CHILDREN’S BOOK DESIGNED TO INTRODUCE THE STRATEGY
OF DEEP BREATHING TO COMBAT SPORT ANXIETY

A Project
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Kinesiology

by

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the family and friends who have supported me on this journey to follow my passion; sport psychology.

Mom and Dad, thank you for raising me with the belief that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. Thank you for the support and encouragement throughout this process of finding my passion and pursuing it. I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish what I have without you, thank you.

To my brother Andrew, thank you for always celebrating my accomplishments and believing I’d always have another one to celebrate in the future. It’s the little things in life that keep me going.

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ABSTRACT

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Fall 2014

A children’s picture book was created in order to introduce the strategy of
deep breathing to combat sport stress to children between the ages of five and eight. This
picture book was designed to be used in an informal setting either read by the child
himself or herself, or read to the child by a guardian, coach, educator, sibling, or peer.
This book was created to raise awareness to the coping strategy of deep breathing and
how beneficial it can be in sport and other general life situations that elicit stress.

Literature related to the effects of stress in sport for children was reviewed. Also
included was related literature on; coping strategies for children, diaphragmatic breathing,
relaxation methods coaches are teaching athletes, and the relationship between anxiety and
sports performance.
An extensive review of literature revealed a clear lack of research around using deep breathing in sport, especially with the youth population. Understanding that deep breathing is a simple coping method that children can master, creating an age appropriate way to introduce it may improve children’s experience in sport. Stories that demonstrate sport psychology strategies for young kids are rare, and those that bridge the gap between sports and life are even more so. This picture book creatively presents Terry Orlick’s Jelly Belly technique as the solution to becoming a true baseball player while simultaneously demonstrating that greatness comes from within.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Sport has become an undeniably prominent aspect of American culture. It has become the basis of a common language across the nation and most adults can vividly retell an experience from their days as a youth athlete. Although sport may be prominent in today's society recent research has revealed that 70% of youth athletes drop out of sport by the age of 13 (Grossbard, Smith, Smoll, & Cunnings, 2009). With an estimated 35 million children between the ages of five and eighteen participating in sport, 70% is a significant decrease in children reaping the cognitive and physical benefits of sport participation (National Council of Youth Sport, 2013). One potential reason for this decrease in sport adherence is the stress and expectations that are put on children at a young age. Research shows that stress is an inherent part of youth sport participation and impacts performance and enjoyment (Englert and Bartrams, 2012; Gould, Wilson, Tuffey & Lochbaum, 1993; Paser, 1981).

Stress is prevalent in the vast majority of settings and situations and is inherent in almost all aspects of life, at all stages, including childhood (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014; The American Institution of Stress, 2014). Stress, if not combated with effective coping strategies, can result in harmful psychological and physical consequences (The American Institute of Stress, 2014). However, utilizing
effective relaxation techniques can help manage stress, and reduce the prevalence of negative side effects (The American Institute of Stress, 2014).

One of these effective techniques is diaphragmatic breathing, which refers to slow, rhythmic inhalations designed to move the diaphragm downward during inhalation and upwards during exhalation. Diaphragmatic breathing is a simple, and effective technique that can be used by the youth population to reduce the symptoms of stress. (Richtsmeier, Culbert, & Kaiser, 2002) Studies have shown that due to its simplicity, diaphragmatic breathing can be mastered in children. (Kabat-Zin, 1990; Kajander & Peper 1998). Nevertheless, research focused on breath training in children is severely lacking (Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kajander & Pepper, 1998; Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Kudlackova et al., 2013) and the majority of the youth population are unaware of the effective coping strategies they can utilize to lessen the effects of stress (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Taylor & Orlick, 1996).

Although participation in youth sport is declining, sport still serves as a valuable platform to teach children this simple relaxation strategy (Kajander, 1997). Relaxation techniques have proven to be effective in creating more successful sport performances as well as eliciting higher amounts of enjoyment in sport (Gilbert & Orlick, 1996; Grossbard et al., 2009). Unfortunately, even though research outlines the benefits of these relaxation strategies, they are not being used or taught by coaches and their young athletes (Kajander, 1997). Using sport as a platform to teach breath training has the potential to increase youth adherence to sport as well as provide transferable coping strategies to other contexts (Grossbard et al., 2009, Gilbert & Orlick, 2002, 1996, Cox & Orlick, 1996, McCaffrey & Orlick, 1991).
Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to create a children’s storybook that would informally familiarize children with a simple relaxation strategy they can utilize in situations that elicit strong emotion or high amounts of anxiety. The children’s book market lacks stories that focus on relaxation in sport for children. This is a new creative platform to reach kids and create beneficial changes. This project was created to teach children how to constructively handle their emotions in hopes they will respond in a more beneficial manner and experience lower levels of stress in sport and in life. As an instructional aid in elementary classrooms I witness numerous situations in which children become overly stimulated with emotion. Once this happens they lose focus or lash out irrationally and have to deal with the consequences. By giving them a way to effectively deal with their emotions, they could reap the benefits of getting more out of school and life. As a coach, I also want to bring awareness to the simple strategy of deep breathing in sport to enhance performance and overall experience. There’s a lack of research in this area and I strive to bring attention to this gap in information.

Scope

Description of the Project

This children’s story was written in a picture book format. It contains a simple storyline with pictures to illustrate the words. It’s intended for children between the ages of five and eight. This book was designed to be read by a child or read aloud to a child depending on their reading ability. This story consists of a young baseball player who becomes very anxious during sport competitions. He learns from a coach to use deep
breathing in these situations in order to become more relaxed and perform more successfully. The young athlete does this and begins to perform better and in turn experiences increased amounts of joy within his sport. This baseball player then goes on to realize this technique is beneficial in other situations off the baseball field. This book is intended to be very simple and straightforward so children can understand and enjoy its content. It was created in hopes that children will realize there is a simple way to reduce the negative consequences of strong emotions and anxiety in many contexts.

Significance of the Project

In the field of sport psychology using breath training for children to reduce performance anxiety in sport is over looked. There is a lack of research in this area, however the research that is available suggests that it is a beneficial method for elite athletes, as well as a more general population in order to relieve stress. This book is not only targeting an untapped population, but it is also displaying the information in a unique format and context. Using a picture book as a platform allows the information to reach children across a wider age spectrum, pre-school to grade school and beyond. Children’s books are a good medium for teaching emotion regulation because they are easily accessible, have affective value, and are cognitively stimulating (Zambo 2007). Bibliotherapy is a method used by clinicians and educators to help readers learn coping strategies through literature (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money 2005). Developmental bibliotherapy is a more informal version of bibliotherapy intended for children. Educators, parents, and librarians use children’s literature to facilitate normal development and self-actualization with an essentially healthy population (Central
Researchers predict that children may be able to gain more insight by connecting with fictional characters rather than discussing their own life experiences. (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Shelton, Kelly, Morrison, & Young, 2013). Biliotherapy is used to teach many coping strategies, however books regarding coping methods in sport are nonexistent. This book is intended to be an informal, enjoyable, and informational product for young children. I hope to lessen the severe dropout rate in youth athletics, by giving young children coping strategies, which will make their sport experience more enjoyable. This book is intended to increase the use of deep breathing in children when they become emotionally overwhelmed.

Limitations of the Project

- Limited resources on using breath training with children.
- This book is left up to the interpretation of the child and the message may not be received as it was intended.
- This is an informal educational platform and may not alter maladaptive behavior.
- I cannot be certain that children will read the storybook

Definition of Terms

Acute

(Of a bad, difficult, or unwelcome situation or phenomenon) present or experienced to a severe or intense degree.
Anxiety
A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.

Apprehension
Anxiety or fear that something bad or unpleasant will happen.

Attentional Focus
The ability to focus attention on cues in the environment that are relevant to the task in hand (Landers, 1980).

Bibliotherapy
“The use of books selected on the basis of content in a planned reading program designed to facilitate the recovery of patients suffering from mental illness or emotional disturbance” (Online Dictionary for Library & Information Science).

Biofeedback
Refers to the process of using electronic monitoring to bring voluntary control to normally automatic bodily function (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

Breathing
The process of taking air into and expelling it from the lungs (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

Breathing Techniques
Methods to alter one's breathing patterns.

Cognitive
Mental processes or thinking.
Coping

Is a purposeful cognitive or behavioral effort put forth to manage internal and external demands of a stressor with the goal of stress resolution or alleviation of emotional reactions (Compas, Conner-Smith, Saltaman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001).

Deep Breathing

Slow, rhythmic inhalations and exhalations with emphasis on the diaphragm muscle moving downward on inhalation and upward on exhalation (Richtsmeier, Culbert, & Kaiser, 2002). The respiration rate is 5 to 8 respirations per minute and is associated with a return of a normal respiratory sinus arrhythmia. As people slow their respiration rate, the tidal volume tends to go up and the minute volume tends to go down. The tidal volume in diaphragmatic breathing ranges from 750 to 2000 ml of air per inhalation. The exhalation phase is longer than the inhalation phase (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

Developmental Bibliotherapy

An informal form of bibliotherapy used by parents, teachers, and librarians. Developmental bibliography uses appropriate literature to help children understand normal health and developmental changes (Heath et al., 2005).

