

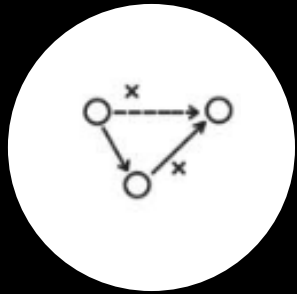
The Footballer's Brain

Sports psychology & mindset tips for coaches and players

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4 pillars determine the quality of a footballer



Mental aspect can also be trained!



How the "primal brain" of the human being works

Focused on survival and reproduction

Focus on negative things

Examples: which fruits are poisonous, which water makes you sick, which animals are life-threatening, who / where is the enemy...

"Fight or flight" in case of threat

Adrenaline & Cortisol → narrow focus

(Ideal) brain of a football player

Instinctive reactions under control

Stress / Anxiety / Aggression / Frustration / ...

Focus on the right things

Mental skills → **more consistent**





The right focus



**During the competition:
a continuous flow of thoughts and emotions**

0:00

45:00



PLAYER 1

≠

PLAYER 2



0:00

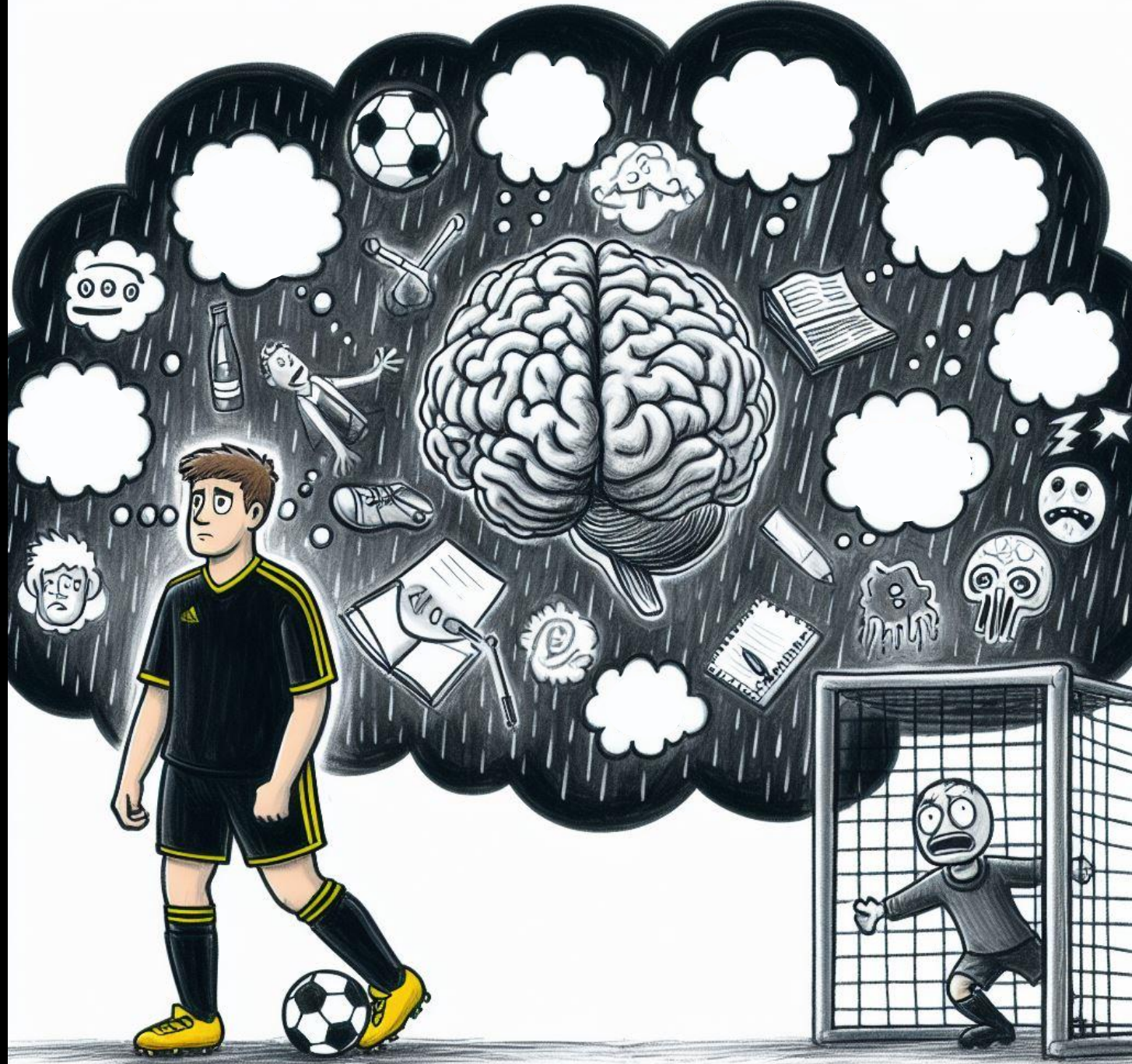
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PLAYER 1

