



Finding Your Performance Zone.

Have you heard a cricketer, tennis player or footballer say they were *'in the zone?'*

Chances are they were talking about the mindset of being totally focused in the game, with all the energy, rhythm and confidence flowing in the right way. It was almost effortless and yet so good!

***Have you had that experience of batting or bowling almost effortlessly?
Bowling with rhythm and natural control of line, length and variation, and
batting with such confidence you see the ball early and clearly, let it come to
you, and strike it easily through the gaps in the field?***

This activity applies four tools to help create blue zone experiences, and a fifth to apply to debriefing and learning from those experiences.

The activity includes briefing information from the Mindful Cricket book and the formats outlined in the Mindful Cricket Workbook.

***'The Zone is an ideal place to begin to understand
what Game Mindset means and to discover your
own unique mindset.'***

Finding your Performance Zone.

How the Zone Reveals Your Unique Game Mindset.

A great way to understand the concept of mindset zones is this narrative from the Mindful Cricket book.

'Imagine a cricket match is about to begin. You jog onto the field with your teammates and then stand back for a moment to observe what's happening.

Some are running and tossing the ball to sharpen their reflexes, the opening bowlers are pacing their run ups, and others are stretching and looking at the sky adjusting their eyes to the surroundings. The opposition openers are approaching the pitch.

Imagine you can see each of your teammates and opponents' mindset by the colour of their cap or helmet:

Blue Caps are in the mindset to achieve. They're active, sharp, energetic and confident. They feel in control of their game and are looking forward to getting into the contest. They're ready to take a sharp catch, to bowl with energy and rhythm, or to play each ball on its merits.

Red Caps are in the mindset to attack. They're more hyped or psyched than the blue caps. They might be feeling too nervous or impatient. They're more likely to be impulsive. You'll see it in bowlers running in faster and being very aggressive, or in the batters getting frustrated and playing high risk shots. They might succeed but the percentages aren't good over the long term.

Orange Caps are in the mindset to avoid. They haven't brought the right energy, which might be because they're tired or bored, or they're preoccupied with fear, doubt and worry. They don't have their usual zip as bowlers, they're slow to respond in the field, and as batters they look tentative.

The caps are 'mind zones'. Blue cap or blue zone is where we play our most consistent cricket. Red and orange zone doesn't mean you won't do well, it's just a lower percentage chance of success.'

Instructions

The five tools which follow are a step-by-step guide to identify these zones in your game, and to get better at triggering the blue zone while getting less of the red and orange.

Tool 1. Understanding Your Performance Zones

Tool 2. Capture Insights for Action

Tool 3. How To Find Your Zone Triggers and Blockers

Tool 4. Create Your Blue Zone Plan

Tool 5. Debrief Your Zone Performances

These tools will help to lay the foundation for understanding your unique Game Mindset.

Take your time over this activity and revisit it regularly by using the fifth tool 'Debrief Your Zone Performances' to get better at creating the mindset you need to be the best cricketer you can be.

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Zone Tool 1. Understanding Your Performance Zones.

The questions below are designed to help you build awareness of how you think, feel and act differently in each of the three 'zones'.

What's Your Blue Zone?	
<i>How do you think when you are in that blue zone? (eg: clear mind, quick and clear decisions)</i>	
<i>How does being in the blue zone change the way you feel? (composed, energetic)</i>	
<i>What do you do better as a cricketer when you are in the blue zone? (eg: judge line and length, rhythm and timing)</i>	
What's Your Red Zone?	
<i>How do you think when you are in that Red Zone? (eg: rushed, unclear)</i>	
<i>How does being in Red Zone change the way you feel? (eg: impatient, aggressive)</i>	
<i>How does the Red Zone change the way you play? (eg: lose my shape, take more risks)</i>	
What's Your Orange Zone?	
<i>How do you think when you are in that Orange Zone? (eg: pre-occupied, avoiding mistakes)</i>	
<i>How does being in Orange Zone change the way you feel? (eg: more worried and self-doubting)</i>	
<i>How does the Orange Zone change the way you play? (eg: tentative shots, slower to react)</i>	

Finding your Performance Zone.

Zone Tool 2. Capture Insights for Action.