Diaphragm

A dome-shaped, muscular partition separating the thorax from the abdomen in mammals. It plays a major role in breathing, as its contraction increases the volume of the thorax and so inflates the lungs.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing requires slow, rhythmic inhalations and exhalations with emphasis on the diaphragm muscle moving downward on inhalation and upward on
exhalation (Richtsmeier et al., 2002). The respiration rate is 5 to 8 respirations per minute and is associated with a return of a normal respiratory sinus arrhythmia. As people slow their respiration rate, the tidal volume tends to go up and the minute volume tends to go down. The tidal volume in diaphragmatic breathing ranges from 750 to 2000 ml of air per inhalation. The exhalation phase is longer than the inhalation phase. (Kajander & Peper, 1998)

**Exhalation**

Expelling air from the lungs

**Fatigue**

Extreme tiredness, typically resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness.

**Inhalation**

The action of inhaling or breathing in.

**Intervention**

The action or process of intervening; action taken to improve a situation, especially a medical disorder.

**Hyperventilation**

Hyperventilation is defined as rapid cycles of inhaling and exhaling and or breathing calumnious amounts of air in each breath (Schwartz, 1995).

**Pressure**

The use of persuasion, influence, or intimidation to make someone do something.
Psychotherapy

(Of a physical illness or other condition) caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as internal conflict or stress. (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002)

Psychology

The scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context.

Sports United to Promote Educational and Recreation (SUPER)

This program teaches middle school and high school aged athletes the proper use of goal setting techniques through sport, and also generalizes their teachings to everyday life (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish & Theodorakis, 2005).

State Anxiety

State anxiety is a physical and psychological reaction that is induced by a situation or experience (Passer, 1982; Gould, Wilson, Tuffey, & Lochbaum, 1993).

State Anxiety Inventory

This is the most commonly used self-report measure in youth sport research used to assess state anxiety, by measuring physiological, self-report, and behavioral measures (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970).

Stress

Is defined as a process that occurs when an individual perceives an imbalance between some physical or psychological demand and her or his resources to meet that demand in an activity he/she deems important” (Gould et al., 1993).
Thoracic Breathing

Thoracic breathing is the tendency to take shallow breathes through the upper chest only using accessory breathing muscles such as the scalene’s, trapezius, and pectoralis (Peper, 1992).

Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety is a disposition that predisposes a person to perceive an imbalance between environmental demands and their response capabilities more frequently; this then causes them to respond with increased state anxiety (Gould et al., 1993).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Stress is defined as a “substantial imbalance between demand and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet that demand has important consequences” (McGrath, 1970, p. 20). Although stress affects both adults and children alike, the ways in which this stress is expressed differs. When children get stressed, they tend to either keep to themselves, or develop anger and irritability towards their peers, which can eventually lead to psychosomatic illnesses, lack of appetite, and lack of sleep (American Academy of Pediatrics, Dickey and Henderson, 1989; Lang & Stinson, 1991). Research shows that because children have less experience handling stress, smaller daily changes may be more significant to the child than the adult (Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2013).

For these reasons, stress management techniques are important for keeping children healthy. Although children have a hard time mastering certain skills, relaxation techniques have shown to be effective. This was demonstrated in a study where second graders were exposed to a stress-reducing program for 10 weeks. Results showed that they were able to significantly lower their heart rate using the mental skills taught when compared to their original pre-test scores (Gilbert & Orlick, 1996).

One area of life where children have particularly high incidences of stress is in sport. Being that sport is an achievement related field, many parents and coaches
emphasize the importance of winning. Since children will not always be able to win, they often feel the stress of potential performance failure, which can cause anxiety even outside the sports realm (Englert & Bartrams, 2012; Passer, 1982). Studies show that children who have sport anxiety and stress become sensitive to fear of failure, which can lead to negative evaluations of themselves (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). The occurrence of anxiety levels affecting sport performance can be explained by the inverted-U hypothesis which was developed by Yerkes and Dodson in 1908 (Landers, 1980). This theory explains how finding the optimal levels of anxiety will increase performance whereas too much or too little anxiety will lead to a performance reduction.

Although stress management has been found to work in children, little research exists on reducing stress through breathing techniques. One of the breathing techniques that is potentially beneficial in children is diaphragmatic breathing. Diaphragmatic breathing refers to the slow, rhythmic patterns of the moving diaphragm and it may be the most effective breathing pattern as it delivers high amounts of oxygen to the blood stream (Kajander & Peper, 1998). Diaphragmatic breathing consists of slowing ones breathing rate so that the exhalation period lasts longer than the inhalation period. It is ideal for children because it is one of the simplest stress reducing methods and has proved to be easy to learn and apply in daily stressful situations (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

There is literature to support the benefits of these relaxation techniques in adults, however, little information exists on breath training in children and research suggests that coaches aren’t teaching athletes strategies to cope with these kinds of competitive stresses (Smith et al., 2007; Kajander & Peper, 1998). Researchers believe
that there is a gap in the literature in psychology for children as few studies exist that focus on the self-regulatory psychological skills, breath training, or coping with acute stress (McCarthy, Jones, Harwood, & Oliver, 2010; Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kajander & Pepper, 1998; Goyen & Anshel, 1998). Furthermore, of the research that does exist, studies measuring these variables in young athletes are virtually nonexistent (Goyen & Anshel, 1998).

Although the literature on effects is scarce, sport may serve as the perfect platform for teaching breathing techniques to children. Studies also show that children are able to transfer learned techniques to different contexts (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002). Therefore teaching these techniques, such as diaphragmatic breathing, would help children incorporate stress management skills into their everyday lives as well as improve sport performance and adherence (Englert & Bertram, 2012; Greenspan & Feltz 1989; Grossbard et al., 2009; Weinberg & Hunt 1976; Taylor, 2010).

Stress

Stress is a “substantial imbalance between demand [physical and/or psychological] and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet that demand has important consequences” (McGrath, 1970, Pg. 20). Stress can be understood through a four-stage process (Passer, 1982). It begins when the individual is presented with a situation that involves a type of demand or opportunity. The second stage is the process in which a person evaluates the situation. The evaluation process takes into account the characteristics of the demand or opportunity, how important it is, and how many resources a person has available to expend into the situation. Psychological stress
occurs in situations that are evaluated as threatening, significant values could be jeopardized (Lazarus, 1966, as cited in Passer, 1982). This perception of threat creates an aversive emotional response like anger or anxiety. This is the third stage of the process in which physiological and cognitive-attentional components are combined; “the perception of threat may elicit physiological arousal as well as self-pre-occupational thoughts that divert the individual's attention from task relevant cues” (Lazarus, 1966, as cited in Passer, 1982, p. 233). The behavioral, psychological, and health-related consequences of the person's emotional response make up the fourth stage of the stress process (Passer, 1982).

**Stress in Childhood**

As adults we tend to remember childhood as a carefree and stress free period of time in our lives. It is easy to forget or simply dismiss the stress that children are enduring on a daily basis (Aldwin, 1994; Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2013). Children have less experience dealing with stressful situations as compared to adults, so even circumstances that require the slightest adjustment may be a significant stressor in the eyes of a child (Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2013). The consequences of these minor daily stressors can lead children to act out due to anger and irritability. Daily stressors can also create a lack of appetite and loss of sleep (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014). A survey of 879 children, ages 9-13 year was published on kidshealth.org and revealed that the biggest stressors in children’s lives were; “homework (36%), family (32%), friends, peers, gossip, and teasing (21%).” Orlick & McCaffrey (1991) stated:

> It may seem ridiculous to teach stress control skills to children. In a perfect world they would not need these skills, but we do not live in the ideal world. So as we
continue trying to improve the environment that children face, by intervening with adults, we must also place appropriate mental skills in the hands and minds of children.

Coping with Stress in Childhood

Research has revealed that most children don’t know how to properly handle stress unless they are taught effective techniques (Taylor & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert & Orlick, 2002). A young athlete from a study identifying stress in sport from a child’s perspective stated, “one thing that really bothers me is that I don't have a foolproof method on how to deal with my stress” (Gould et al., 1993). Children tend to handle stress by keeping their feelings to themselves, and/or physically fighting with their peers (Bagdi & Pfister, 2006). These reactions to stress often lead to psychosomatic illnesses such as anxiety disorders (Lang and Stinson, 1991). In contrast, an open-ended question study done on 96 children ten to twelve years old by Kostenius & Ohrling (2009) yielded results stating some children do innately use deep breathing as a relaxation technique. When asked “When I am stressed this is what I do to not feel stressed,” one child answered; “I think it’s better not to stress so I take a few deep breaths and calm myself down. It is much nicer and calmer when one is not stressed and it is much more comfortable too”” (Kostenius & Ohrling, 2009, p. 209). Also, children described deep breathing as a mechanism to allow them to feel like they were “in the moment” and “calm” (Kostenius & Ohrling, 2009, p. 209).

