment

Equipment used in this activity includes: - 5 Hoola Hoops  
- 2 to 4 Tennis Balls

#### Discuss!!

- What did you learn about your **commitment** from this activity?
- Watch the following video clip while considering what you have learnt about **commitment**.

## 3.2

### Commitment Activity

(Video Clip)



# Video

#### Discuss!!

- What did you observe and additionally learn about **commitment** from this video clip?
- Did your view of **commitment** change from the first to the second commitment activity?









## REFERENCES

- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) based approach to athletic performance enhancement: Theoretical considerations. *Behaviour Therapy*, 35, 707-723. Retrieved from <http://0-www.sciencedirect.com.innopac.up.ac.za/>
- Gardner, F. L. & Moore, Z. E. (2006). *Clinical sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
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## Appendix A Values Chart

<b>Goal:</b>  (eg. reach SA's)	<b>Value nr.1:</b>  (eg. punctual)	<b>Actions that will reflect your value nr 1:</b>  (eg. be on time for every training session)  1. _____ _____ 2. _____ _____
	<b>Value nr. 2:</b>	<b>Actions that will reflect your value nr 2:</b>  1. _____ _____ 2. _____ _____

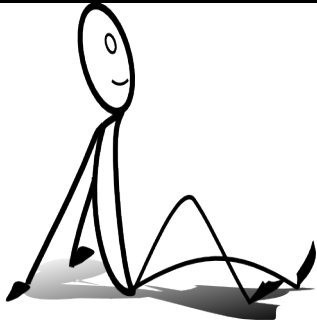
## Appendix B

### Values Chart – Hoola Hoops and Tennis Balls Activity

<p><b>Goal:</b></p> <p>To keep the activity going for 15 consecutive minutes.</p>	<p><b>Value nr.1:</b></p>	<p><b>Actions that will reflect your value nr 1:</b></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p><b>Value nr. 2:</b></p>	<p><b>Actions that will reflect your value nr 2:</b></p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>_____</p>

MODULE 5

INTEGRATION OF THE  
MAC APPROACH



**M**



**A**



**C**

## 1. OUTCOME

The outcome of this module is:

- 1.1 To understand the integration of **Mindfulness, Acceptance** and **Commitment**.
- 1.2 To understand the integration of all three parts of **MAC** through an activity.
- 1.3 To reflect on your learning regarding the **MAC** approach as a whole.
- 1.4 To reflect on your application of the **MAC** approach to the sport of athletics.
- 1.5 To reflect on your application of the **MAC** approach to life.



## 2. CONCEPTS.... (MAC)

**MAC!...** In order to experience the full benefits of the MAC approach, you have to integrate all three parts, Mindfulness, Acceptance and Commitment.

### *Activity!*

- Identify and write down 3 parts of your specific athletics item that you consider to be crucial elements of the sport.
- For example: I want you to think of the sport of cricket. In cricket you have three crucial parts, namely batting, bowling and fielding. Without one of them it will not be the sport of cricket, so only by having all three parts together you can call it cricket.
- This is an individual activity and you are not allowed to discuss it with each other.
- Once you have written down your three parts, you will discuss it with the rest of the group and explain why you see each part as important and how it contributes to the sport as a whole.

### *Discuss!!*

- What did you learn about integrating all three elements of the **MAC** approach from this activity?
- Discuss the **MAC** vs. MAM handout page.



# The End!



## Notes

A series of horizontal dashed lines provided for taking notes.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!**

## REFERENCES

- Gardner, F. L., & Moore, Z. E. (2004). A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) based approach to athletic performance enhancement: Theoretical considerations. *Behaviour Therapy*, 35, 707-723. Retrieved from <http://0-www.sciencedirect.com.innopac.up.ac.za/>
- Gardner, F. L. & Moore, Z. E. (2006). *Clinical sport psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
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## APPENDIX D

### RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

## **Interview 1**

**Interviewer: Ellie Dykema**

**Participant: P1**

### **Research process:**

- Five adolescent track and field athletes participated in a sport-specific MAC programme on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013.
- During the MAC programme the participants made written reflections on their experience. Specifically on what they have learnt through their experience, how they could apply their learning to their sport or athletics, and how they could transfer their learning to their lives.
- Each participant's individual reflections were then used as a guideline for a 1 hour, semi-structured interview that took place with each participant.
- The semi-structured interview for participant 1 follows.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Participant 1 (P1)**

#### **1. MINDFULNESS**

##### **1.1 Learning**

a: Okay P1, we will be starting with mindfulness and I want you to just read... read to me your written reflections that you... that you wrote during the MAC programme on what you have learnt about mindfulness.

b: So you have now read to me your written reflections, can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail what you have learnt about your mindfulness?

c: Are you talking about the video clip that I showed during the workshop?

d: And if I can take you a bit back to what you've just read to me, you also speak about in the activity and how you should focus on one thing at a time. I assume you... you there talk about the hula hoop activity that you did.

e: You speak about external factors a lot; can you explore that a little bit more?

f: Okay, and in the end, what did you learn about your own mindfulness?

g: You said you never applied it, have you heard about it before?