The Players Journal note below is an excerpt from the Mindful Cricket book and offers an example of the insights to be gained by getting to know your performance zones.

PLAYERS JOURNAL

'The Blue Zone activity helped me recognise how often I've been pushing myself into the red. When I look back on the last few months, I can see I've lost composure and confidence and become more impatient and easily frustrated. That's not my game mindset – so I've got something to work on now which feels simple and about my game.'

Use the **Reflection Questions** which follow to jot down any insights you've gained about the differences in mindset between the three zones and how this has been affecting your enjoyment and performance of the game.

What do you see as the key difference between your mindset in the three zones (eg: clarity of thinking)?

Blue Zone

Red Zone

Orange Zone

How does each zone affect your performance and enjoyment?

Blue Zone

Red Zone

Orange Zone

Can you recognise these zones in other aspects of your life (eg: work, study)?

Finding your Performance Zone.

Zone Tool 3. How To Find Your Zone Triggers and Blockers.

Triggering your blue zone isn't like the 'law of gravity', however here are six common triggers to consider.

1. Find a Challenge

What activities and challenges trigger your blue zone?

2. Set Clear Meaningful Goals

What goals or purpose seem to bring out your best?

3. Stretch Yourself

When you 'size' a challenge and feel it's achievable at a stretch that is usually a great motivator. What are stretch challenges for you?

4. Clear Your Mind

What physical or mental preparation helps you to bring a clear mind to practice and games?

5. Focus Intently on the Challenges at Hand

How effectively do you stay in the present moment? What causes mind drift? What helps you to set aside those thoughts about what's happened or might happen, and to refocus on the present moment?

6. Open-up to Feedback

What's your mindset towards feedback from coaches and teammates? How do mistakes and setbacks seem different when you are in the different zones?

Finding your Performance Zone.

Zone Tool 4. Create Your Blue Zone Plan.

Here are three questions in **Stop – Start – Continue** format to begin drafting your Blue Zone Plan.

Stop or Do Less.	<i>What will you stop or do less to get more time in blue and less in red or orange? (eg: rushing preparation and being reactive to what other people say or do)</i>
Start or Do More.	<i>What will you start or do more to get more time in blue and less in red or orange? (eg: use the game mindset tools to be composed and game ready)</i>
Continue.	<i>What habits, rituals and actions will you keep doing to create blue zone experiences? (eg: stay with pre-game routines, and bowling cues)</i>

The Finding Your Blue Zone activity is intended to get you more familiar with your performance zones and to understand how much you influence that in your preparation and mindset

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Zone Tool 5. Debrief Your Zone Performances.

The best way to get more Blue Zone experiences is to be aware of what triggers or blocks these experiences, and then build these into your Game Readiness plans. You can do that by debriefing your match experiences.

Here's an example drawn from a Scenario in the Mindful Cricket book.

<p>Zones I experienced during the match...</p> <p><i>'Too much red zone when starting my innings and when under pressure to score runs. Really nervous at the start of my innings and felt pressure to keep the score moving'</i></p>	<p>How that affected my behaviours...</p> <p><i>Started off tentatively, then took unnecessary risks and lost control of the shot by lifting my head and trying to overhit it'</i></p>
<p>What triggered those zones...</p> <p><i>'Poor, rushed routine before batting, too much focus on score and doubting my own ability to pace the innings'</i></p>	<p>What to stop, start or continue...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Have all my gear ready when a wicket falls</i> 2. <i>Plan with my batting partner – don't just take it on myself</i> 3. <i>Be calmer and more confident</i>

Zone Debriefing Questions

Use these four questions after matches to learn and adapt. (Try this now by reflecting on a recent match).

1. What zones did you experience?

2. How did that change your behaviours?

3. What triggered those zones (eg: was it preparation or in-the-game experiences)?

4. What can you stop, start or continue to get more blue zone?

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Summary.

Mindful Cricket is continually learning and refining ways to trigger the Blue Zone.