Effects of Stress

Stress provokes both physical and psychological responses, most of which are consequential to our daily lives, activities, and health. It can alter the way people act, think, and feel (Zeive & Kaneshiro, 2013). When stress is perceived, people experience
muscle tension, increased heart rate, and rapid breathing patterns (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, Wadsworth, 2001; DeBoard, 2013). The human body engages in the fight or flight response which induces increased heart rate, blood pressure, and rate of breathing, as well as a 300 - 400% increase in the amount of blood being pumped to the muscles (University of Maryland Medical Center, 2014). These symptoms are synonymous at all ages; children experience the same physiological changes as adults when stress is present (Grossbard et al., 2009). In a study done on 7-12 year olds, Grossbard, Smith, Smoll, & Cunnings (2009), found that children tend to interpret the symptoms of stress (sweating and trembling) in a negative manner; they perceive it as a threat or danger that can cause them to avoid the situation or react in an in-conducive manner.

**Maladaptive breathing patterns elicited by stress.** Research has shown that when experiencing stress individuals tend to participate in dysfunctional breathing patterns (Kajander & Peper 1998). “Children experienced quickened breathing when stressed” (Kostenius & Öhrling 2009, p. 209). These patterns consist of thoracic breathing, hyperventilation, and breath holding. Thoracic breathing is the tendency to take shallow breathes through the upper chest only using accessory breathing muscles such as the scalenes, trapezius, and pectoralis (Peper, 1992). Most individuals use this type of breathing pattern throughout their everyday lives. However, this type of inconsistent breathing pattern can lead to fatigue, irritation, headaches, increased muscle tension, and an increased feeling of anxiety or panic (Peper, 1992). Kajander & Peper (1998) state that as thoracic breathing quickens it can lead to hyperventilation; Hyperventilation consists of rapid shallow breathing where one exhales more than they
inhale creating an imbalance of carbon dioxide in the body (Schwartz, 1995). This commonly occurs in events that elicit fear or stress (Kajander & Peper 1998). Breath holding also occurs in situations where an individual feels stressed or fearful, this can provoke the alarm reaction or stress response (Kajander & Paper, 1998).

Breathing Techniques

**Diaphragmatic Breathing**

Diaphragmatic breathing is the most effective breathing pattern as it delivers high amounts of oxygen to the blood stream (Kajander & Peper, 1998). Diaphragmatic breathing consists of a slower breathing rate, where exhalation lasts longer than the inhalation period. Breathing in an effective manner during stressful situations can lead to a slew of beneficial outcomes. In fact, diaphragmatic breathing is a core component of most relaxation and biofeedback programs. (Kajander & Pepper, 1998). In a stress reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, graduate students stated that deep breathing was the most important aspect they learned in the clinic (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Diaphragmatic breathing affects every body system in a positive manner. It calms the nervous system, slows the heart rate, and lowers blood pressure. It slows brain wave rates and creates a peace of mind (Schwartz, 1995). Deep breathing can also help to change the focus of ones’ thoughts and give a sense of control (Shwarts, 1995).

**Children and Diaphragmatic Breathing**

Diaphragmatic breathing is one of the simplest coping mechanisms and has been shown that children can easily learn it and apply it to daily stressful situations.
Diaphragmatic breathing is commonly used in biofeedback stress management programs. Biofeedback refers to the process of using electronic monitoring to bring voluntary control to a normally automatic bodily function. 80% of children who were involved in a biofeedback stress management program claimed “the breathing stuff” was the part of the intervention they remembered the most. (Kajander & Pepper, 1998, p.16). The Positive Living Skills Program created by Terry Orlick (1993) is a life skills program developed for young children. Part of the program encompasses relaxation techniques. He teaches children how to deep breathe correctly by instructing them to watch their stomach rise and fall as they breathe, he calls this technique, “Jelly Belly” (Orlick, 2010). This program has been tested in several elementary schools and results have shown that children were able to significantly lower their heart rate using the mental skills taught in the intervention (Gilbert and Orlick, 2002; Cox & Orlick, 1996). Second grade children who were exposed to the program for 10 weeks were able to significantly lower their heart rate using the mental skills taught when compared to their original pre-test scores (Gilbert and Orlick, 1996).

**Relaxation Training for Children**

There are multiple ways to teach children how to use deep breathing effectively. Kajander and Peper (1998) suggest pretending there is a balloon inside the kids bellies that they must inflate and deflate slowly.

Here is how to do diaphragmatic or "belly breathing

1. Lay on the floor or sit up straight with your feet supported.
2. Put one hand on your chest and the other hand over your belly.
3. Exhale all your air, until your belly pulls in slightly.
4. Imagine you have a balloon underneath your belly button that inflates as you inhale and deflates as you exhale.
5. Breathe in through your nose and pull the air deep into your lungs. Feel your
belly expand, like a balloon blowing up. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Feel your belly go back in, like a balloon deflating. Say "haa" as you exhale.

6. Breathe in slowly - inhale to the count of 3 seconds and exhale to the count of six.

7. Keep your shoulders as relaxed as possible; they should not rise as you inhale. (p. 20)

Orlick (2010) suggests two interactive ways for children to learn deep breathing:

Children hold an item in front of their nose and mouth. They suck air in through their noses and blow air out of their mouths, watching the effect breathing this way has on the item. Examples of items to blow: feather, flower petal, tissue, paper, bubbles, ribbon, piece of fabric, etc. (p. 3)

Orlick (2010) also suggests using the technique “Jelly Belly,” this method consists of children placing their hands over their belly buttons and feeling their stomachs rise and fall as they breathe in and out.

Orlick (2005) specifically suggests teaching children “The One Breath” relaxation technique to help them quickly relax and regain control in situations where they feel stressed, afraid, distracted, upset, or worried. The audiotape is designed to help children learn this technique, it simply instructs them to; “Breathe in slowly, Breathe out slowly. Picture the tension following out of your body. Take one long slow deep breath in and slowly breathe out; say to yourself “relax.” In times of stress go to your breathing, it is a great way to remind yourself to relax” (Orlick, Audio File, 2005).

Stress as it Relates to Sport

Stress in Youth Sport

Sporting competitions can be interpreted as potentially threatening evaluative situations (Englert and Bartrams, 2012). Researchers have found that athletes engage in sport for 6 reasons; affiliation, skill development, excitement, success and status, fitness,
and energy release (Passer, 1982). In the achievement-related demands of a sport atmosphere all these motives can’t always be fulfilled for each athlete; for instance everyone can’t always win (Passer, 1982). Therefore, at any given time, the sport setting will appear to be threatening to some children; this is the trigger to release the stress response which can elicit heightened levels of anxiety (Englert & Bartrams, 2012, Passer, 1982). The most stressful aspects of sport for youth athletes is pressure from parents and coaches to win, emphasis on sport participation from parents and coaches, and losing (Gould et al., 1993).

**Anxiety in Sport**

Anxiety is a common reaction to stress in a sport setting. Anxiety is divided into two categories; state anxiety and trait anxiety. When an imbalance between resources and capabilities is perceived, young athletes respond with increased state anxiety; this is an immediate feeling of apprehension, tension, and or nervousness. State anxiety is a physical and psychological reaction that is induced by a situation or experience (Passer, 1982; Gould et al., 1993). Trait anxiety is a disposition that predisposes a person to perceive an imbalance between environmental demands and their response capabilities more frequently; this then causes them to respond with increased state anxiety (Gould et al., 1993). In relation to sport, the most prominent situational factors that lead to elevated state anxiety are increased event importance, uncertainty regarding event outcome, and losing (Gould et al., 1993)

Researchers have measured state anxiety in youth athletes in multiple genres as sport, as well as varying age groups. State anxiety is a transitory emotional response to a situation and is defined as "subjective consciously perceived feelings of apprehension
and tension, accompanied by or associated with activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1966, p. 17). Physiological, self-report, and behavioral measures are used to assess state anxiety. The most commonly used self-report measure in youth sport research is the Spielberger, Gorsuch, and Lushene (1970) State Anxiety Inventory (Passer, 1982). A Study done by Simon and Martin (1979) found that pre-competition state anxiety levels in boy athletes ages 9-14 were higher in individual sports, specifically gymnastics and wrestling, than team sports; football, hockey, and baseball (as cited in Passer, 1981).