## 1.2 Application

a: Okay P1, I'm going to ask you to now please read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness to your sport.

b: Now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about mindfulness to your sport?

c: Can you maybe think of a real life example where that happened to you, where there was external factors and where you could have applied mindfulness?

d: Can I take you a little bit back to your written reflections again? In there you said something that you have to do what is expected of you, you have to do your thing. Can you help me understand that...

e: Okay, and is that also what you meant... you also said it's difficult to focus on a task when you are not ready.

f: Okay, it seems like you are saying almost as if feelings and emotions sometimes influences mindfulness.

g: Okay, and when you said in your reflections that it's difficult to focus when your coach gives you too much information at once. What can you explain to me a bit more what makes that situation for you difficult? And does it happen often? Tell me about a situation like that.

## 1.3 Transference

- a: Okay P1 will you now please read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness to your life?
- b: So now that you've read your written reflections to me, can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about mindfulness to your life?
- c: And you said that you were first shocked to hear that you can actually apply mindfulness to your life.
- d: Okay and is there certain areas in your life that stands out or that you think you can apply mindfulness to?
- e: So the fact that your parents are far away and sometimes you miss them, how does that have an impact on you being mindful, let's say when you have to train?
- d: Okay, and then at the end you mentioned something about girls and needing attention. Can we maybe explore a bit how mindfulness relates to that?
- 

## **2. ACCEPTANCE**

### **2.1 Learning**

- a: Okay P1 we will now be moving to acceptance and I want to ask if you will please read to me your written reflections on what you have learned about acceptance.
- b: Okay, so you have now read your written reflections to me can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail what you have learned about your acceptance?
- c: You also said that it was a bit strange for you to first hear about acceptance.
- d: And what, what about acceptance makes it difficult for you?

## 2.2 Application

- a: P1, will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance to your sport?
- b: Now that you've read it to me can you again personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about acceptance to your sport?
- c: In your reading you did say it, it will not always be easy to apply acceptance.
- d: You talk a bit about, a lot about avoid and accept. Can we maybe, maybe explore a little bit deeper the difference between avoiding and accepting?

## 2.3 Transference

- a: Again will you please read to me now your written reflections on how do you think you can apply acceptance in your life?
- b: And now that you've read your reflections to me can you personally tell me, and in more detail, how you think you can apply what you've learned about acceptance to your life.
- c: And you've all, you, you speak about life throwing curved balls. Um, is there anything else? You did now speak about a few things. Is there anything else that's difficult?
- d: You've also mentioned in your reflections that it's difficult to apply it, to apply acceptance to everything. Can we maybe talk about some things that's, where it's difficult to apply it?
- e: And then you, at the end you spoke about accepting to achieve. Can you maybe explore that a bit further?
-

### **3. COMMITMENT**

#### **3.1 Learning**

- a: Now P1 we are moving now to, to commitment so again will you please read to me firstly your written reflections on what you have learned about commitment?
- b: Now that you've read it, again can you maybe personally tell me in a bit more detail what you have learned about your commitment?
- c: And, but you also said there in your reflections that you will not always be able to commit. Can you maybe explore some, some examples where you, where it's not able, where you are not able to commit?
- d: And P1, so after what you've learned about commitment what would you say about your own commitment?

#### **3.2 Application**

- a: Okay P1, will you now again please read from your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment to your sport of athletics?
- b: And now that you've read it, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about commitment to your sport?
- c: So, if you think about going to SAs and how you think you were committed there, explain to me how it would have looked if you were only motivated.
- d: And you also in your reflections, if I can take you back to that, you said that there will always be someone that's better and that actually helps you to commit. Can you, can we explore that a bit more?

#### **3.3 Transference**



- a: P1 will you now please read to me your written reflections on how you think you're going to apply commitment in your life?
- b: So now that you've read your reflections can you personally tell me and in more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about commitment to your life?
- c: And how would you say is your commitment currently towards school?
- d: So are you saying you understand how mindfulness, acceptance and commitment can work together?
- e: And lastly, you said something, you said in your reflections that you can commit because you don't want to let your parents down. Can you just help me explore that as well?

