



# P3 Thinking Worksheet for Soccer Players

## *Introduction*

1. To be mentally tough, you have to **think well**. Thinking well means that you follow the P3 formula: **Purposeful + Productive + Possibility** Thinking.
2. When you lose focus or choke, it's from **poor thinking**. Self-defeating thoughts in soccer come from the R3 formula: **Random + Reactive + Restrictive** Thinking.
3. Look at the differences in how soccer players think using P3 and R3 Thinking formulas in the following example situations.

**Example A:** My soccer team arrives at the competition site 45 minutes late due to transportation problems, and we have less time than usual to warm up.

### P3 Thinking

#### **Purposeful**

Warm up quickly and deliberately,  
But don't rush – prepare to play well.

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#### **Productive**

Focus on readiness of body, skillful ball  
Control, and confidence – I'm ready!

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#### **Possibility**

We might play better with a shorter  
Warm-up period!

### R3 Thinking

#### **Random**

I feel rushed

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#### **Reactive**

This is not fair!

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#### **Restrictive**

I can't get ready to play that quickly

**Example B:** The referee awards a penalty kick to other team after an obvious dive. The other team converts the penalty right before halftime, making the score 1-0.

**P3 Thinking**

**Purposeful**

Bad calls happen all the time –

We can deal with this.

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**Productive**

Use the halftime break to refocus on

The game plan and figure out how to

Come back in the game.

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**Possibility**

If we channel our frustration into working

Hard as a team, we might play even better

Than we would have without that penalty.

**R3 Thinking**

**Random**

The referee is awful!

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**Reactive**

We are going to lose now!

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**Restrictive**

We never win when we get scored on first.

4. Here are some tips to help you become a better P3 Thinker:

- a.) Think on Purpose. Your thoughts are changeable and controllable. Think ahead of time about how you want to think and what you want to think about.
- b.) Decide right now that you are going to manage your thoughts to manage your life. Soccer players who lack mental toughness let their lives and what happens to them control how they think. Control your thoughts or they will control you!
- c.) In situations where you struggle, think negatively, or choke, **Plan some brief trigger words** or thoughts and practice these ahead of time. Your thoughts are Productive in competition when they are focused on the present, personally controllable, task-oriented, and personally meaningful.
- d.) When you have self-defeating or R3 thoughts, that's okay. Mentally tough soccer players have R3 thoughts occasionally – they just refuse to focus on them and let them “pass through” their heads. Immediately replace an R3 thought with a P3 thought. **It's okay for R3 thoughts to occur – Just don't give them the privilege of your attention!**
- e.) **Focus on what you want to happen and/or what you hope will happen.** See this vividly. If you picture what you DON'T want to happen or what you fear, quickly replace this image with an image of your best possible performance or response in this situation.

- f.) **Choose to RESPOND (cool thoughts); don't REACT with emotion (hot thoughts).** Remember that what happens to you is not nearly as important as how you RESPOND to what happens to you. Thinking is a choice!
- g.) **Mentally practice your P3 Thinking** by going through how you want to think in different situations. Visualize yourself thinking well and responding using the P3 formula.

**Exercises**

- 1. Think carefully and reflectively about **thoughts and feelings that you associate with GOOD performances.** What thoughts and feelings prepare and enable you to perform well while also remaining focused and confident in competition?

Personal thoughts and feelings that enable me to perform well and remain focused and confident:

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- 2. Now, think carefully and reflectively about **thoughts and feelings you associate with POOR performances.** What thoughts and feelings do you have when you are performing poorly or feeling less focused and confident in competition?

Personal thoughts and feelings typically occurring prior to and during my POOR performances:

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- Identify any **situations or things** that happen to you in sport that **trigger you to have self-defeating thoughts or feelings** (e.g., criticism from coaches, mistakes, officials, teammates). **Be very specific** in describing the exact thing that triggers you to think **REACTIVELY** or feel badly.

**Situations or Things that trigger me to think or feel badly:**

<i>Specific Thing</i>	<i>What I think</i>	<i>How it makes me feel or how</i>
<i>That happens to me</i>	<i>(Self-Defeating R3 Thoughts)</i>	<i>it hurts my performance</i>

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

4. In the previous exercise, you identified self-defeating R3 thoughts that hurt your performance in certain situations. Your task now is to **plan the P3 thoughts that you will use to immediately replace the R3 thoughts when they occur in each situation.**

Tip: Your replacement thoughts must be believable – don't just go through the motions. Write down what you actually believe and that has meaning for you in that situation.

**Situations or Things that trigger me to think or feel badly**

<i>Specific Thing</i>	<i>How I can think better</i>	<i>How this will enhance my</i>
<i>That happens to me</i>	<i>(Replacement P3 thought)</i>	<i>feelings and performance</i>

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

5. Spend a few minutes each day visualizing the situations you've identified, and **mentally practice thinking well in these situations by using your P3 replacement thoughts**,
  
6. When the old self-defeating thoughts come back at times in competition, remind yourself that you knew they could, but **immediately choose to think about your planned replacement thoughts**. Keep it simple – make your thoughts short and easy to remember – and focused on what you have to do at that moment in competition. Give yourself a **perfect mental picture** of your performance as you repeat your P3 thoughts. Good luck!