The Effects of Stress on Sport Performance

The effects created by diaphragmatic breathing could be beneficial in alleviating stress experienced in sport; it can help to enhance physical performance by increasing the flow of oxygen to the blood, in turn, bringing more energy to the muscles and quickening the process of waste removal (Kudlackova, Eccles, & Dieffenbach, 2013). In fact, studies have shown that elite athletes use this technique as a coping mechanism (Kudlackova et al. 2013). In stressful situations correlated with sport, anxiety caused by stress can be detrimental to performance (Weinberg and Hunt 1976; Greenspan & Feltz 1989; Grossbard et al., 2009; Taylor, 2010). The occurrence of anxiety levels affecting sport performance can be explained by the inverted-U hypothesis that was developed by Yerkes and Dodson in 1908 (Landers, 1980).

The Inverted U Theory

The Inverted U theory is “still working” and is consistent with concepts like attentional narrowing, and can be used to explain how arousal plays a role in performance (Landers, 1980). This hypothesis explains that as anxiety increases so does performance,
however this positive correlation plateaus at a certain level where optimal anxiety and optimal performance meet. After this point, as anxiety increases, performance decreases, thus creating an inverted-u shape when marked on a graph (Balk, Adriaanse, De Ridder, & Evers, 2013).

When stress is perceived and anxiety increases the previously mentioned psychological and physiological symptoms occur. These changes are what explain the decreases in performance within the Inverted U theory (Balk et al., 2013). A study conducted by Wienberg and Hunt (1976) used electroencephalogram to monitor electrical activity in the muscles of college students as they threw a tennis ball. They found that as anxiety increased individuals used higher amounts of muscular energy before, during, and after their throws. This increase in muscular energy can cause tension and fatigue and interfere with coordination (Weinberg & Hunt, 1976). In the words of a fifteen year old male soccer athlete, “In soccer when I get a lot of action, I get stressed and nervous and my muscles tighten up. I don't play as well” (Gould et al, 1993, P. 290).

**Attentional Focus**

Another consequence of anxiety in sport is the changing of an athlete’s attentional focus. This can inhibit performance by focusing the athlete’s attention on insignificant cues. It can also attribute to poor performance by narrowing the attentional field and causing the athlete to miss significant cues, like being blindsided by a lineman in football (Englert & Bertrams, 2013; Landers, 1980). Stress distracts children from the task at hand; they tend to focus on their feelings of worry and being overwhelmed (Matheny, Aycock, & McCarthy, 1993). In addition the individual may worry about the fear of failure or become caught up in feelings of helplessness (Matheny et al., 1993).
The Effects of Stress in Youth Sport

According to research stress is an innate aspect of youth sport that is primarily due to high, often unrealistic, expectations of parents and coaches and the pressure to perform at high quality levels (Scanlan & Passer, 1979; Passer, 1982; Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Anshel & Delany, 2001; Harwood & Knight, 2009). Children who experience anxiety in sport tend experience fear of failure that result in negative evaluation from the athlete themselves and from others (Smith et al., 2007). Passer (1982) found that children who experienced high amounts of anxiety frequently worried about making an error, performing badly, and losing, more so than athletes with lower levels of anxiety. They also were more concerned about the evaluations of their peers, parents, and coaches (Passer, 1982). When asked what the most stressful part of sport was, 52 ten to twelve year old hockey players indicated that “receiving a bad call from an umpire” and “making a physical game error” were the most intense sources (Anshel & Delany, 2001, P. 336). These stressful situations that elicit anxiety may lead to decreases in physical performance and reduced enjoyment (Grossbard et al., 2009). Also, as performance decreases the coach may expect less out of the player; for example moving the athlete to a less central position. This can compound the stress an athlete was previously experiencing (Passer, 1982; Harwood & Knight, 2009).

Stress in sport also leads to decreases in enjoyment levels (Passer, 1982; Gould et al., 1993; Goyen and Anshel, 1998; Smith et al., 2007; Grossbard et al., 2009; Englert and Bartrams, 2012) The increase of anxiety, and the decrease of enjoyment results in decreased participation among both children and adult in sports. This is also evident in the dramatic decrease in sport participation by youth after the age of ten. It has
been concluded that 70% of youth athletes drop out of sport by the age of 13 (National Council of Sport, 2013).

Coaching Influence on Stress in Sport

Research suggests that coaches aren’t teaching athletes strategies to cope with these kinds of competitive stresses. Training programs exist for coaches and they cover a wide variety of topics including risk management, instructional strategies, and the benefits of a positive environment (Smith et al., 2007). However youth coaches are not incorporate relaxation techniques into their coaching routines (Kajander & Pepper, 1998). If coaches were to teach relaxation skills, such as breathing techniques, children could learn to cope with the stresses of youth sport and endure a more enjoyable experience. This could provoke children to stay involved in sport for longer periods of time (Englert & Bertram, 2012; Grossbard et al, 2009). Children who drop out of sports can suffer negative consequences such as a decrease in physical activity and social interactions, which can be unhealthy (Smith et al., 2007; Grossbard et al, 2009). Kajander and Peper (1998) suggest: “It may be helpful for people who work with children in many capacities such as schools, sports, and medical and mental health clinics to consider teaching diaphragmatic breathing as a basic technique for health and relaxation” (p.21).

Lack of Research in Breathing Techniques with Children

Even research literature has overlooked breath training in children. Most research mentions that there is a gap in the research regarding sport psychology services for children. McCarthy, Jones, Harwood, and Oliver (2010) state: “sport psychology
researchers have largely neglected to study self-regulatory psychological skills for young athletes” (p. 160). Kajander and Pepper (1998) indicate: “There is a paucity of professional or lay literature that specifically addresses the topic of breath training in children” (p. 14). Greenspan and Feltz (1989) conclude: “Clearly, more research is needed that addresses the effects of different psychological interventions with elite, young, and minority athletes” (p. 233). Anshel and Delaney (2001) state:

Sources of and coping with acute stress, however, has not been widely examined in the sport psychology literature, in general, and among younger athletes, in particular . . . Research on the coping process in youth sports has been virtually nonexistent. (p. 330)

Anecdotal Support

Interestingly enough, sport psychologists often recommend that athletes employ relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, even though they haven’t been widely researched (Kudlackova et al., 2013). Sport psychologist Jim Taylor (2010) specifically instructs clients to use deep breathing techniques when they encounter anxiety-provoking situations:

Deep breathing has several important benefits. It ensures that you get enough oxygen so your body can function well. By getting more oxygen into your body, you will relax, feel better, and it will give you a greater sense of control. This increased comfort will give you more confidence and enable you to more easily combat negative thoughts (which are often the cause of the over intensity). (para. 3)

Dr. Taylor (2010) explains that deep breathing can help to alleviate intense or negative emotions:

It (Deep Breathing) will also help you let go of negative emotions such as fear or frustration, and allow you to regain positive emotions such as excitement . . . If you take two deep breaths at this point (lulls in the game, like between pitches), you ensure that your body will be more relaxed, comfortable, and prepared for the upcoming performance. (para. 3)
Kids Health Organization (2014) also suggested deep breathing to relieve stress in competitive situations:

Teach your child to use these relaxation techniques when the demands of competition start to heat up: Deep breathing: Find a quiet place to sit down and inhale slowly through the nose, drawing air deep into the lungs. Hold the breath there for about 5 seconds, then release it slowly. Repeat the exercise five times. (New, 2011)

Transferring Skills Learned Through Sport to Life

“Sport participation serves as a training ground for developing stress management techniques which can be used throughout life” (Gould et al., 1993, p. 296). Research suggests that children are able to transfer learned techniques to different contexts. Researchers state that teaching relaxation skills through sport is beneficial because there are many similarities between sports and daily life:

Many of the skills learned in sport are transferable to other life domains. These skills include: the abilities to perform under pressure, solve problems, meet deadlines and/or challenges, set goals, communicate, handle both successes and failures, work with a team within a system, and receive feedback and benefit from it. (Papacharisis et al., 2005, p. 248)

In studies done with Positive Living Skills developed by Orlick (1993) 86% of the 3rd graders involved in the study said they used the relaxation skills on their own outside of the classroom, these situations included; when they were stressed, scared, angry, sad, nervous, couldn’t sleep, in an argument with friend or sibling, and during schoolwork (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002). Similar results were also found in previous studies with 2nd grade, and k-6th grade children (Cox & Orlick, 1996, Gilbert & Orlick, 1996). According to the study young athletes felt it would be beneficial to learn how to manage stress in a sport situation so they could apply it to other aspects of life (Cox & Orlick,
In another study that asked young athletes to describe stress in sports from their own perspective, one athlete stated:

If young athletes learn at a young age that they can apply their strategies for managing stress to stressful sport situations, they will be able to apply the same strategies for dealing with stress to situations that will occur to them later in life. (Gould et al., 1993, p. 292)

**Sport Psychology with Children**

Research shows that athletes can transfer sport psychology techniques from sport to other life contexts. The Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (SUPER) program has yielded promising results in transferring life skills from sport to daily life (Papacharisis et al., 2005). This program teaches middle school and high school aged athletes the proper use of goal setting techniques through sport, and it also generalizes their teachings to everyday life. Adolescent athletes who participated in the program showed greater knowledge about life skills as compared to athletes in the control group. Athletes in the experimental group also experienced high self-beliefs for personal goal setting, problem solving, and positive thinking. This program also didn’t take away from the learning of their actual sport skills; athletes in the experimental group also performed better in their respective sport (Papacharisis et al., 2005).