## Interview 2

**Interviewer: Ellie Dykema**

**Participant: P2**

### **Research process:**

- Five adolescent track and field athletes participated in a sport-specific MAC programme on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013.
- During the MAC programme the participants made written reflections on their experience. Specifically on what they have learnt through their experience, how they could apply their learning to their sport or athletics, and how they could transfer their learning to their lives.
- Each participant's individual reflections were then used as a guideline for a 1 hour, semi-structured interview that took place with each participant.
- The semi-structured interview for participant 2 follows.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Participant 2 (P2)**

#### **1. MINDFULNESS**

##### **1.1 Learning**

a: P2 we will start with mindfulness and I want to ask if you will please read to me your written reflections that you have made during the MAC workshop on what you have learned about mindfulness.

b: Now that you've read your reflections to me can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what you have learned about mindfulness?

c: Okay, in your reflections P2 you say, that you've, you were first confused about it.

d: Okay, and also in your reflections you talk about how you managed to put your mind to it the first time.

e: You also said that you need some guidance. Can you tell me about that?

f: Okay, so what happens if you start thinking ahead or thinking about the past?

## 1.2 Application

a: P2 will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your sport.

b: So now that you've read your reflections to me can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you have learned about mindfulness to your sport of athletics.

c: In your reflections you started off by saying you can apply it, you want to apply it always. Can we explore that where can you apply it in athletics?

d: Have you ever experienced it during a meeting, you struggle to be mindfulness and can you tell me, to be mindful.

e: You also said in your reflections P2 that um, you want to try not think ahead and then you spoke about a teammate that's faster than you. Can you tell me more about that situation?

f: All right, can you think of a specific moment, in your item, which is sprinting where mindfulness is especially important?

g: Right, and tell me personally, where is your mind when you go down in the blocks?

## 1.3 Transference

a: P2 would you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your life.

- b: So now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about mindfulness to your life.
- c: Okay, you've said there in your reflections you talk about, about friends and you having to leave them at your, at your old school. How does that affect your mindfulness?
- d: In your reflections you talk about school and how you could maybe apply mindfulness there. Can we explore that?
- e: You also spoke about socialize in your reflections, can we talk about how mindfulness links to that?
- f: Okay, so when you are in a social setting with friends, how important is mindfulness there?
- g: Can we perhaps talk about mindfulness and relationships, whether it's with friends or with family, how important is it there?
- h: And you also said um, lastly in your reflections you talk about going to a job interview and how, how can mindfulness be applied there.
- 

## **2. ACCEPTANCE**

### **2.1 Learning**

- a: Okay P2 we will now be moving to acceptance and um, I want you to again please read to me your written reflections from what you have learnt about acceptance.
- b: Know that you've read your reflections to me can you please tell me personally and in a bit more detail what you have learnt about your acceptance.

c: Okay in your reflections you, you said something about you have to accept that you're not that good at this moment. Can we explore that a bit.

d: You also said that you have to accept now that you have to work hard. Can we explore how that is for you?

e: So overall what have you learnt about your own acceptance?

## **2.2 Application**

a: P2 will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your sport of athletics.

b: Okay so now that you have read your reflections can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about acceptance to your sport.

c: You said in your reflections that you have to accept that you're not as fit as you would like to be. How is that?

d: Okay you also said that losing scares you, but you have to accept that. Can we explore that a bit.

e: You also mentioned in your reflections that some things is difficult, that accepting that you have to go to the gym in the morning. Can we talk about that?

f: Except for having to accept that you, that you know have to go to gym, it seems like there's other factors that you also have to accept, like tiredness. Anything else.

## **2.3 Transference**

a: P2 will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your life.

- b: Okay thanks and now that you have read your reflections to me can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you have learnt about acceptance to your life.
- c: So you're saying there is certain things that you would try to not avoid. What are these things that you usually avoid.
- d: You spoke a lot in your reflections about an old environment and now coming into a new environment. Can we talk about specific things in the new environment that you had to learn to accept?
- e: Right and you said at the end of your reflections um, you said there is certain things at hpc like your roommate that you have to accept. How is that for you?
- f: So what will be the consequences if you don't accept?
- 

### **3. COMMITMENT**

#### **3.1 Learning**

- a: P2 we will now be moving to commitment and again I want you to please read to me your reflections on what you have learnt about commitment.
- b: Okay, thanks and now that you have read your reflections can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what you have learnt about commitment.
- c: Okay you said in your reflections that you've learnt that you are committed.
- d: I knew, you also mentioned that you are committed to get fit. Can you tell me just a few practical things that how I can see that you are committed specifically to become fit.

e: Okay and you said there that you didn't at first understand how motivation is the opposite, yet now you get it. Can we explore motivation and commitment?

### 3.2 Application

a: P2 will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment in your sport.

b: Okay so now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about commitment to your sport.

c: You said in your reflections that you would like to push yourself and work with your coach, can we explore the role of your coaching commitment.

d: And you also said that you have to be committed during both off and on season. Can you tell me how that is for you?

e: Right and you did mention in your reflections that you are improving too slowly. How does that affect your commitment?

f: Okay you said, you said that peer pressure also had a great impact on your commitment. Can you explain that to me?

g: And then you mentioned that you would like to get your talent back through commitment. Help me understand that.

h: Right, can we explore your commitment previously compared to how it is now?

i: So you're saying that certain things here at hpc helps you to commit.