Distracted by things
beyond his control

Some examples:
a (wrong) decision by the referee, the rain, a mistake made, a (dirty) foul by an opposing player, a fellow player who has made a mistake, the supporters shouting all kinds of things, the condition of the field, the score on the scoreboard, the coach of the opposing team, ...



PLAYER 2

focuses on himself and his own tasks in the match & he deliberately ignores everything he has no control over

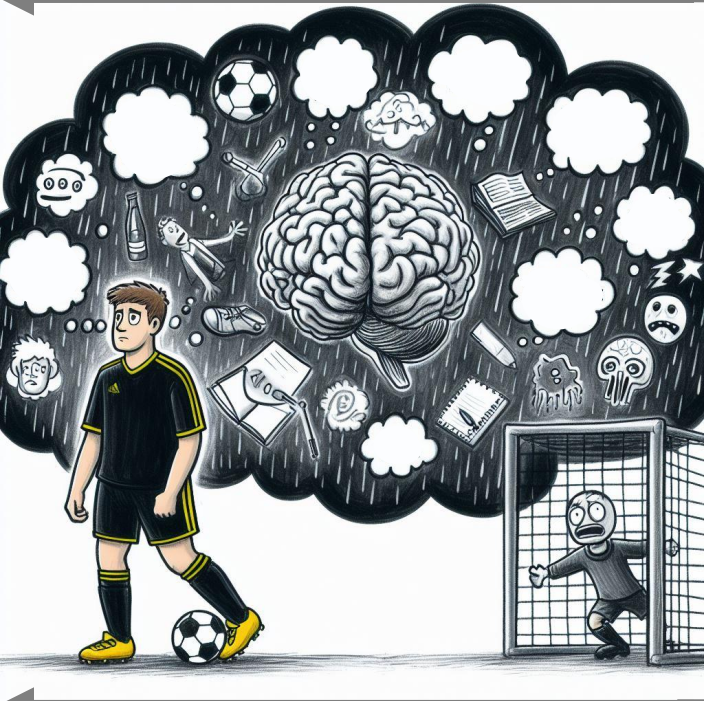
Some examples:

Finding space, making runs, scanning the field, setting off passing lines, intercepting the ball, switching quickly, playing with the optimal intensity, directing fellow players, ...



Difference in focus

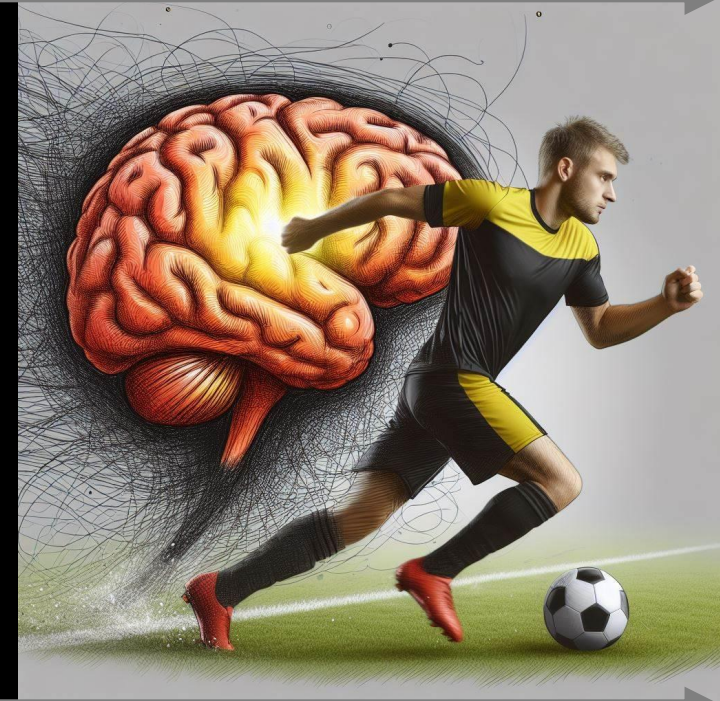
between PLAYER 1 & PLAYER 2
is noticeable in the following areas:



Speed of execution &
anticipation

More consistent quality in decisions
and execution

Being "in the game" (or not)



Actively maintaining focus on manageable matters allows you
to attain and keep **your best level**

Tips for focus

Here, now & my tasks in the match

Specific tasks for players to focus on during the match (never more than 5).

Actively formulated, because the brain ignores the word "not".

Example:

"Don't think of a pink elephant!" ;-)



Tips for focus

“(sh)IT HAPPENS”

Forget mistakes as soon as possible and restore focus.
Learning from mistakes is for training.

If you've reached your best level, it's always a success.

“That’s football”

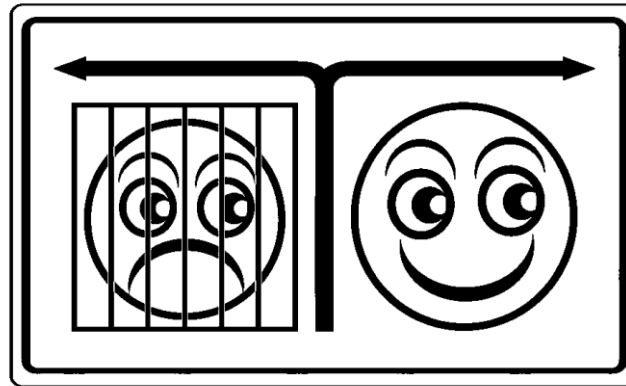
It's not always the best team that wins, but playing with the right focus gives the **best chances** to win.





The Power of Positive Thinking

Why Positive Thinking Is So Constructive



Why Positive Thinking?

Goes hand in hand with **self-confidence**

Quick focus on the **solution**
(instead of dwelling on the problem)

Upward spiral:
more **motivation** → work harder →
continuous improvement

Better **ability to concentrate**

Resilience: better armed against
setbacks → keep going

More creativity and more energy
Better decisions, even under pressure



Tips for Positive Thinking

Self-talk

Self-management by talking positively to yourself
(Instead of listening to your own negative thoughts).

Monitor automatic negative thoughts: park your thoughts and turn them around consciously.
(Before/after the match)

Actively fight negativity

Against complaining & sawing / blaming a mistake on something or someone else“
Losers have excuses, winners have a plan.”

Growth / excellence mindset

Errors = continuous improvement

“Catch ‘em while being good”

What you focus on makes you bigger→
Reinforcing positive things

Strong body language

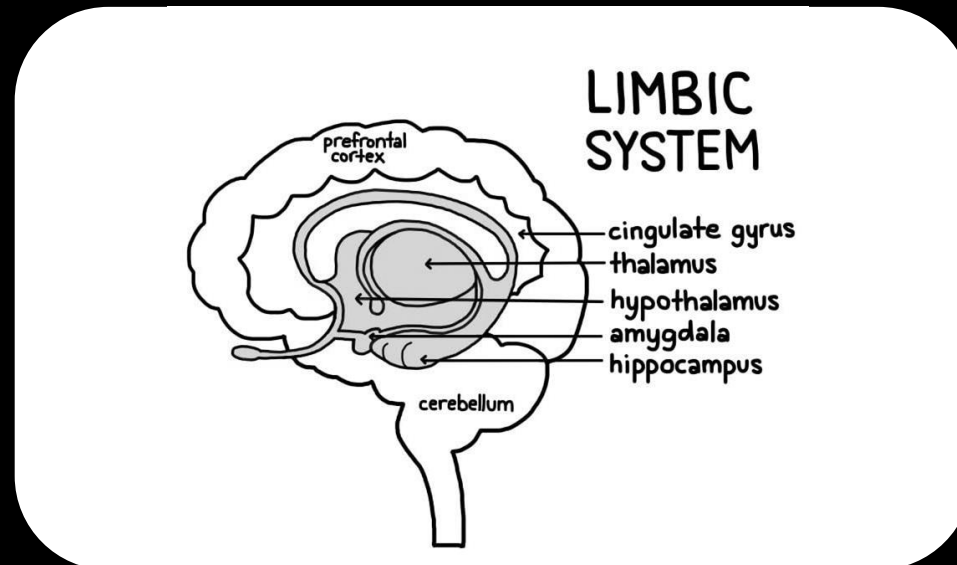
Influence on sensation and biochemical processes (hormones)