**Conclusion**

Based on the research, children experience stress and tend to have difficulty employing proper strategies to effectively cope with it (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013; Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Taylor & Orlick, 1996, The American Institute of Stress, 2014; Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2013). Simple techniques, such as deep breathing, are effective in relieving the negative effects of stress, however, research focused on this technique in
children is lacking (Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kajander & Pepper 1998; Kudlackova et al., 2013). It has been demonstrated that children are able to learn and implement this technique if taught (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Kajander & Pepper, 1998; Taylor & Orlick, 1996). Sport is a suitable platform to incorporate the teachings of relaxation techniques because a plethora of children participate, and it has the capability of improving their sport performance, as well as influencing their continued participation in sport (Englert & Bertram, 2012; Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Grossbard et al., 1993; Weinberg & Hunt, 1976). It has been noted that many coaches aren’t implementing relaxation skills into their coaching curriculum. However, research shows that children are able to generalize what they learn through sport in other contexts of their lives (Cox & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Grossbard et al., 2009; Kajander & Peper, 1998; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1991).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

Stress is a common obstacle familiar to both adults and children and has been known to illicit negative physical and psychological consequences when not dealt with effectively (The American Institute of Stress, Stress Effects Section, Para. 1, 2014). Although there are many ways to mediate the effects of stress, research shows that children are generally unaware of these strategies (Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Taylor & Orlick, 1996). Researchers have found that diaphragmatic breathing which refers to the slow, rhythmic, inhalations using the diaphragm is an effective technique for young children as it is simple to use and easy to master. Studies show that diaphragmatic breathing is one of the simplest relaxation techniques known to relieve stress and therefore is useful to for children of all ages (Kabat-Zin, 1990; Kajander & Peper, 1998).

One of the areas where teaching diaphragmatic breathing may be most beneficial is in youth sport. Research shows that many children experience high degrees of stress when participating on sport teams (Englert & Bartrams, 2012; Gould et al., 1993; Passer, 1982). Studies also show that stress can be managed by employing the proper relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing. (The American Institution of Stress, Kabat-Zin, 1990; Kajander & Peper, 1998,). There is a significant lack of research done on breadth training in children (Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kajander &
Peper, 1998; Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Kudlackova et al., 2013). However, the studies that have been done show that relaxation techniques taught to children are transferable from one context to the next (Grossbard et al., 2009, Gilbert & Orlick, 2002, 1996, Cox & Orlick, 1996, McCaffrey & Orlick, 1991). Although these findings exist in the literature, most youth sport coaches are not teaching breathing to their young athletes (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

According to the National Council on Youth Sport (2013), 52 million children between the ages of 6 and 18 participate in youth sport, which makes it a prime platform for educating children on how to use diaphragmatic breathing to manage stressful situations (Kajander & Peper 1998; Grossbard et al., 2009). Not only is it able to reach an extensive amount of children; relaxation techniques can also be beneficial to improving sport performance as well as influencing continued participation in sport (Gilbert & Orlick, 1996; Grossbard et al., 2009).

This methodology section will discuss in detail the process of creating a children’s book based around sport psychology research. First it will cover the process of deciding to write a children’s book, enlisting the help of an expert to do so, and picking an audience and topic. It will then cover the literature used to create this project; background information from sport psychology research found in the literature review and an informational guide to writing a children’s book. Following will be the familiarization with children’s literature including what makes a children’s book successful. Existing children’s literature related to sport psychology will then be discussed. The creative process of observing children, braining storming, learning from other authors and immersing oneself to aide in the writing process will follow.
Developing characters and how to perfect the story using trial and error will be described next. Finally reading the story to the correct critiques and the ins and outs of the publishing process.

Choosing to Write a Children’s Book

Writing a children’s book is an efficient way to reach mass amounts of children in a timely manner. Teachers, coaches, and parents don’t always have time to teach children beneficial strategies to cope with stress. Writing a children’s book that taught a simple strategy is an efficient way to reach mass amounts of children quickly. Children’s books are a good medium for teaching emotion regulation because they are easily accessible, have affective value, and are cognitively stimulating (Zambo (2007). Bibliotherapy is a method used by clinicians and educators to help readers learn coping strategies through literature (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money 2005). Developmental bibliotherapy is a more informal version of bibliotherapy intended for children. Educators, parents, and librarians use children’s literature to facilitate normal development and self-actualization with an essentially healthy population (Central Michigan University Bibliotherapy Education Project, 2014). “Children might identify with fictional characters and bullying situations both at a cognitive and emotional level and gain insight more easily than talking directly about their own experiences” (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Shelton, Kelly, Morrison, & Young, 2013, p. 695). Bibliotherapy is used to teach many coping strategies, however children’s literature that could serve as a basis to teach coping methods for sport are virtually nonexistent.
Enlist the Help of an Expert

I enlisted the help of a children’s book editor to guide me on my journey in writing a successful children’s book. Taylor Norman is an assistant editor at Chronicle Books. Her primary duty is to read manuscripts of children’s books and improve their content. She is familiar with the process of turning an idea into a published story, and understands what makes a children’s book great. Her first piece of advice for me was to make sure I understood what I was getting into. Norman explained that writing a children’s book was no easy feat:

Picture books are the most important books anyone ever reads- or doesn’t read: Interaction with books at the beginning of life has SUCH an impact, and it’s absurd the tiny degree to which that responsibility is taken seriously. It’s a huge responsibility! The author and illustrator become the kid’s conduit to a new way of seeing the world for five minutes, and if they’re not careful, this can have a huge (and potentially negative impact). I think people see the tiny page count and the dearth of words and think “easy!” But it’s not, and it shouldn’t be. Picture books need to be given the weight and consideration of the true art form they are. (Personal communication, 2014)

Choosing a Topic and an Audience

Deciding the type of children’s book and the topic it would be on was an essential decision before beginning the writing process. I decided that I wanted to take the challenge of writing a storybook for young children age five to eight. My book was going to be an informal, educational style picture book. I wanted the readers of my book to learn without realizing they were learning.

Norman (Personal Communication, 2014) instructed me to pick a topic that I was truly passionate about. Writing a picture book takes perseverance and a lot of creativity. The topic needed to be something I had a lot of experience with, and would be
able to creatively relate to children. This is in line with the suggestions from the book *The Everything Guide to Writing Children’s Books 2nd Edition: How to Write, Publish, and Promote Books for Children of All Ages*, by Luke Wallin and Eva Sage Gordan. Wallin and Gordan (2011) suggest that authors first decide which format their book will take, “picture book, early reader, chapter book, middle-grade or young adult.”

I chose the topic of deep breathing to cope with stress in young children. I had been working as an instructional aid in elementary schools with kids from ages 5-12 for two years. I had immense amounts of experience teaching children with learning and behavioral disorders. In my line of work I found that teaching children to use deep breathing when they hit a roadblock, or were consumed with intense emotion was beneficial. I was passionate about teaching this technique to mass amounts of children because it was simple and I believed it worked. The use of deep breathing to reduce the effects of stress was the perfect topic for my children’s book.

**Review of Literature**

After choosing a topic, the first step in creating a research based children’s book was to review the related literature on breath training in children to reduce anxiety in sport. The dearth of literature that specifically targets the youth population shows that this is area of sport psychology needs further investigation. This finding lead me to pursue my project of writing a story book to introduce children to proper breathing techniques to reduce sport and life stress.

The research that has been conducted around the youth population suggests that children experience stress just as adults do (Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2013). It also shows
that children are capable of learning the diaphragmatic breathing technique to combat stress (Kajander & Peper, 1998; Orlick, 2004). However, most children aren’t being taught any efficient strategies to cope with stress (Kajander & Peper, 1998). This is evident in the arena of youth sport. Young athletes often experience the consequences of the stress response, and their engagement and performance in sport suffers (Passer, 1982; Gould, 1993; Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Smith et al., 2007; Grossbard et al., 2009; Englert & Bartrams, 2012). Most coaches aren’t incorporating any stress management techniques into their coaching routines (Kajander & Peper, 1998). Even the simplest form of stress management, deep breathing, hasn’t made it into the coaches practice plans to aide their athletes in attaining higher enjoyment and success levels in sport (Kajander & Peper, 1998). Research done on existing programs, found that children are able to learn a strategy in a sports setting and apply it to other life contexts (Gould et al., 1993; Papacharisis et al., 2005). This was a significant finding to show that kids can learn the deep breathing technique through a sport context and use it to control their anxiety in other life situations.

