

MENTAL PERFORMANCE WORKBOOK

Just 4 Goalkeepers

A Goalkeeper's Field Guide to Elite Mental Skills

Goalkeeper Name:

Club / Team:

Age Group / Season:

Just4GK Coach:

Date Started:



This workbook is yours. Work through it with Coach Jerimy, return to it before big games, and revisit it after setbacks. There are no wrong answers — only honest ones.

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HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

1. Read the **Why It Matters** note at the start of each section to understand the mental skill.
2. Study the **Example** to see how a Just4GK goalkeeper applied it in real training and competition.
3. Complete your own write-in exercises honestly — there are no wrong answers.
4. Revisit your entries weekly and update them as you grow.

The goalkeeper position is the most mentally demanding position on the field. You touch the ball less than anyone — but your mental state affects every moment you're in that box. The keepers who reach their ceiling aren't always the most physically talented. They're the ones who control what they can control, reset faster than everyone else, and step into pressure instead of shrinking from it.

This is your mental game. Own it.

Section 1: Goal Setting & Motivation

WHY IT MATTERS

Research consistently shows that specific, challenging goals paired with feedback lead to significantly higher performance than vague "do your best" goals. Process goals — daily actions within your control — reduce anxiety and sustain motivation better than outcome goals alone. Athletes driven by genuine love of their position and personal values show greater resilience and longer commitment than those driven purely by external reward or pressure.

1.1 Three-Level Goal Framework

Effective goalkeepers set goals at three levels simultaneously: Outcome goals give direction, performance goals set measurable benchmarks, and process goals drive daily behavior. The process layer is where championship habits are built — and it's the only level you fully control on game day.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Outcome Goal: Earn the starting goalkeeper spot on my club's top team by the spring season.

Performance Goal: Cut my goals-conceded average from 2.1 to below 1.5 by the end of the fall season.

Process Goals:

1. Complete 150 distribution reps (punts, throws, goal kicks) every Just4GK session.
2. Review game video with Coach Jerimy each week and identify one communication improvement.
3. Complete my pre-session footwork activation for 10 minutes — every session, no skipping.

My OUTCOME Goal (what result do I want by season's end?):

My PERFORMANCE Goal (measurable benchmark at mid-season?):

My PROCESS Goal #1 (daily/weekly action fully in my control):

My PROCESS Goal #2:

My PROCESS Goal #3:

1.2 Motivation Check-In

Goalkeepers with strong internal motivation — driven by genuine love of the position and their own values — show greater resilience and longer commitment. Use the prompts below to reconnect with your deeper "why."

Why does being a goalkeeper genuinely matter to me — beyond wins, stats, or anyone's approval?

Right now, how motivated am I toward my process goals?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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1 = Not motivated at all 10 = Fully committed

What one thing would move my motivation score one point higher?

Section 2: Confidence & Self-Talk

WHY IT MATTERS

Sport confidence comes from four sources: past performance successes, watching similar athletes succeed, encouragement from credible people, and your physical state before competition. Research confirms that instructional and motivational self-talk reliably improves performance — with the strongest effects on fine-motor and novel tasks. Goalkeeper skills (distribution under pressure, one-on-one decisions, commanding a cross) fit both categories exactly.

2.1 Confidence Evidence Log

When confidence drops, your brain scans for weaknesses and ignores evidence of strength. The antidote is deliberate, specific evidence collection. Write three concrete pieces of evidence that you are capable and prepared. Be factual — not vague. Revisit this log before every competition.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Evidence #1: I made a penalty save in the 88th minute last Saturday that kept us level — we went on to win in PKs. That save was mine.

Evidence #2: Coach Jerimy told me after my last session that my communication during set pieces was the clearest he's seen from me — commanding and early.

Evidence #3: I stayed 20 extra minutes after three straight Just4GK sessions working on my weak-side low balls. I can feel the improvement — and nobody made me do it.