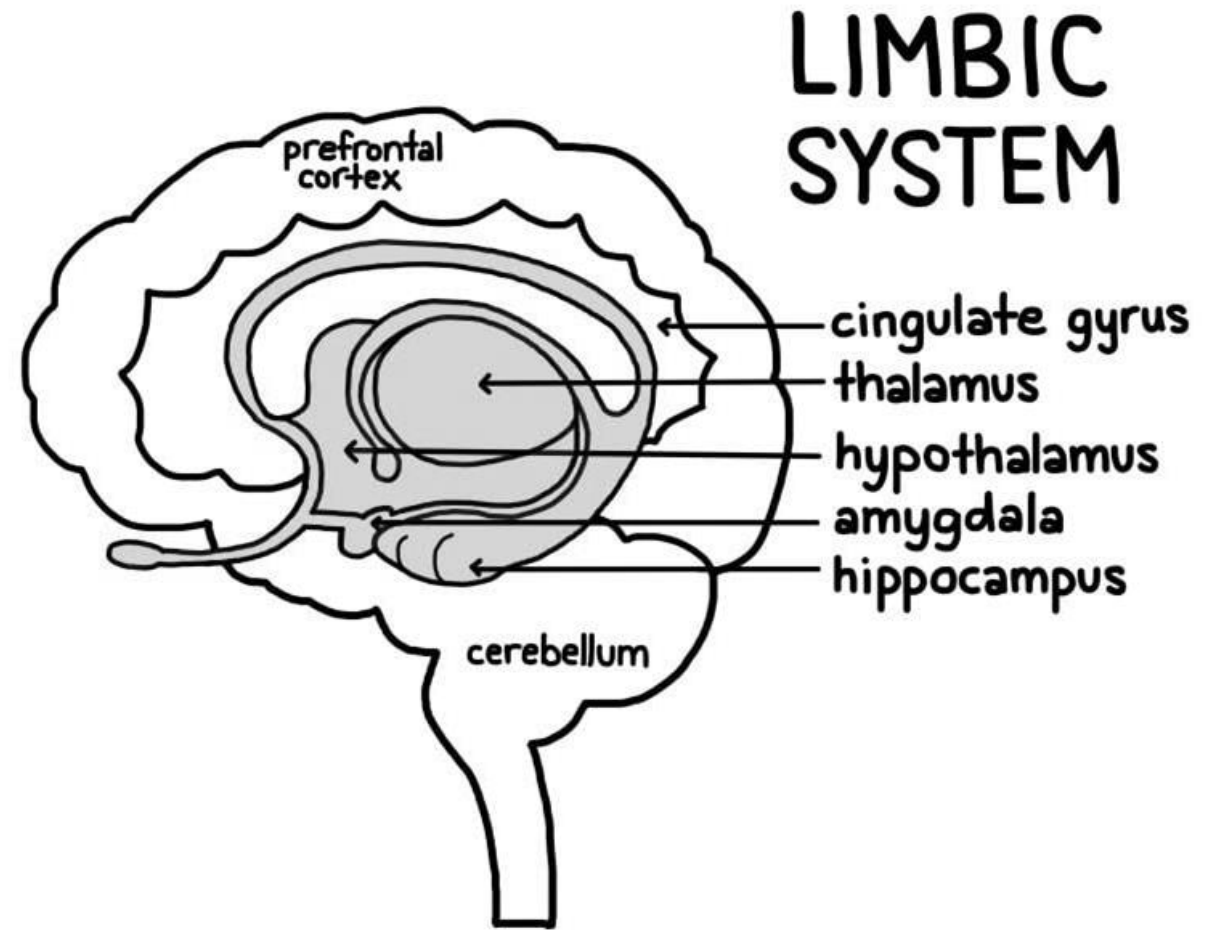