How to Write a Children’s Book

Children’s Literature

Norman (personal communication, 2014) advised me to read excessive amounts of children’s literature and discover what stood out in each book. Norman (personal communication, 2014) suggested I read the classics; “There’s a reason those books have stood the test of time.” I went to bookstores and libraries and read one book after another. As I read through the books I noted which ones I liked and which ones I didn’t. I then asked myself why I liked the ones I liked. What made the story good? What drew me in as a reader?

I found that relatable characters drew me in the most. If I could identify with the main character and connect with them, I was going to enjoy the book. Classics like *Corduroy*, by Don Freeman and *Rainbow Fish*, by Marcus Pfister have stood the test of time because everyone can relate to the feeling of wanting to be loved and included in social settings. Characters that are too perfect aren’t realistic and kids tend to feel they are out of reach; characters in children’s books need to have weaknesses and strengths so children can relate to them (Wallin & Gordon 2011).

I also enjoyed books that had a simple rhythm or rhyme to them. They were easy to read and almost took the words out of my mouth; it made me anxious to turn to the next page. *Good Night Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown and *I*, by Dr. Seuss are perfect examples.

The books that made me giggle I seemed to enjoy the most. These books usually capitalized on a child’s perspective and exploited their naïve tendencies in a heart-warming nature. Books that talked about things that were true, really caught my eye. *The Boss Baby*, by Marla Frazee made me laugh, it’s a book about a baby who is the
boss and his parents hang on his every demand, which paints the perfect picture of bringing home a new baby. *The Day the Crayons Quit*, by Drew Daywalt is also a great example of a heartwarming perspective; this book takes the voice of crayons and exploits which ones are overused and which ones feel left out.

I learned to read just the text without the illustrations and see how the text functioned on its own. On the contrary I had to learn how the illustrations added to a story, and told a story all on their own. I “read” many picture books while relying solely on the illustrations to tell me the story.

**Related Children’s Literature**

It was imperative for me to find any existing children’s literature that was written around sport psychology techniques for children. I searched through book stores in the Bay Area, as well as libraries and the Internet. I used the book *A to Zoo: Subject Access to Children’s Picture Books*, by Carolyn W. Lima and Rebecca L. Thomas. This book lists all children’s books by category so I was able to consult it and find books around stress, deep breathing, and sport. This catalog allowed me to find books such as: *Take a Deep Breath*, by Sue Graves, *Breathe*, by Simon and Suisha and *Calm-Down Time*, by Elizabeth Verdick which are all books that cover the topic of breathing for relaxation. Most of the books I found are simple “How to” books; there’s no story for a children to immerse themselves into. The ones that do tell some kind of story are rare and none of them are depicted in a sports setting.

I found many instructional books aimed at helping parents create a healthy sport experience for their children, such as; *Changing the Game: The Parent’s Guide to*
Raising, Happy, High Performing Athletes, and Giving Youth Sport Back To Our Kids, by John O’ Sullivan. I also found instructional guides for coaches to help their athletes enjoy sport and perform to their potential, Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-esteem through Sport, by Jim Thompson. However, there was a lack of books written for a youth audience.

Using the Amazon.com search tool I was able to find a significant amount of literature for children that focused on relaxation. Lori Lite is a prominent author of children’s books for relaxation; her stories aim to quiet the mind, decrease anxiety and stress, and to help children fall asleep peacefully. Three of her well known titles are; Sea Otter Cove, Angry Octopus, and Bubble Riding. Bubble Riding is a story created in order to teach children visualization techniques to increase creativity while lowering stress. Lite (2012) mentions that her book pulls from sport psychology research and the use of imagery to enhance performance; however this does not come across in her actual text. Her stories were written in order to help calm children down before they attempt to fall asleep; they serve as a perfect bedtime story to prompt peaceful sleep. (Amazon, 2014).

Teaching Diaphragmatic Breathing

The children’s book was intended to teach young children how to use deep breathing as a coping mechanism. Research suggests that when teaching kids to use diaphragmatic breathing, the teacher should have kids pretend there is a balloon in their bellies and they have to blow it up and deflate it (Kajander & Peper, 1998).

Here is how to do diaphragmatic or "belly breathing"

1. Lay on the floor or sit up straight with your feet supported.
2. Put one hand on your chest and the other hand over your belly.
3. Exhale all your air, until your belly pulls in slightly.
4. Imagine you have a balloon underneath your belly button that inflates as you inhale and deflates as you exhale.

5. Breathe in through your nose and pull the air deep into your lungs. Feel your belly expand, like a balloon blowing up. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Feel you belly go back in, like a balloon deflating. Say "haa" as you exhale.

6. Breathe in slowly - inhale to the count of 3 seconds and exhale to the count of six.

7. Keep your shoulders as relaxed as possible; they should not rise as you inhale.

The “One Breath” relaxation technique is also beneficial to children. It is simply one, long, slow, deep breath. This technique is a quick way to relax and regain control in situations that elicit fear, worry, anger, or frustration (Orlick, 2004).

I chose these methods to depict in my storybook because they are simple and vivid which is the epitome of what makes a great children’s book.

Observing Children

I knew that my character needed to relate to children; my audience needed to identify with the character of my book. In order to achieve this I needed to learn what situations resonated with children. I spent 15-20 hours a week with children from the ages of three to nine over an entire academic school year (nine months). Aside from my current job as an instructional aid in a third grade classroom, I volunteered in a kindergarten class, babysat, and attended every youth sporting event I could.

Using the Notes app on my personal iPhone was the most effective way to make quick and descriptive notes as I observed incidents. As an avid texter, I was able to type with precision, and keep my eyes on the situation that was playing out in front of me. It was also a device that I always had with me; I never missed an opportunity to note a specific situation. It was also an easy way for my note taking to go undetected by the
children. Children are curious, and whenever I had a paper notebook with me they constantly wanted to know what I was writing. Their curiosity took away from the natural interactions I needed to observe. Wallin and Gordan (2011) suggest that aspiring authors carry a notebook with them wherever they go to jot down ideas that come to mind throughout the day.

In my notes, I noted common situations that elicited stress; like making a mistake in front of many people, being left out, public speaking, fear, and not feeling special. These served as situations for the characters in my book to encounter.

Brainstorming

I kept my phone with me everywhere I went; the notes app was also helpful in recording my ideas for the story. I noted everything that came to mind throughout the day that could be used for the book. I informally started conversations among my students about their sport experiences and how they coped with difficult situations. When I heard things that sparked my imagination or were common among multiple kids, I jotted it down. I entertained every situation I witnessed and was told about as an idea for my book. Those that made me feel inspired I ran with and kept writing about, those that fizzled after minutes were left out of the end product. I also enlisted the help of my students in the brainstorming process. I asked them what details they would include in a children’s book about deep breathing. I needed my character to think like a kid, so their perspective was helpful. For instance, they came up with the idea of catching the air in a balloon and a jar.
I learned to really let my imagination wonder. In the end it helped to solidify the ideas I wanted to include in my book. At one point, the main character in my book was a dragon that needed to stop charring baseballs with his fire breathing talents. He needed to learn to breathe in through his snout and out through his mouth. I eventually left this idea in the scrap pile; a dragon wasn’t relatable or believable enough for kids. It also wasn’t a style I was comfortable writing in.

Gain Insight from other Authors

I went to a seminar given by Katherin Otoshi who is the author of the children’s book, *One*. Her book is an anti-bullying story that teaches acceptance, tolerance, and the power of one voice, while introducing colors, numbers, and counting to young children. In the seminar she covered how she came up with the book idea, how long it took her to write it, and the concept of layering. The most beneficial information that Katherine spoke of was layering. Layering is a technique used by authors of children’s books to make the story educational and entertaining to multiple age groups. To her youngest readers, the book introduces simple concepts like colors and numbers. To her older audiences the book represents much deeper topics; the power of one voice, how to stick together to stand up to bullies, and the rewards of always being kind.

Immerse Yourself

Every time I tried to write, I learned that I needed to immerse myself in a kids setting; whether it be the children’s section of a bookstore, a classroom, or the local baseball field. I needed to be around kids in order to write a story that would relate to them. Being creative is no easy task, my most productive writing sessions happened
when I immersed myself into the world of children’s books. I went to my neighborhood library where they have an amazing children’s book section. The area was designed to entice kids to stay and read. There were secret tunnels, familiar characters all over the walls, and mini couches perfectly sized for kids. I spent 5 hours a week over a period of eight months reading kids’ books and jotting down ideas as they came to me. I then set aside the kids’ books and let my mind wonder. I started to connect my notes with creative details.

A children’s book I read illustrates the process perfectly. In the book *Rocket Writes a Story*, by Tad Hills (2012) a dog named Rocket is trying to write a story. He struggles to find inspiration, but he knows he wants to write about his favorite stick, so he immerses himself into the forest where he found it.