### 3.3 Transference

- a: P2 will you please read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment in your life.
- b: Okay, so now that you have read your written reflections for me can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you have learnt about commitment to your life.
- c: Okay, it almost seems like you're saying commitment to family sometimes clashes with commitment to athletics.
- d: And you said in your reflections that you will one day want to, want to put commitment into your marriage and into your future. How will that look.
- e: Another area that you've mentioned was schoolwork. How does it apply to schoolwork?
- f: Throughout the interview you spoke about you having ADD. Now I want to ask how does your ADD effect your commitment in school.
- g: Right so at this moment what would you say about your commitment in life.



## Interview 3

**Interviewer: Ellie Dykema**

**Participant: P3**

### **Research process:**

- Five adolescent track and field athletes participated in a sport-specific MAC programme on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013.
- During the MAC programme the participants made written reflections on their experience. Specifically on what they have learnt through their experience, how they could apply their learning to their sport or athletics, and how they could transfer their learning to their lives.
- Each participant's individual reflections were then used as a guideline for a 1 hour, semi-structured interview that took place with each participant.
- The semi-structured interview for participant 3 follows.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Participant 3 (P3)**

#### **1. MINDFULNESS**

##### **1.1 Learning**

a: We will start with mindfulness and I want you to please read to me your written reflections that you made during the MAC workshop on what you have learned about mindfulness?

b: So now that you've read your written reflections to me can you personally tell me maybe in a bit more detail what you've learned about mindfulness?

c: You're mindless? OK. Can you think of a situation ever where, where that happened to you?

d: Right, you also said something, you said you have to learn mental stability in your written reflections. Can you help me understand that?

e: Is there certain areas that did you find harder than others?

## 1.2 Application

a: P3 will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your sport of athletics?

b: So now that you've read your reflections to me can you maybe tell me personally and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about mindfulness to your sport.

c: In your reflections, P3, you speak about how it could help you to know when you do something wrong. Maybe you can then, can correct it. Can you tell me more about that?

d: How will mindfulness help you to know that something is wrong?

e: In your reflections you also say that while you run there is certain things that you want to concentrate on. And, um, can you tell me more about that?

f: Is there certain factors that makes that difficult?

g: So do you think mindfulness can be used in training and competition?

h: Can you tell me about practising mindfulness?

## 1.3 Transference

a: Now will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your life.

b: So now that you've read your reflections to me can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about mindfulness to your life?

- c: You've mentioned school in there. Can we talk a bit about mindfulness at schoolwork?
- d: When you speak about concentration, can you explain to me the difference or the similarities between concentration and mindfulness?
- e: You speak about your phone. I, I've noticed in your written reflections you say that social media is something that can affect it. Can you tell me more about that?
- f: In your written reflections you said something about preventing the sickness from disturbing your future. Can you help me understand that?
- g: You spoke about when things happens at home or with family and how that influences mindfulness. Can we explore that a bit further?
- h: So can you maybe explore other factors at home or you being here at hpc and not at home that can influence your mindfulness?
- i: So P3 if you get, if you, if you can choose one area in your life, and not sport now, where you, where you would want to apply mindfulness?
- 

## **2. ACCEPTANCE**

### **2.1 Learning**

- a: P3 will you please read to me your written reflections that you made on what you have learned about acceptance?
- b: And now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what, um, what you have learned about your acceptance?
- c: Are you now talking about the video that I showed you during the workshop?

- d: In your reflections you, you speak about having to accept the distractions during the hula hoop activity. So that's the activity that you also did during the MAC workshop. Can we talk a bit about that?
- e: Can we explore some things that's, that's hard to accept?
- f: Then you also in your written reflections you say that it's nice to accept because it causes you to not have guilt. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- g: P3 throughout the activities and, and what we did in the workshop, what have you learned about your own acceptance?
- h: Accepting being naughty and accepting not being good. Can we look at some real life examples there?

## **2.2 Application**

- a: Now P3 will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your sport of athletics?
- b: So now that you've read your reflections to me can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about acceptance to your sport?
- c: Hmm. And can we speak about what role acceptance plays in this injury?
- d: In your reflections P3 you also speak about accepting that you can't always win. Can we talk about that?
- e: Okay and then you said in your reflections also that you have to accept that you have to be at training at 5.00 am. Can we talk about that?