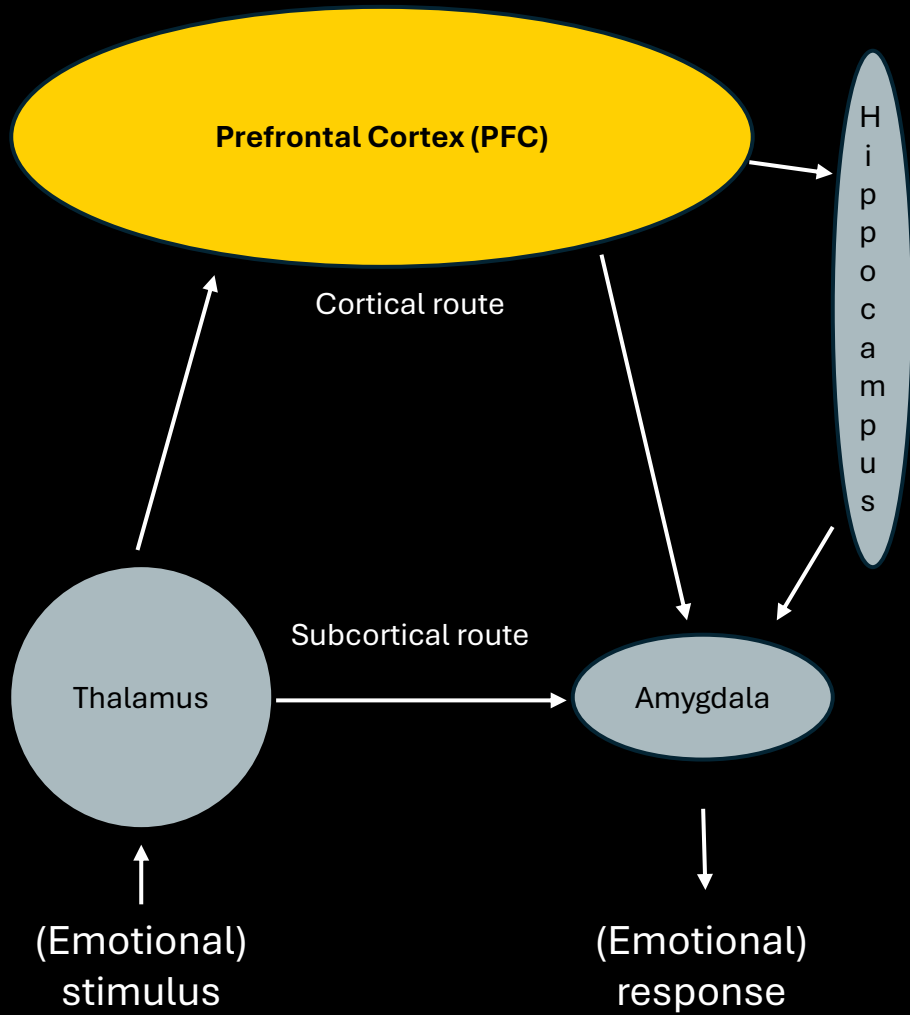