Rocket took a walk to look for inspiration. He thought about friends he knew, places he’d been. He stuck his nose high in the air and sniffed the gentle breeze. And there it was- a delightful smell of pine needles and feathers. Inspiration! For the rest of the morning he thought about feathers and pine needs. Pine needles and feathers. That afternoon he started to write. (13)

**Developing Characters**

It’s imperative that characters within a story are relatable. Developing relatable characters was just as important as writing in relatable situations. I used an exercise from Wallin and Gordon (2011) to fully develop my main character. This exercised suggested answering 12 specific questions about the main character of the story. This helped to finalize the character as a real person. Some of the questions included; “What is the characters gender? What are the characters strengths? How old is the character?” This exercise made me consider aspects of Hunter I hadn’t thought of.
Hunter was molded after a child I worked with in third grade, however in my book, the character is 3 years younger than he is in real life. My characters strengths and weaknesses were different than my students’. The kindergarteners I worked with were really helpful for this. For instance, in my story Hunter encounters a sharing incident, this is partially because in this exercise I had to name my characters pet peeve. In kindergarten I noticed that most kids had issues with sharing things that were “theirs.” Hence Hunter loses his temper when his sister is slurping on *his* Hotwheels car.

I found that developing my characters was relatively simple. All the characters in my story were modeled after people in my life. This helped them to come alive in the story, the words they say and the way they react to situations are true to the person they are molded after. Wallin and Gordon (2011) instruct authors to know their characters intimately and be able to see a picture of them in your mind. I could do this because my characters were real people in my life.

Learning Through Trial and Error

Every time I wrote out a draft I was satisfied with I sent it off to Taylor Norman, the assistant editor at Chronicle Books. Through the use of Google Docs she tweaked details and explained to me why certain areas weren’t working. She taught me to focus on writing a good story and letting the lesson be secondary. “Kids have to want to read the book if you want them to get anything out of it. Hopefully, they will read it multiple times throughout their life and won’t forget the underlying lesson” (T. Norman, Personal communication 2014). Wallin and Gordon (2011, P. 89) also remind writers,
“Don’t preach! You can certainly convey an important message through your story, but don’t tell your readers what to think.”

Norman (personal communication, 2014) gave me great direction especially when she told me that writing a children’s book is a lot like writing a song. *Deep Breath* needed to be like the chorus of a song, repeated multiple times in slightly different ways. Along with this repetition advice, she taught me that three is a good number to use when writing a book for children. Series of three have a good rhythm to them and it helps children follow along with the story. This strategy is apparent in my story when the coach tells the athletes the three secrets of baseball. Hunter also runs into three situations outside of baseball where deep breathing helps him; sharing with his baby sister, speaking in front of his class, and the scary monster in the closet. Although rhythm is good, rhyming can be a death sentence for children’s authors. Unless an author has a profound skill of versifying, rhyming is frowned upon by children’s book editors (Wallin and Gordon 2011). It’s awful when a poem for kids doesn’t scan (T. Norman, personal communication, 2014).

Deep breathing shouldn’t be a save all, end all solution to the characters problem. Kids are smarter than most assume they are; they know deep breathing can’t magically fix everything. It is best if the character experiences a realistic change, or maybe a slight increase in success instead of an outrageous victory. This is why Anna doesn’t automatically give Hunter back his Hotwheel car the second time she snatches it from him.

Her most difficult feedback; the less words the better try to consolidate your writing as much as you can (T. Norman, personal communication, 2014). I learned to
take into account what the pictures would add to the story. Pictures are a way to express components of a story without words. When writing a children’s book you have to write in the pictures with it (Wallin and Gordon 2011). Even if you aren’t an artist, ideas of illustrations should accompany your manuscript text. The first couple drafts of my book followed a five year old boy who was already immersed in the world of baseball. This was unlikely for a real five year old. Norman (personal communication, 2014) suggested I use illustrations to incorporate Hunter’s imagination into the beginning of the book. The illustrations now show Hunter encountering real baseball situations; however he is in the comfort of his own room using stuffed animals as opponents. The book ends with debuting in his first ever little league baseball game.

Norman (personal communication, 2014) also had positive and encouraging feedback. “Your story puts the reader in the action, you didn’t write with a passive voice” (T. Norman, personal communication, 2014). Using an active voice makes the book more stimulating for readers; authors should always try to use an active voice as opposed to a passive voice (Walling and Gordon, 2011).

Read the Story to Children

The best piece of advice Norman (personal communication, 2014) gave me was to read my book to children. Children were the intended audience for my book so they were naturally the best critics. I read the drafts of my book to the students I worked with, and any child who was willing to listen at the local library. I noted when they got bored, when they laughed, and when they didn’t seem to understand the plot. Kids are straight forward critics; they will tell you exactly how they are feeling. One of my biggest
challenges was overcoming a dull ending. The first couple drafts of my story climaxed too early, and made deep breathing seem like a perfect, quick fix to everything. The kids quickly lost interest.

I took in the criticism and re-worked the book to keep the children’s interest peaked. In my first draft the main character, Hunter, first learns to use deep breathing to be successful in baseball and then he applies it to other life contexts. This plotline became boring to readers because baseball was the main focus of the story, and the baseball issue was resolved first. I switched around the order of events; Hunter first uses deep breathing to conquer issues at school and at home. The book now ends with Hunter using deep breathing to be successful in baseball. This change held readers attention until the very end of the book. (See Appendix A)

Illustrations

Pictures are an essential part of a children’s book. They are responsible for depicting the setting in which the story takes place, as well as depicting the mood of the story. Illustrations also help to explain and interpret the text. They serve as an aid in developing and fleshing out the characters (Fang, 1996). However, when submitting a book to be published by a professional publishing company it’s best to leave the illustrations out. Publishing companies have their own preferred illustrators (T. Norman, Personal communication, 2014). When sending a book in to get published, you send it in as a manuscript, without pictures. If the company likes your book they will match an illustrator to your story who will illustrate it for you (C. Cameron, personal
communication, 2014). Publishing houses usually have a select set of illustrators that they use to maintain a house style (Wallin and Gordon 2011).

Although the publishing companies take care of the illustrations, it’s important to include art notes. Art notes are written into the manuscript in lieu of pictures. They are notes as to what the pictures should depict and are especially used in areas of the book where you are counting on the illustration to add to the text. For instance, in my book, the first couple scenes tell about Hunter playing baseball. However, the art notes show the reader that Hunter is too young for a real baseball game and is merely playing imaginary baseball with his stuffed animals.

He loved
staring down the pitcher with the meanest fastball in town,
[art: Hunter’s at “home plate” in his room across from a stuffed animal propped on a fake “mound.” ]
rounding the bases, fans shouting his name,
[art: Hunter’s running from a rock to a stump in his backyard. Off-screen his mom is calling “Hunter! Time for dinner!”] (Art note example)

Therefore my final project did not include illustrations, it simply has art notes.

The Publishing Process

Getting a children’s book published is a long and grueling process, no matter which way you go about it; “There is no easy way to get your book published, distributed to the proper markets, and into the hands of children” (Wallin and Gordon, 2011, p. 115).

When publishing a book authors have three options. Options one, subsidy publishing; authors pay for the cost of publication and in return get a professional looking book with a marketing plan, however the publishing company owns the books and receives royalties on every book sold (C. Cameron, Personal Communication, 2014).
Without a wealth of money to expend on publishing my book, subsidy publishing was not an option best suited for my manuscript. Self-publishing, option two, is one of the quickest ways to publish a book, however it isn’t the most effective route for publishing a children’s book (C. Cameron, personal communication, 2014). Children’s books must be printed in order to be accessible to the intended audience; children will not be able to access an online e-reader version. Printing is expensive, and the author must pay up front fees before they can sell a single copy. Self-publishing also entails illustrating the book yourself or hiring an illustrator. Without any artistic talent or financial backing this option quickly dismissed itself. Lastly there’s the traditional route, which entails submitting a manuscript to a publishing house and hoping the story gets picked up and published. Finding a publishing house to accept and print my book was the most logical way for me to get my story on the market. This process consists of sending a manuscript off to multiple publishing houses and hoping their editors see its potential and pick it up to be published. Each publishing house has their own list of guidelines for submitting a manuscript, they can include; specific formatting guidelines, query letters, cover letters, and proposal requests. Following their guidelines are key, it shows the editors that you are serious about having your work published (Wallin and Gordon, 2011).

There are two ways to go about submitting a manuscript. One can either submit a manuscript as an independent author, or hire an agent and have them contact the publishing houses for you. I decided to submit my book without an agent. Since I didn’t plan on making a career out of writing children’s books it was unnecessary for me to use an agent (T. Norman, personal communication, 2014). However, with this choice I could only submit my work to publishing houses that accept unsolicited manuscripts (Wallin &
Gordon, 2011). Meaning, I could only submit my project to those publishing houses that don’t require authors to have an agent.

Selecting the correct publishing house is key. Every publishing house has their own niche and their own style. I submitted my story to educational publishing houses. These companies tend to publish children’s books that are slightly longer than normal length. My book contains roughly 1,000 words, and most publishing houses that release children’s books prefer stories with 600-800 words. Educational houses however produce longer books due to the nature of their goal, educational products.