## **2.3 Transference**

- a: P3, will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your life?
- b: So now that you've read your reflections to me, can you please now tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about acceptance to your life?
- c: In your reflections you said that it's, that you have to accept that you have left home and family and friends. Can we explore a bit how it is to accept leaving home?
- d: You also said that you have to accept now a new life and new people. Can we talk about that process?
- e: And then something else that you said in your reflections is that it is hard when people are always on your case. Can we explore that?
- f: And is it possible for you to tell me about a real life example of something like that where people were on your case?
- g: Is there any other areas in your life where you think you can apply acceptance?
- 

### **3. COMMITMENT**

#### **3.1 Learning**

- a: Now we move to commitment. Will you please again read to me your reflections on what you've learned about commitment?
- b: So now that you've read your reflections to me. Can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what you've learnt about your commitment?
- c: So can you explain to me the difference between motivation and commitment?

d: Have you ever only been motivated, without commitment?

e: You also said in your reflections that even if you are tired, you should still commit. Tell me about this.

### **3.2 Application**

a: P3, will you please read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment in your sport.

b: So now that you've read your reflections to me. Can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how think you can apply what you've learnt about commitment to your sport.

c: Okay, can we explore some practical examples of how I will be able to see that you are committed to go to African Champs?

d: What will you say is the difference between being committed at training and being committed at a competition?

e: Okay and you also said in your reflections is that you had to first set your goals and then you have to show commitment.

### **3.3 Transference**

a: Will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment in your life.

b: Now that you've read your reflections, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about commitment in your life.

c: Okay, you're saying you've already set some goals?

d: You also say in your reflections that people will see you now and compare you to the past. How does relate to commitment?

e: You furthermore said in your reflections that you're showing commitment to how your parents want you to be.

f: If you talk about here and now, what do you mean?

g: So in the end, P3, what have you learned about your own commitment?

## **Interview 4**

**Interviewer: Ellie Dykema**

**Participant: P4**

### **Research process:**

- Five adolescent track and field athletes participated in a sport-specific MAC programme on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013.
- During the MAC programme the participants made written reflections on their experience. Specifically on what they have learnt through their experience, how they could apply their learning to their sport or athletics, and how they could transfer their learning to their lives.
- Each participant's individual reflections were then used as a guideline for a 1 hour, semi-structured interview that took place with each participant.
- The semi-structured interview for participant 4 follows.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Participant 4 (P4)**

#### **1. MINDFULNESS**

##### **1.1 Learning**

a: P4 will you please read to me your reflections on what you have learned about mindfulness?

b: So you have now read your written reflections to me. Can you personally tell me in more detail what you have learned about your mindfulness?

c: So you can only be mindful for a short period of time?

d: In your reflections, what you've just written to me you've also said that by practicing mindfulness it can become better. Can we explore that a bit?

e: So from all of it what have you learned about your own mindfulness.



## 1.2 Application

- a: Will you please now read to me your reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness to your sport of athletics?
- b: So you have now read your written reflections to me. Can you maybe personally tell me in more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about mindfulness to your sport?
- c: So you're saying you're not focused on what you should be? Can you explain that to me?
- d: Okay, so can you explain the consequences when you lose focus?
- e: And you've also said in your written reflections you speak about spectators, that sometimes have an influence on your mindfulness. Can you help me understand that?
- f: Talking about the runway, in your reflections you also said that when you stand on the runway, just before you go, you are very mindful. Yet when you start running you lose this mindfulness. Can you explain this process to me?
- g: It seems to me like external factors or things outside of you causes you to lose mindfulness.

## 1.3 Transference

- a: P4 will you now please read to me your reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness to your life in general?
- b: Now that you have written your reflections to me, can you personally tell me and in more detail what, where you think, um, or can you tell me more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about mindfulness to your life?

- c: All right, so, in your studying maybe mindfulness can be applied?
- d: Um, do you want to explain to me, talk about maybe some distractions?
- e: In your written reflections you also wrote about stress and how that can influence your mindfulness during the exams.
- f: And something interesting that you also said in your, in your reflections is about social media and that having an influence on your mindfulness. Do you maybe want to, can we explore that a little bit?
- g: Explain to me how it would be if you are mindful in a situation like that, in a conversation between two people.
- h: You said in your reflections something about when you are in a new environment that it can influence you because you keep thinking of the old environment. Can you maybe tell me a bit more about that?
- 

## **2. ACCEPTANCE**

### **2.1 Learning**

- a: P4, we will now move to acceptance and I'm going to ask you to please read for me your written reflections on what you have learned about acceptance.
- b: OK, thanks, so you have now read your written reflections to me. Can you now personally tell me and in more detail what you have learned about your acceptance?
- c: OK so you're talking about distractions, if you don't accept the distraction. Can you maybe explore those distractions?
- d: Right, so you are saying you are going to apply the activity and what you've learned there to other areas?

e: Can I maybe ask you to, to tell me a bit more about your own acceptance and what you have learned.