Emotions in the brain

About emotions and self-control





Emotions: aggression

Prefrontal Cortex

filters response to emotional stimuli

In other words, it allows the footballer to choose how to react to the situation (instead of reacting instinctively).

Monitoring Optimal Intensity



Temporary switching intensity

Example: immediately high pressure on opponent's half after losing the ball in the first 10 seconds

Using Aggression (Dark Practice)

Example: Michael Jordan



Emotions: stress/anxiety

Prefrontal Cortex

filters response to emotional stimuli

In other words, it allows the footballer to choose how to react to the situation (instead of reacting instinctively).

Ability to put things into perspective "Stress is something you inflict to yourself"

Positive stress

Perfectionism: fear of making mistakes

You can't win with "playing it safe"

Ask journalist: "Tip for young players?"

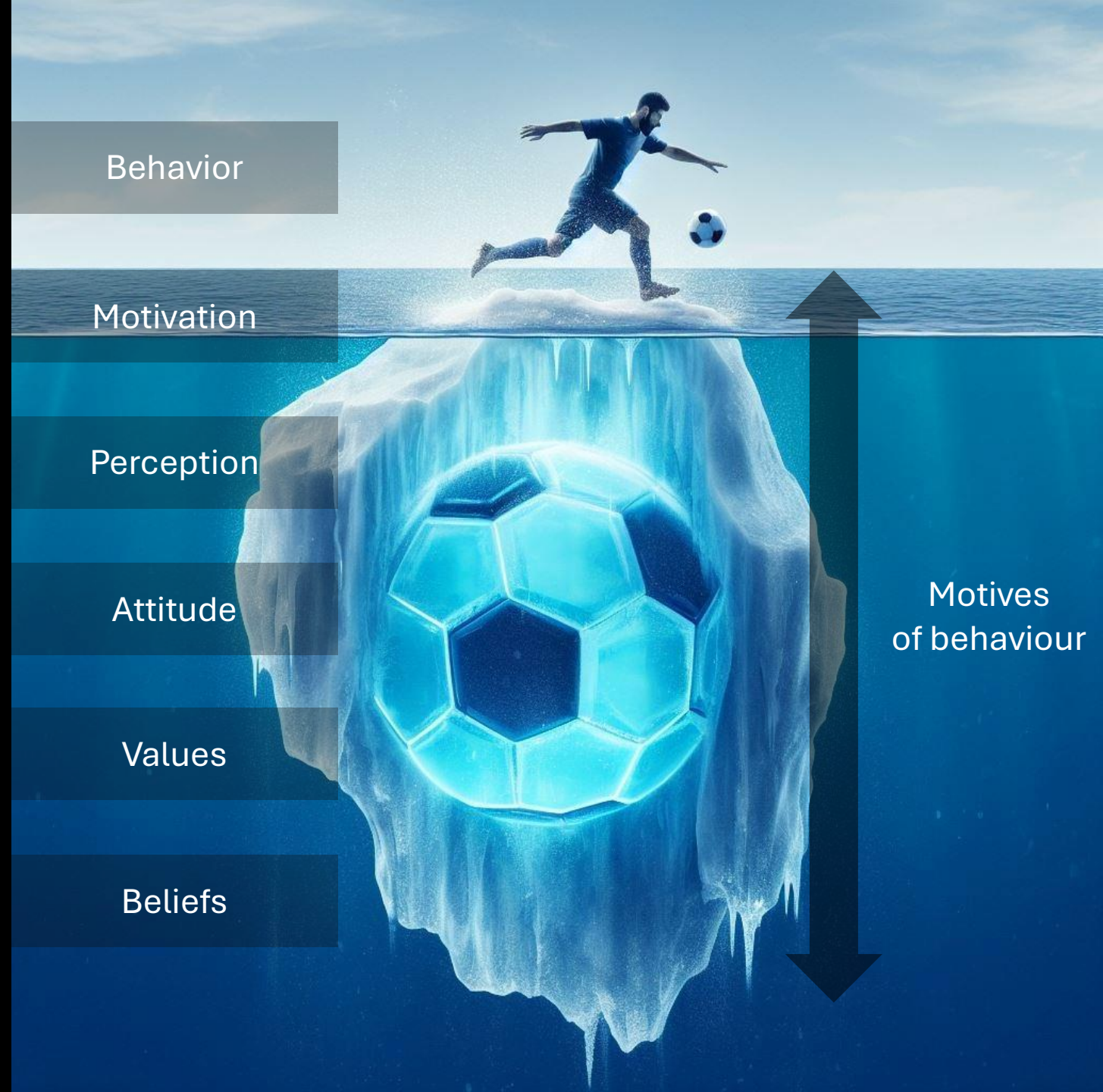
Kevin De Bruyne: "Make more mistakes!"



Full-time!

Footballer's Brain:
Fire in the heart
and a cool head

**Acquiring mental skills:
a gradual learning process**



Learn more

