

Mental coaching



■ What is mental coaching?

Mental coaching is a specialised field that focuses on helping athletes optimise their psychological state, increase well-being, and overcome mental barriers. A sport mental coach is an educator and facilitator who teaches athletes the mental skills they can apply both in training and competition, as their role is strictly focused on the athlete's performance.

■ Goals in sports mental coaching

The primary goal of mental coaching, which is to lead athletes to reach their highest potential, can be reached through a series of more specific goals that the mental coach has to set.

One of the most common specific goals for a mental coach is to develop the athlete's **resilience and mental toughness**, especially after a major injury or an unsatisfactory result. In addition to that, a mental coach has to build or boost **self-confidence** in the athlete they coach, which is primarily the belief in

their ability to succeed. Finally, as athletes very often experience high pressure, related to competitions, on them, the goal of a mental coach is to **transform competition stress and anxiety** into a source of energy for the athlete to reach their best results.

■ Requirements for a mental coach in Italy

In Italy, the profession of mental coach is still not regulated by an official register (*Albo*) or a professional order; this means that there are no **mandatory** requirements to practise this profession. However, to operate with integrity, competence, and credibility, it is essential to follow specific training and fulfil recognised standards.

Most professional mental coaches follow courses offered by schools recognised by major national or international coaching associations. The most important ones in Italy include AICP (*Associazione Italiana Coach Professionisti*), Asso.Co.Pro. (*Associazione Coach Professionisti*) and, at international level, the ICF (International Coaching Federation).

Moreover, the coach activity is governed by law and technical standards; in particular, the UNI Standard Law 11601:2015 (*Norma UNI 11601:2015*) defines the standards for professional coaching and provides guidelines on the competencies, knowledge, and abilities a coach should have. Furthermore, becoming a member of a professional association, however voluntary, is highly recommended to ensure quality for the athletes who rely upon them.

mandatory: *obbligatorio*

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Answer the questions.

1. What does a mental coach do?
2. What does a mental coach focus on?
3. What is the primary goal of a mental coach?
4. What are the specific goals that a mental coach has to set in order to achieve the primary one?
5. Are mental coaches enrolled in a professional register in Italy?
6. What does this imply?
7. How can people train to become a professional mental coach?
8. How is the activity of mental coaches regulated in Italy?
9. What does it provide?
10. What is advisable for a professional mental coach?