

The Mental Side of Goaltending: Building Confidence Between The Pipes

By: <https://goaliecoaches.com/mindset-training/>

Outside of a Quarterback leading his team down the field in a two minute drill, trailing by a touchdown, there is no position in the world as high stress as being a goalie. For world class net-minders, mastering the ability to control your mind and focus the brain with an elite mindset is critical to your success between the pipes. Not only does a confident goalie shine in the locker room and on the ice, [scouts love confident goalies](#).

Mindset training for goalies is part of a holistic approach to hockey goalie training. While there is no one set way to improve your confidence as a goalie, simply acknowledging it is a huge step forward for most. When it comes to confidence and the mental part of being a goalie in general, it's not something that is often talked about. Of course, no goalie wants to be viewed as somebody who is less than confident in the net.

The reality is that at some point or another, your confidence as a goalie is going to come into question. You'll give up a bad goal and start to wonder, am I good enough? Our goal in writing this is to talk about some of the best things goalies can do to become more confident and to eliminate self doubt in the crease.

How To Improve Confidence For Goalies

When it comes to mental preparation, the top thing folks as us is "How do I improve my confidence as a goalie?". Of course, having an iron clad mind that shuts out negative or self deprecating thoughts before they even enter the mind would be an excellent trait to have.

However, if you're like the rest of us, chances are at some point or another you'll fight a battle of improving confidence. The mental side of goaltending (or hockey in general) is one that historically has not been talked about often, but has, in recent years come to the forefront of headlines in hockey. This was no more so the case than when [NHL goalie Robin Lehner opened up on his Bipolar diagnosis](#) in a piece written for The Athletic in 2018.

In the world of hockey and sports in general, mental toughness is a tremendous point of emphasis for elite athletes. Improving your confidence as a goalie will help you rebound from bad goals, be a better teammate, and likely lead to better results between the pipes. On top of all this, learning to improve your confidence is a great skill for life.

Here are our top tips for goalies who want to be more confident on the ice:

1. Identify and challenge negative self-talk
2. Highlight and focus on your strengths
3. Practice visualization techniques for improved focus and confidence
4. Start using positive affirmations
5. Set achievable goals

6. Prioritize and practice self care
7. Consider starting a journal
8. Be open with your friends, family and teammates
9. Practice self-compassion
10. Surround yourself with positive people
11. Hire a mental game coach

Identify and challenge negative self-talk

Reducing negative self talk is critical to improved confidence on the ice. While it may be funny to poke fun at yourself or others in the locker room, there is simply no place for negative self talk in the sport of hockey or life in general. Cut it out immediately.

Remember, as a developing athlete, your brain is still not completely developed. In fact, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, the human brain does not [finish developing until the mid to late 20's](#).

The #1 thing you can do to eliminate negative self talk is to be aware of it and to cut it out completely.

Highlight and focus on your strengths

There is a difference in arrogance and being humbly confident in your beliefs. It's OK to be proud of who you are as a goalie. In goalie training, we tend to focus on the things we are not good at. Coaches will often point out areas we need to improve because they're trying to improve the teams chances of winning, but it does not mean we should gloss over the things we do well.

Learning to recognize what you're good at is the core to developing confidence as a goalie. We'll talk about journaling later on, but writing down the things you did well at practice or during a game and reading them aloud is one of the best confidence building goalie drills there is.

Practice visualization techniques

The importance of visualization cannot be overstated. It is one of the best pre game [preparation techniques for goalies](#) there is. There is a reason that NHL goalies can often be seen on the bench prior to a game, with their eyes closed, visualizing. Visualizing is an excellent tool that goalies should learn at a young age.

Here are some things goalies can do to start working on visualization:

- Start by reducing outside noise with your eyes closed
- Use positive imagery

- Focus on technique
- Visualize in a similar setting each time
- Use a variety of perspectives each time you visualize
- Be flexible, don't be upset if you're interrupted

If you want to become better at visualization, it's important that you practice with a degree of regularity. Like [improving your butterfly](#), or working on [hip stretching](#), or anything in goaltending, you're much more likely to improve at it if you practice it on a regular basis.

Visualization scenarios for goalies:

- Imagine yourself making a big save
- With your eyes closed, try to feel the emotion you get after a big win, skating towards your teammates
- Try to hear the crowd erupting with excitement after you make a stellar save on a breakaway

Start using positive affirmations

If we're going to talk about eliminating negative self talk, we must also talk about positive self talk. One of the best ways to improve confidence in your abilities as a goalie is by talking positively about yourself. This will also help you

Practicing positive affirmations will help you improve your confidence both on and off the ice, but you must make a concerted effort to practice it.

Some positive affirmations goalies can say to improve confidence:

- I am the starting goalie, my team relies on me to come up with big saves in clutch situations
- I make routine saves look routine while in the crease
- I am a confident goalie that delivers results for my team
- I am a great goalie who sees the puck well and demonstrates great rebound control
- I am a great skating goalie who can be relied upon in big situations
- I am a well liked teammate that is looked up to by my peers
- My coaches trust me to play confidently and successfully each time I am on the ice
- I deliver results for my team

As far as positive affirmations are concerned, anything will work, and it doesn't necessarily have to relate to goaltending. Learning to speak positively about yourself will carry you well throughout the sport of life, not just hockey.

Set achievable goals

Want to be an NHL goalie? Before that, you'll have to play Division 1, or in the CHL. And prior to that, you'll likely play Junior Hockey somewhere.

You're allowed (in fact, it's encouraged) to set big, hairy, audacious goals. With that in mind, it's important to set goals that you can hit along the way. Want to lead the league in [Save Percentage](#) and [Goals Against Average](#)? Start by winning the next period.

Learning to turn large goals into achievable chunks is very important to finding success with goal setting.

Prioritize and practice self care

Consider starting a journal

Be open with your friends, family and teammates

Practice self-compassion

Surround yourself with positive people

Hire a mental game coach

How Goalies Can Learn To Cope With Pressure And Adversity

Developing A Growth Mindset