## 2.2 Application

a: P4 will you now please read to me your written reflections, yes about the, about how you can apply acceptance to your sport of athletics.

b: Okay, so you've read to me your reflections that you wrote, um can you maybe personally tell me a bit, in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about acceptance to your sport.

c: I'm going to take you a bit back to what you started with, where you said um there's always spectators standing along the side telling you, you know what to do or giving advice.

d: You spoke about anger; tell me a bit about the emotions that comes with this?

e: You also said something about it's difficult for you to accept that you can't always get a gold medal.

f: Okay, so tell me about the, the process of accepting an injury.

## 2.3 Transference

a: P4 I'm now going to ask you again to read me your written reflections, this time on how you think you can apply acceptance to your life.

b: So you have now read to me your reflections. Can you now personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you can apply what you've learned about acceptance to your life.

c: Tell me a bit about the process of accepting death because that is a big one.

d: You said in your reflections that, you spoke about some things at your hostel at hpc and that there are some things that one has to accept. Can you tell me about that?

e: So it is, almost seems like you are saying they also need to accept certain things about you.

f: Okay, and what about the part where you said in your reflections that you have to accept that you can't always get what you want?

g: Lastly, you've mentioned something about chappies, or something that difficult for you to accept. Can we talk about that?

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### **3. COMMITMENT**

#### **3.1 Learning**

a: P4, we will now move to commitment. I want you to again, please read to me your reflections, firstly on what you have learnt about commitment.

b: So you've now again read to me your written reflections. Can you personally tell me now in more detail what you have learnt about your commitment?

c: Also with that you said that, um, hard work is part of commitment.

d: You also said that tiredness and weakness, that you can't allow things like that to influence commitment. Can we explore that a bit more?

e: And you said that that [hoola hoop activity] was a good way to explain commitment?

f: Okay, so in general, um, P4, what would you say about your own commitment?

### 3.2 Application

- a: Okay, P4 again, can I please ask you to read me your reflections on how you think you can apply commitment to your sport?
- b: So again now you've written your reflections to me, and now can you personally tell me, and in more detail, how you think you can apply what you've learnt about commitment to your sport?
- c: Okay, you're saying it's about not giving up?
- d: How did your injury affect your commitment?
- e: You're saying that you will show your commitment by doing certain things, for example, putting in extra hours?
- f: Okay, so in general, what do you think commitment can do in your sport?

### 3.3 Transference

- a: P4, can you now please again read for me your reflections, this time on how you think you can apply commitment to your life?
- b: Okay, so now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me, and in more detail, how you can apply what you've learnt about commitment to your life?
- c: Tell me, how will it look, um, if you commit in school?
- d: And you are saying that there's certain things that you want to do if you commit, like study more?
- e: Something that you also said, you... you spoke about hpc, where you currently live and that there's certain things that you might have to commit to there.

f: About your brothers, I want to ask if we can maybe explore the role of commitment in relationships. How important is that?

g: How will it look if I see P4 committing to a relationship?

## **Interview 5**

**Interviewer: Ellie Dykema**

**Participant: P5**

### **Research process:**

- Five adolescent track and field athletes participated in a sport-specific MAC programme on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2013.
- During the MAC programme the participants made written reflections on their experience. Specifically on what they have learnt through their experience, how they could apply their learning to their sport or athletics, and how they could transfer their learning to their lives.
- Each participant's individual reflections were then used as a guideline for a 1 hour, semi-structured interview that took place with each participant.
- The semi-structured interview for participant 5 follows.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Schedule: Participant 5 (P5)**

#### **1. MINDFULNESS**

##### **1.1 Learning**

a: P5 so we will be starting with mindfulness and I want you to please read to me your written reflections that you made during the MAC workshop on what you have learnt about mindfulness.

b: Now that you have read your written reflections to me, can you maybe tell me personally in a bit more detail what you've learnt about mindfulness?

c: So can you explain to me the difference between mindfulness and controlling your mind?

d: Can I take you a bit back to your written reflections where you also said that mindfulness can be a lot of work. Can we explore that a little bit?

e: And what have you learnt about your own mindfulness.

## 1.2 Application

a: P5 will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your sport or athletics.

b: So now that you have read your written reflections to me, can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about mindfulness to your sport.

c: You said in your reflections that you have to focus on the now instead of past events. Can we talk about that?

d: In your written reflections you've, you've talked about sometimes keeping a song in your head while you perform. Can we explore that a bit?

e: In your reflections you also said that the fear of losing and thinking about what your coach will say if you lose makes you lose concentration. Can you tell me about that?

f: So what does the fear of losing and the fear of the coach do to your mindfulness?

## 1.3 Transference

a: Okay P5 will you please now read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply mindfulness in your life.

b: Thanks so now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me and in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about mindfulness to your life.

c: Talking about parents you said in your reflections that parents are your biggest problem?



d: Right so if you are in a serious conversation with your dad and you are not mindful what will happen?

