



The emotional competencies of the tennis coach

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ABSTRACT

Professional and personal competencies are valid indicators to evaluate productive and human processes. Competencies are also a reference for the development of individuals, groups and organisations that are developed before and during the professional working commitments. This article discusses the main concepts related to the emotional competencies of a tennis coach and stresses their importance in daily work.

Key words: tennis coach, professional competencies, emotional competencies

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INTRODUCTION

Gallwey (1974), stated that “a good coach can help the athlete to reach harmony between the body and the mind”, and that a common problem for coaches has been to learn “how to give instructions fostering the natural learning process for the student without interfering in it” (p. 96).

There have been several authors including Zeigler & Bowie (1983) that have proposed a number of skills that must be possessed by the coach in order to be successful at the personal and relational level. These skills are:

- Personal skills: to organise their own work in reference to their professional competence.
- Relational skills: to impact the group of people who are working with them, and to motivate them towards a common target.

Then, Martens, Christina, Harvey & Sharkey (1989) identify three fundamental qualities for a sport coach, combining conceptual, personal and social elements.

- Knowledge of the sport: techniques, rules, strategies.
- Motivation: to enjoy the activities
- Empathy: to be able to understand the feelings, thoughts and emotions of the athletes.

A coach’s empathy is the capacity to understand the athlete; it is considered an element of vital importance (Lorimer, 2013).

Emotional competencies

Bisquerra & Pérez (2007) have explained that emotional competencies are an important and relevant element among the professional competencies of coaches and have divided the competencies into two categories, socio-personal and technical-

professional, as illustrated in Table 1.

Types of competencies	
Socio-personal	Technical- professional
Motivation	Command of basic and specialised knowledge
Self confidence	Command of the tasks and skills required by the profession
Self control	Command of the techniques that are necessary for the profession
Patience	Organisation capability
Auto criticism	Coordination capability
Autonomy	Environment management capability
Stress control	Networking capability
Assertiveness	Adaptation and innovation capability
Responsibility	
Decision making capability	
Empathy	
Conflict prevention and resolution capability	
Team spirit	
Altruism	

Table 1. Types of competencies.

These authors define emotional competencies as “the set of knowledge, capabilities, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to understand, express, and regulate emotional phenomena in an appropriate way. These competencies are important aspects for effective personal and professional development and can help to combat hard times in life in a more successful way. Among those aspects that are favoured by emotional competencies are the learning processes, interpersonal relationships and problem resolution, as well as working properly and keeping the job” (Bisquerra & Pérez 2007).

In his research, Gomila (2014) considers that the emotional dimension is “the auto-perception a person has of his/her emotional status. It goes from extreme sadness, frustration, depression, to excellent enthusiasm, joy, happiness, etc. The

blocks of emotional competencies can be seen in Figure 1

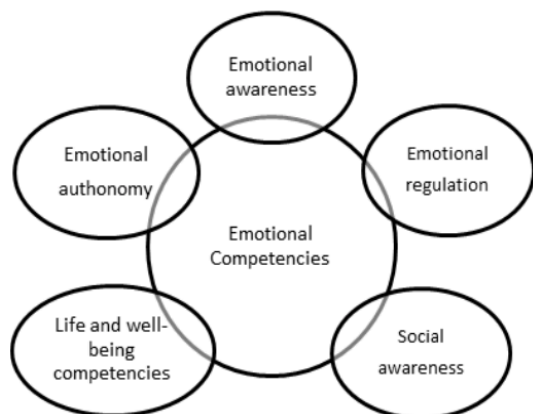


Figure 1. Block of emotional competencies.

Table 2 describes and summarises the different types of emotional competencies.

Blocks of competencies	Description	Competencies
Emotional awareness	Capacity to be aware of your own emotions and the emotions of others, including the skill to capture the emotional climate in a certain context.	Awareness of own emotions Give a name to emotions Understand the emotions of the others.
Emotional regulation	Capacity to manage emotions in an appropriate way. It implies being aware of the relationship between emotion, cognition and behaviour, having good coping strategies, capacity to self generate positive emotions, etc.	To be aware of the interaction between emotion, cognition and behaviour Emotional expression Emotional regulation Coping skills Competency to generate positive emotions
Emotional autonomy	It can be understood as a broad concept that includes a set of characteristics and elements related to personal self management, among which are self esteem, a positive attitude towards life, responsibility, the capacity to analyse social norms critically, the capacity to look for help and resources and emotional self efficacy	Self-esteem Self-motivation Positive attitude Responsibility Emotional self efficacy Critical analysis of social norms Resilience to face negative situations in life
Social competency	Capacity to keep good relationships with other persons. This implies having a command of social skills, a capacity for effective communication, respect, assertiveness, etc	To have a command of basic social skills Respect for the others To practice receptive communication To practice expressive communication To share emotions Pro-social behaviour and cooperation Assertiveness Conflict prevention and resolution Capacity to manage emotional situations
Competencies for life and well-being	Capacity to adopt an appropriate and responsible behaviour to face the daily challenges life has to offer in an effective way, whether private, professional or social, as well as those exceptional situations we come across. They help us to organise our life in a healthier and more balanced way, with satisfactory or well-being experiences	To set adaptable targets Decision making in personal, family, academic, professional, social and free time in daily life To look for help and resources Active, responsible, critical and committed citizenship Subjective well-being Contribute actively to the well-being of the community (family, friends, society).

Table 2. Emotional competencies (Bisquerria & Pérez 2007).



CONCLUSION

This paper supports Martens' (2002) notion that the role of the coach is much more than just his/her player's record in competition. The author considers that successful coaches help athletes to acquire and maintain skills that allow the player to have a command of new skills and enjoy competing in match play. Successful coaches are not only responsible for teaching strategies and methodologies on court but also a key responsibility of theirs is to develop and educate their player with the skills that will equip them to prosper in life on and off the tennis court. A coaches' emotional competences play a key role in the teaching-learning process. Continuous improvement of these competencies is essential for a coach to shape and develop a player's character and personality for all aspects of life.

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