Evidence #1 — A specific recent performance I am proud of:

Evidence #2 — Positive feedback or recognition I have received:

Evidence #3 — A moment I showed mental toughness, discipline, or work ethic:

2.2 Self-Talk Reframe Practice

Negative self-talk is rarely completely wrong — it often contains a grain of truth. The goal is not to replace it with empty positivity, but to build a truthful, actionable alternative that redirects your attention toward what you can control and execute right now.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Negative thought: "I let that near-post shot in — they're going to keep targeting that side all game and I can't stop it."

Why it's unhelpful: It's past-focused, predicts failure, and pulls attention away from the next moment.

Truthful reframe: "Near post is set. Reset my angle, communicate the shape to my defenders, and be ready — the next shot is mine."

2-word cue: "Set. Ready."

My recurring negative thought during competition (write it exactly as it sounds in your head):

Why is it unhelpful? What does it focus on that I cannot control?

My truthful, actionable reframe:

My 2-word competition cue (distilled version of the reframe):

How confident do I feel entering my next competition?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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1 = Very low confidence

10 = Extremely confident

Section 3: Attention & Focus Control

WHY IT MATTERS

Elite performance requires flexible, rapid switching between four attentional modes: Broad-External (reading the whole field), Narrow-External (locking onto a specific target), Broad-Internal (strategic thinking), and Narrow-Internal (monitoring body sensations and technique). Research shows that athletes who actively practice attention switching — rather than trying to suppress distractions — perform more consistently under pressure. For goalkeepers, this switching happens multiple times per minute.

3.1 Attentional Demand Mapping

Different moments in a game require different attentional modes. By mapping these demands explicitly, you can practice the correct switch in training so it becomes automatic under pressure.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Broad-External: Scanning the full field as the opposing team builds out — reading striker run patterns, winger positioning, and where pressure will come from before the ball enters the final third.

Narrow-External: Tracking the ball from the moment a shot is struck — eyes locked through the shooter's hips, ignoring everything in peripheral vision until the save is made.

Broad-Internal: During a dead ball or goal kick — reviewing the defensive shape, deciding the best distribution option, and setting the defensive line height.

Narrow-Internal: After conceding a goal — hands on knees, checking jaw tension and shoulder position, controlling breathing rhythm, resetting posture before stepping up to restart.

Broad-External focus is required when:

Narrow-External focus is required when:

Broad-Internal focus is required when:

Narrow-Internal focus is required when:

3.2 Distraction Audit & Refocus Plan

List your three most common competition distractions, then assign a specific refocus action for each. A refocus action is a concrete physical or verbal cue — not a wish or vague intention. It's something you can execute in 2–3 seconds.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Distraction #1: The crowd erupting after a big save — I start soaking it in and lose track of where the ball is going next.

Refocus Action: Clap hands once, call out my shape ("line up!"), shift eyes immediately to the ball and the restart position.

Distraction #2: A defender error that leads to a goal — frustration rising, I start replaying the mistake.

Refocus Action: Walk to the post, place one hand on it, exhale for 4 counts, say "next ball" internally, face the field ready.

Distraction #3: An opposing striker trying to get in my head during set pieces.

Refocus Action: No response, no eye contact — bounce on my toes twice, lock eyes on the ball at the corner spot.

Distraction #1:

Refocus Action #1:

Distraction #2:

Refocus Action #2:

Distraction #3:

Refocus Action #3:

3.3 Focus Word Bank

Build a personal vocabulary of 5–8 single words that immediately anchor your attention to the present moment. These become your in-game language — short, automatic, and personally meaningful. Examples from Just4GK keepers: Set. Ready. Pinks. Present. Mine. Reset. Command. Next.

My Focus Word Bank (list 5–8 words below):

Section 4: Arousal Regulation & Breathing

WHY IT MATTERS

Both under-arousal and over-arousal impair performance — every keeper has an individualized optimal zone. Diaphragmatic breathing with an extended exhale activates the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing heart rate and tension within seconds. Conversely, short explosive breaths and power movements reliably increase physiological activation. Your optimal arousal level is specific to you — not universally "moderate" — and must be individually identified and deliberately recreated before every game.