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## **2. ACCEPTANCE**

### **2.1 Learning**

a: Okay P5 we will now be moving to acceptance and I want to ask if you can read to me your written reflections on what you have learnt about acceptance.

b: Now that you have read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what you have learnt about acceptance.

c: Okay, you also said in your reflections that there will always be distractions that will make it difficult. You talk about external, internal and bodily sensations. Can we explore that?

d: Is there a difference between acceptance and avoidance.

e: Okay so P5, what have you learnt about your own acceptance.

### **2.2 Application**

a: P5 can I ask you to now please read to me your reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your sport or athletics.

b: Okay so you have now read your written reflections to me. Can you personally tell me and in more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about acceptance to your sport.

c: You say sometimes you have to accept you have to do something to get somewhere.

d: What are the things that you sometimes have to accept?

e: Right. In your reflections you also said that sometimes you have to accept that others will be faster than you.

f: And then you also spoke about family and friends at every competition supporting you and that sometimes you don't always want them there.

g: Okay and how can you apply acceptance to that situation about the family and the friends?

### **2.3 Transference**

a: P5 will you please now read to me your reflections on how you think you can apply acceptance in your life?

b: Okay so now that you've read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learnt about acceptance to your life?

c: You said that something you can't accept is that your parents are always on your case?

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## **3. COMMITMENT**

### **3.1 Learning**

a: P5, we will now be moving to commitment and I want to ask you if you could read to me your written reflections on what you have learned about commitment?

b: So now that you have read it to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail what you have learned about your commitment?

c: You said that commitment is something that you do that you won't regret afterwards?

d: You said also in your reflections that you struggled first when you came to Tuks sport to commit?

### **3.2 Application**

a: P5 will you please read to me now your written reflections on how you think you're going to apply commitment to your sport?

b: So now that you have read your reflections to me, can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you've learned about commitment to your sport?

c: You spoke about distractions that could come between you and your sport, how could distractions influence your commitment?

d: What have you learned about your commitment to athletics?

### **3.3 Transference**

a: P5 will you now please read to me your written reflections on how you think you can apply commitment to your life?

b: So now that you have read your reflections to me can you personally tell me in a bit more detail how you think you can apply what you have learned about commitment to your life?

c: You said in your reflections also that passing matric is a goal for you. How would it look if you commit to that goal?

d: How will someone be able to see that you are committed to that?

e: You also said in your reflections that there's some things that motivates you, parents, friends, nice cars, what is the difference between motivation and commitment?

## APPENDIX E

### RESEARCH ASSENT



## SECTION A RESEARCH INFORMATION

Dear Participant,

The following information is important regarding this research project. Once you have read the information and you are willing to participate in the project please complete Section B of this letter.

**Information:** I am currently registered for my MA (Counselling Psychology) degree specialising in Sport Psychology, at the University of Pretoria (UP), where I am required to do a dissertation. I am interested in athletes' experiences of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) approach. This is the proposed focus of my research project. Prof. Lourens Human from the Department of Psychology at UP is the study leader of my research project.

**Title:** The title of the study is: "Performance development of adolescent athletes: A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach."

**Purpose:** The study is conducted to create an understanding of how you (as an athlete) experience the MAC programme to performance development.

**Procedures:** This research project is qualitative in nature and will require you to complete the following procedure:

1. Your participation in a MAC workshop presented over a two-day period at the High Performance Centre (hpc).
2. After the workshop is presented, a reflection interview will take place at the hpc where you will be asked questions of how you experienced the MAC workshop.
3. Thereafter for a month long period I will attend your training sessions to assist you in applying the MAC experience to your sport.
4. After a month, a second interview will take place at the hpc where you will be asked questions of how you experienced applying the MAC workshop to your sport.

Every attempt will be made to provide an accurate reflection of your story, and this will be verified with you. The interviewing process will be video taped, for the purpose of transcribing the interviews accurately for analysis. Ethical considerations and confidentiality will be respected throughout our meetings.

Results will be made available to you, your parents and the resident sport psychologist at the hpc, Monja Human.

**Dual Roles:** During the study I will have dual roles: firstly you will experience me in the role of facilitator during the presentation of the MAC programme and secondly you will experience me as the researcher during the interviews. The interplay between these roles will be handled with sensitivity as to avoid any confusion or discomfort on your part.

**Risks:** There are no perceived physical or psychological risks involved by partaking in this study as the programme and interviews are of a psycho educational nature. However, should you wish to discuss what you have learnt from the performance development experience, support services will be available at the hpc by the resident sport psychologist (Monja Human) at no cost.

**Benefits:** There are no financial gains for participating in the research, but you may benefit personally in terms of sharing your experiences. You may benefit in improved athletic performance, depending on your experience.