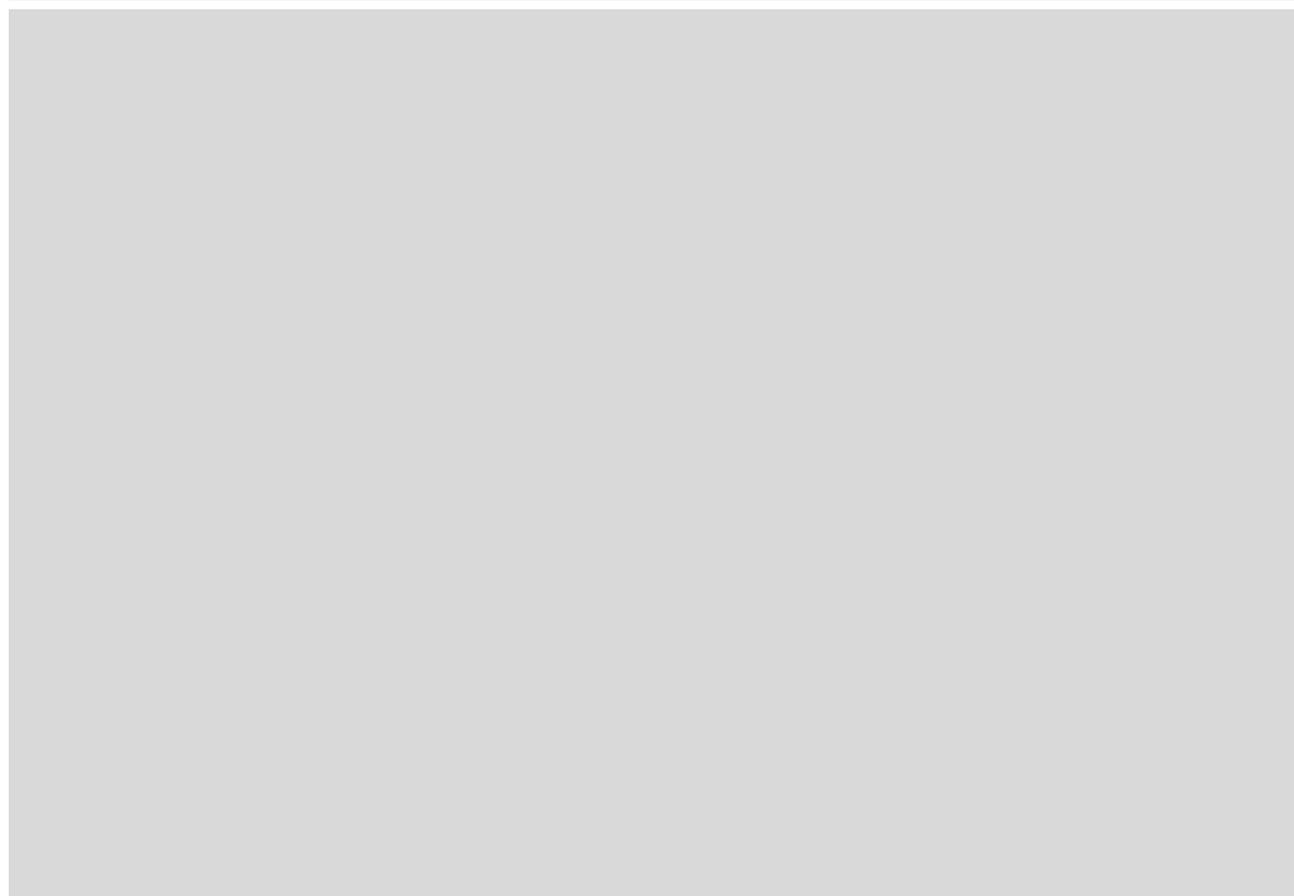
The Blue Zone is the place to really get to know, because it reveals the blueprint for your unique Game Mindset, while reinforcing the value of a Clear Mind and Playing Brave, Playing Clever and Playing Better.

Devote time to reflect on the Find Your Blue Zone Activity and observe and explore the shifts in your mindset as the Zones change for you.

For example, be aware of how the red zone makes things seem to move faster and be more complicated, whereas the blue one brings composure and focus which seems to naturally quell the reactive mind and distractions. Be aware of how this affects your game, whether you are batting, bowling, fielding or keeping.

This awareness lays the ideal foundation, because all the work you put in on Game Mindset is designed to get you into the Blue Zone.

Notes

A large, empty grey rectangular area intended for taking notes.