4.1 Identify Your Optimal Zone

Your Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) is the specific combination of physical sensations and mental states that corresponds to your best performances. Documenting it in concrete terms gives you a target state to aim for and recreate before every game.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Physical when performing best: Loose hands, relaxed shoulders, weight slightly forward on my toes, breathing feels easy and automatic — not thinking about my feet, just reading the game.

Mental state: Calm authority. Commanding my box without tension. Communicating clearly and early. Not reactive — anticipating. Everything in front of me seems to slow down.

Optimal arousal number: 6 out of 10 — composed and sharp, not hyped or frantic.

Physical feelings in my body when I perform at my best:

Mental and emotional state when I perform at my best:

My optimal arousal level on competition day:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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1 = Flat / calm 10 = Very high energy

What does over-arousal feel like for me, and what is my first physical sign I've gone too high?

4.2 Regulation Toolkit

Select at least one technique from each category below. Practice your chosen technique daily for 2 weeks before trusting it under competition pressure.

DOWN-Regulation (to reduce over-arousal):

- 4-7-8 Breathing: Inhale 4 counts, hold 7, exhale 8 — repeat 3 cycles.
- Box Breathing: Inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4 — widely used by elite athletes.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Contract and release each muscle group from feet to face.
- Cold water on wrists or face — fast physiological interrupt before competition.

UP-Regulation (to raise energy when flat or under-aroused):

- Power breathing: 3 sharp explosive inhale-exhale cycles followed by a deep power hold.
- Dynamic warm-up with high-tempo, personally curated music.
- Motivational self-talk combined with a physical power pose or movement.
- Vivid recall of a peak-performance highlight — replay it for 30 seconds.

My chosen DOWN-regulation technique and when I will use it:

My chosen UP-regulation technique and when I will use it:

Section 5: Competition Reset Routine

WHY IT MATTERS

A reset routine is a brief, pre-programmed behavioral sequence used after errors or high-stress moments to restore attentional focus and return to the optimal performance state. Research shows that athletes who use consistent reset routines demonstrate significantly lower performance variability under pressure than those without one. The routine does not suppress emotion — it channels it, giving the nervous system a structured bridge back to readiness.

5.1 Build Your Reset Routine

A competition-grade reset routine has three characteristics: (1) it is physically anchored — a real action, not just a thought; (2) it takes 5–15 seconds; and (3) it is executable regardless of score, conditions, or how badly the last play went.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16 (AFTER CONCEDED A GOAL)

RELEASE: Walk deliberately to retrieve the ball — steady pace, head up, no sprinting or hanging my head.

RESET: Hands on knees for one full breath — check jaw is loose, shoulders are down, look up at the field not at the scoreboard.

REFOCUS: Set the ball, look at my defenders, call my shape out loud: "Our shape. Let's go. Next one." Step back to my position only when I feel ready.

RELEASE — My physical action to discharge the emotion (e.g., step away, specific gesture, breath):

RESET — My body-check action (e.g., shoulders back, jaw loose, one exhale):

REFOCUS — My anchor cue word or short phrase that returns my attention to task:

When exactly in a game will I use this routine? (Name 2–3 specific trigger moments):

Section 5.2 — Reset Routine Practice Tracking

Track your reset routine usage across every Just4GK session and game. Mark each opportunity: U = Used it fully P = Used it partially F = Forgot or chose not to. Target: 80% or more "U" marks in practice before trusting the routine under game pressure.

Date	Session / Game	# Opps	U / P / F	Routine Felt...	Notes / Observations

COACH JERIMY'S NOTE

We'll review this table together at our next session. Celebrate usage rate first — then talk quality. I'll ask: "What made it easier or harder to use your routine?" not "Why didn't you use it?" If you're scoring below 60% U after two weeks, we'll revisit the routine — it may need to be shorter or simpler for your game's timing demands.

Section 6: Imagery & Mental Rehearsal

WHY IT MATTERS

Mental imagery activates many of the same neural pathways as physical execution, with brain studies confirming overlapping motor cortex activation during vivid first-person mental rehearsal. Research shows imagery is most effective when: (a) combined with physical practice, (b) performed in first-person perspective, (c) multi-sensory — including kinesthetic feeling, not only visual detail, and (d) practised regularly. Even 5 minutes of pre-competition imagery has been shown to increase performance confidence and reduce anxiety significantly.