**Rights:** Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from participating at any time without negative consequences for doing so.

**Confidentiality:** All information will be treated as confidential. Anonymity will be assured, and the data will be destroyed if you wish to withdraw your participation. All possible identifying characteristics will be altered or omitted from the research report.

**Data:** During the period of the research the data will be stored on my personal computer that only I have access to. After completion of the research, data will be stored in the Department of Psychology at UP for 15 years for archival purposes.

**Researcher:** If you need further clarity or more information, my contact details are as follows:

**Name:** Ellie Dykema  
**Cell no.:** 072 477 6160  
**E-mail:** [elliedykema@gmail.com](mailto:elliedykema@gmail.com)

Researcher: ..... (Miss E. Dykema)

Date: .....

Research Supervisor: ..... (Prof. L.H. Human)

Date: .....

Head of Department: ..... (Prof. D. Maree)

Date: .....





**SECTION B**  
**RESEARCH ASSENT**

I, ..... (Full name and surname) hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand this research information.

Please indicate whether you would like to participate in this study by making the appropriate statement:

I agree to participate	<input type="checkbox"/>
I decline to participate	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby agree to participate in the research project. I accept and agree with the conditions as stated above.

## APPENDIX F

### RESEARCH CONSENT



## SECTION A RESEARCH INFORMATION

Dear parent or guardian of participant,

The following information is important regarding this research project. Once you have read through the information in Section A, and you are willing to allow your child to participate in the research project, please complete Section B.

**Information:** I am currently registered for my MA (Counselling Psychology) degree specialising in Sport Psychology, at the University of Pretoria (UP), where I am required to do a dissertation. I am interested in athletes' experiences of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach. This is the proposed focus of my research project. Prof. Lourens Human from the Department of Psychology at UP is the study leader of my research project.

**Title:** The title of the study is: "Performance development of adolescent athletes: A Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment (MAC) Approach."

**Purpose:** The study is conducted to create an understanding of how your child (as an athlete participating in the sport of athletics) experienced the MAC programme to performance development.

**Procedures:** This research project is qualitative in nature and will require your child to complete the following procedure:

1. To participate in a MAC workshop presented over a two-day period at the High Performance Centre (hpc).
2. After the workshop is presented, a reflection interview will take place at the hpc where your child will be asked questions of how they experienced the MAC workshop.
3. Thereafter for a month long period I will attend your child's training sessions to assist him/her in applying the MAC experience to their sport.

4. After a month, a second interview will take place at the hpc where your child will be asked questions of how he/she experienced applying the MAC workshop to their sport.

Every attempt will be made to provide an accurate reflection of your child's story, and this will be verified with him or her. The interviewing process will be video taped, for the purpose of transcribing the interview accurately for analysis. Ethical considerations and confidentiality will be respected throughout our meetings.

The results from this study will be made available to you, your child and the resident sport psychologist at the hpc, Monja Human.

**Dual Roles:** During the study I will have dual roles: firstly your child will experience me in the role of facilitator during the presentation of the MAC programme and secondly he/she will experience me as the researcher during the interviews. The interplay between these roles will be handled with sensitivity as to avoid any confusion or discomfort on your child's part.

**Risks:** There are no perceived physical or psychological risks involved by partaking in this study as the programme and interviews are of a psycho educational nature. However, should your child wish to discuss what he or she has learnt from the performance development experience, support services will be available at the hpc by the resident sport psychologist (Monja Human) at no cost.

**Benefits:** There are no financial gains for participating in the research, but your child may benefit personally in terms of sharing their experiences. Your child may benefit in improved athletic performance, depending on their experience.

**Rights:** Participation is voluntary. Your child may withdraw from participating at any time without negative consequences for doing so.

**Confidentiality:** All information will be treated as confidential. Anonymity will be assured, and the data will be destroyed if your child wishes to withdraw their participation. All possible identifying characteristics will be altered or omitted from the research report.

**Material:** During the period of the research the data will be stored on my personal computer that only I have access to. After completion of the research, data will be stored in the Department of Psychology at UP for 15 years for archival purposes.

**Researcher:** If you need further clarity or more information, my contact details are as follows:

**Name:** Ellie Dykema  
**Cell no.:** 072 477 6160  
**E-mail:** elliedykema@gmail.com

Researcher: ..... (Miss E. Dykema)

Date: .....

Research Supervisor: ..... (Prof. L.H Human)

Date: .....

Head of Department: ..... (Prof. D. Maree)

Date: .....



**SECTION B**  
**RESEARCH CONSENT**

I, ..... (Full name and surname) hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand this research information.

Please indicate whether you give permission to allow/decline your child from participating in this study by marking the appropriate statement:

I give my permission for my child to participate.	
I decline permission for my child to participate.	

I hereby agree to my child's participation in the research project. I accept and agree with the conditions as stated above.