

# Sports-Injured Athletes in Rehab Gung Ho for Imagery

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Researchers from the School of Kinesiology at the University of Western Ontario find that injured athletes use imagery for cognitive, motivational and healing purposes. Researchers from the School of Kinesiology at the University of Western Ontario investigated how ten sports-injured athletes used guided imagery during the course of their physiotherapy treatment. In-depth interviews established that the athletes clearly believed the imagery served cognitive, motivational and healing purposes in effectively rehabilitating their injury.

The athletes used cognitive imagery to learn and properly perform their rehabilitation exercises. They employed motivational imagery for goal setting (e.g. imagining being fully recovered) and to enhance mental toughness, help maintain concentration and foster a positive attitude.

Imagery was also used to manage pain. The methods employed for controlling pain included using imagery to practice dealing with expected pain, using imagery as a distraction, imagining the pain dispersing, and using imagery to block the pain.

They employed both visual and kinaesthetic imagery, and their images tended to be positive and accurate.

The study concluded that the implementation of imagery alongside physical rehabilitation served to enhance the rehabilitation experience and, therefore, facilitate the recovery rates of the injured athletes. Moreover, the investigators recommended that those responsible for the treatment of injured athletes (e.g. medical doctors, physiotherapists) should understand the benefits of imagery in athletic injury rehabilitation, since it is these practitioners who are in the best position to encourage injured athletes to use imagery.

*Citation: Driediger M, Hall C, Callow N. Imagery use by injured athletes: a qualitative analysis. Journal of Sports Science. 2006 Mar; 24 (3): pages 261-71.*