6.1 Imagery Script Builder

A high-quality imagery script is multi-sensory, emotionally accurate, and written in present tense. It includes the environment, physical sensations, execution of the skill, and the emotional experience of performing at your best. Once written, record yourself reading it aloud (2–4 minutes) and replay the recording before sleep or during pre-game preparation.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Environment: I am on the pitch 30 minutes before kickoff. I can smell the freshly cut grass and feel the cool evening air on my forearms. The goal frame is behind me — it feels familiar and completely mine.

Physical sensation: My gloves feel tight and grippy. My hands are already warm. Weight is centered and balanced — loose everywhere, shoulders, jaw, legs. Nothing is forced.

Execution: A forward breaks through one-on-one on my right side. I do not backpedal — I hold my line, stay big, read the body shape, and commit at exactly the right moment. I smother the ball with strong hands. Clean. No rebound. Done.

Emotion: Total presence. No crowd noise, no scoreboard — just me and the ball. I own this box and everything that comes into it.

Environment — describe the sights, sounds, and smells of your performance setting:

Physical sensation — how does your body feel at its very best?

Execution — describe your key skill or sequence in specific, vivid detail:

Emotion — what do you feel internally when performing at your peak?

Section 7: Resilience & Adversity Response

WHY IT MATTERS

Resilience in sport is the capacity to adapt positively under significant challenge — not the absence of difficulty. Research identifies five trainable resilience factors: positive emotions, cognitive reappraisal (reframing), a strong sense of personal meaning, social support, and self-regulation skills. Setbacks are training opportunities when processed correctly. Catastrophising and rumination are the two primary psychological mechanisms that derail competition resilience and must be actively interrupted.

7.1 Adversity Response Plan

Elite goalkeepers do not improvise when adversity strikes — they execute a pre-planned response that was designed when they were calm and thinking clearly. Use this framework to build your personal adversity response plan before your next competition.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

Most likely adversity: Conceding a soft, savable goal in the first 20 minutes — one I know I should have stopped.

Honest first reaction: "That was completely my fault. The whole team is going to lose confidence in me and the coach might pull me."

Why that reaction is unhelpful: It catastrophises one moment, is entirely past-focused, and pulls attention away from the 70+ minutes my team still needs me for.

Planned reframe: "One mistake does not define this match. My team needs a goalkeeper right now, not someone who's gone missing mentally. Refocus, organize, stay in the game."

Immediate physical action: Walk to the post, place one hand on it, one slow exhale, call out my defensive shape.

Recovery affirmation: "I am still the best goalkeeper on this field. The next shot is mine."

My most likely competition adversity:

My honest likely first emotional reaction:

Why that reaction is unhelpful (what does it focus on?):

My planned cognitive reframe:

My immediate physical action in that moment:

My recovery affirmation:

7.2 Post-Competition Resilience Review

Complete this review within 24 hours of any competition where adversity occurred. Honest reflection — not harsh self-criticism — is the goal. This is where real growth lives.

EXAMPLE | JORDAN T. — JUST4GK GOALKEEPER, AGE 16

What happened: I conceded from a corner — I misjudged my starting position and the ball sailed over my head at the back post.

How I responded honestly: I was distracted for the next 10–15 minutes, mentally replaying the cross. My distribution became sloppy and my communication dropped off.

What I would do differently: Use my reset routine at the very next restart — walk to the post, hand on the post, one exhale, call my shape, focus only on the next ball.

What I did well that I want to repeat: I made two excellent reaction saves in the second half once I settled. The error did not end my match — it only interrupted it.

What adversity occurred?

How did I actually respond in the moment? (Be honest — no judgment):

What would I do differently using my reset routine or reframe?

What did I handle well that I want to repeat or build on?

Overall resilience rating for this competition:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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1 = Really struggled to bounce back

10 = Managed adversity well