

## **THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY ON COPING BEHAVIORS, PERFORMANCE, AND EMOTIONS IN YOUTH SWIMMERS.**

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According to Lazarus' Cognitive Relational-Motivational Theory (1991, 1999), the way stress is handled is a process influencing both performance and emotions. Problem-focused (i.e. efforts to change a situation), emotion-focused (i.e. emotional control), and avoidance (i.e. withdrawal) coping are three coping functions frequently used to investigate coping in sport. Some problem-focused coping strategies have been linked to performance (Crocker & Graham, 1995) and emotions (Gaudreau & Blondin, 2002) among a variety of sports. In addition to the link between coping functions and performance, self-efficacy is another significant predictor of performance (Bandura, 1997). The influence of self-efficacy on one's thoughts (i.e. goals) and behaviors (i.e. effort and persistence) is part of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). Drawing on both theories, self-efficacy can be viewed as a potential factor influencing the appraisal of a stressful situation and can play a significant role in the selection of coping options. The relationship between self-efficacy and the stress and coping process has been examined in areas such as health (Endler, Kovoski, & Mcrodimitis, 2001) and mental disorders (Pica, MacDonald, Hayes, & Baglioni, 1998). To date, there has only been one exploratory study looking at the influence of self-efficacy on coping behaviors in sport (Haney & Long, 1995). In order to understand the relationship between self-efficacy and the stress and coping processes in sport, further controlled and theoretically grounded research is necessary. The purpose of this study was to examine a model that linked the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs on coping, performance, and emotions in youth swimmers, recruited at provincial championships in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. One hundred seventy-seven participants (aged 14-18 years) volunteered to complete questionnaires prior to and following their race. The pre-race questionnaires included a stress thermometer and self-efficacy scale specific to swimming. The post-race instruments included the Coping Functions Questionnaire (Kowalski & Crocker, 2001) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). It was expected that self-efficacy would be positively correlated to problem-focused coping and that a positive link would be found between problem-focused coping and performance. Results did not support the expected model. The relationships between self-efficacy and problem-focused coping failed to reach significance. In addition, coping did not correlate with performance. No age or gender differences were found. More research looking at different sports and age groups needs to be conducted in order to develop a better model that could be used by coaches and sport psychologists.