Selecting Specific Publishing Houses

I selected several publishing houses to submit my manuscript to by scouring Publishing Central, an online archive of publishing houses. I searched and scrolled through hundreds of listings to find companies that focused on educational books, the topic of sports, and teaching life skills to children. This was a tedious task in and of itself. It was even more difficult to find houses within my genre that accepted unsolicited manuscripts. Using Publishing Central, I was able to find Free Spirit Publishing, Albert Whitman & Company, Kane Miller EDC Publishing, and Sky Pony Press Publishing; four suitable publishing houses which I submitted my manuscript to.

Submitting a Manuscript

The publishing houses I submitted my manuscript to also required authors to submit a query/cover letter, market analysis, and a promotion plan.

Writing a query letter. According to instructions on the Arthura Levine Books website (2001), a query letter consists of:
A one page description of your manuscript that illuminates its strengths and captures our interest. What is your manuscript about? Why would a reader turn to your book? What makes it original or memorable? Try to answer these questions in a way that reveals the character of your writing and gives us the overall feel of the manuscript. (Often good queries sound like jacket copy, the text on the inside front flap or back cover of a book, or the descriptions found in publisher's catalogs.) Don't think of a query as a form to fill out-your letter should be as individual as the book it describes and the author it introduces. Consider it an opportunity to make an impression, to introduce your work to readers who might enjoy it. (Submission Guidelines Section, para 4)

After reading this description I set out to try my hand in composing a query letter. I wanted to try and write my query letter before seeking out other examples so I could find my own voice and style. I then searched for sample query letters online and reorganized mine to read more like the samples. When searching the Internet for sample query letters be sure to specify your search with “Children’s picture book,” query letters for novels and chapter books are quite different.

Query letters should be concise and straight to the point, publishers receive thousands each month so they don’t like to seep through excess jargon (Garner, 2014). It’s imperative to cover the basics somewhere in your letter; publishing houses need to know the title, genre, word count, and target audience or age range (Garner, 2014). The letter should give a clear synopsis as to what your book is about without giving away the ending, leave them excited to read to your manuscript (Liu, 2006). Make sure to be specific, really highlight what makes your story unique (Garner, 2014). A query letter also needs to reference who you are as an author, however this can get tricky, only incorporate relevant details (Garner, 2014).

Writing a market analysis. A market analysis shows the publishing house that you’ve done research and you know there’s a market for your book (Tibbetts, 2003). It
should include titles on the market that are similar to yours and how yours will differ and stand out. A market analysis can also include books already released by the publishing house you are submitting to. This is the author’s opportunity to show how their story compliments, without competing with, the titles already released by the company (Levine, 2005).

**Writing a personal promotion plan.** A personal promotion plan is a proposal of what an author will do, without the help of the publishing house, to personally attract buyers for their book. Publishing companies want authors to highlight the connections they have that will aid in the success of their manuscript (Freidman, 2012).

**Promoting My Story**

Once my book is published I will promote my book through social media, my coaching and sport psych platform, as well as author appearances. However, publishing companies decipher a marketing plan and promote the book with their own approach (C. Cameron, personal communication, 2014).

To help advertise myself as an author and sell my book, I will first create pages on my existing websites promoting myself as an author and *Hunter the Great*. My personal blog, One Game, One Love, already has a consistent audience with sport psychology interests; incorporating *Hunter the Great* and my perspectives on the site will be a great way to publicize my book. EDIFY Sport, my current mental game consulting company website, also draws attention from people with a sport psychology interest. I plan to add a page with information about myself as an author, as well as information about my story and the benefits it can provide to youth athletes.
Using social media sites, such as Facebook, is another perfect platform to create a page for *Hunter the Great* as I already have a plethora of connections within the site. Along with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are additional platforms to draw attention to my book by creating accounts, and posting information about my story.

I plan to also promote my book by contacting the schools around my current residing location and offering to make appearances. These appearances will consist of reading my book, educating the children on what sport psychology is, and discussing the ways they can reduce stress in sport. This is a perfect opportunity for me as I am familiar with educating youth; I am currently employed as paraprofessional in elementary classrooms. I have a social network of teachers due to the fact that I have been working in the school system for the last few years.

As a softball coach and mental game consultant, I plan to promote my book to local youth sporting leagues by offering to do appearances. Growing up in Sonoma County and being an athlete who was in the local paper throughout my career, I have many connections in the sport world that would willingly welcome me into their organizations. I will use my book as an introduction for teaching young athletes relaxation strategies.

I also plan to contact local bookstores and sell the fact that I am a local author who would be willing to come in and do readings, speaking engagements, and signings. Not only can I sell myself as a local author, I also have personal connections with several employees within the bookstores.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This project was designed as a picture book for young children between the ages of five and eight to familiarize readers with how the technique of deep breathing can be helpful in coping with stress in sport and in everyday life situations.

Research has shown that children experience stress in life and in sport, however they aren’t aware of proper coping strategies to mediate the negative effects of stress (The American Institute of Stress, 2013, Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Taylor & Orlick, 1996). Sport is a beneficial platform to educate children on proper coping strategies as large numbers of children participate, and reducing the stress levels of athletes can positively benefit their sports performance as well as their sports experience (Gilbert & Orlick, 1996; Grossbard et al., 2009). Research shows that coaches aren’t teaching their athletes coping strategies (Kajander and Pepper 1998).

Studies show that diaphragmatic breathing is one of the simplest relaxation techniques known to relieve stress and is useful for children due to its simplistic nature (Kabat-Zin, 1990; Kajander & Peper 1998). There is a significant lack of research done on breadth training in children (Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kajander & Peper, 1998; Goyen & Anshel, 1998; Kudlackova et al., 2013). However the studies that have been done show that relaxation techniques taught to children are transferable from one context

Children’s books are a good medium for teaching emotion regulation because they are easily accessible, have affective value, and are cognitively stimulating (Zambo, 2007). Developmental bibliotherapy is a more informal version of bibliotherapy intended for children. Educators, parents, and librarians use children’s literature to facilitate normal development and self-actualization with an essentially healthy population (Central Michigan University Bibliotherapy Education Project, 2014). Bibliotherapy is used to teach many coping strategies, however children’s literature that could serve as a basis to teach coping methods for sport are virtually nonexistent.

*Hunter the Great* is a research based picture book that aims to fill the void in breath training research and implication. Its purpose is to impact the lives of young athletes by introducing the habit of deep breathing when stressful situations arrive in sport and in life. *Hunter the Great* is a story that follows a young boy who is preparing to make his little league debut. Hunter must discover how to “capture the greatness in the air” in order to become a true baseball player. The story creatively presents Terry Orlick’s (2005) Jelly Belly technique as the solution to capturing the greatness. Hunter then applies the “capturing the greatness” technique to other facets of his life. It not only presents Orlick’s (2005) method in a different way, it always presents another important life lesson; greatness comes from within.

*Hunter the Great* is meant to be used in many forms by many different populations; children can read the book to themselves, parents can read the book to their children, teachers can read the book to their students, and coaches can even read the book
to their players. The book is meant to be used as a tool to bring attention to the positive effects of diaphragmatic breathing to combat stress in sport and in life.

Recommendations

Based on the current research there is a need for further research in breath training for children, as well as more training for those in the youth sport arena to teach this coping strategy to young athletes.

In attending conferences, reading research articles, and practicing sport psychology it is evident that the emphasis in sport psychology is on the elite athlete population. It may be the population where the most money is available; however the youth athlete population is where sport psychology can make the greatest impact. By focusing on the youth population, sport psychology techniques can be mastered throughout an athlete’s career and provide tremendous benefits in enjoyment and performance. It’s logical in most situations to begin at the beginning; it seems the sport psychology field has missed this message. As a field we can start small and build a solid foundation with our youth that can guide their path to a successful and enjoyable sports career.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A
One day while he was watching his older brothers baseball game, he overheard their coach tell his players, “There’s greatness in the air boys, all you have to do is capture it.” This gave Hunter an Idea.

At Hunters very own baseball game, it was almost his turn to bat. He was feeling a little nervous and kind of scared. They were facing the best pitcher in the league and he threw hard.

Hunter remembered the words of his brother’s coach. “There’s greatness in the air, all you have to do is capture it”. Hunter clasped his hands together quickly in an attempt to catch the air full of greatness. He caught some! But when he went to grasp his bat, all the air slipped out of his hands.

“How will I ever capture the greatness?” Hunter Thought.

At school the next day Hunter had to take a math test he had been dreading for days. Trying to memorize all his multiplication facts was frustrating!

During recess he did his best to capture the greatness in the air to use during the test. He held a balloon up in the air and ran as fast as he could across the playground. The balloon barely inflated. “Oh well” he thought, “Maybe I only need a little greatness to help me on my math test”. Quickly he shoved the balloon into his pocket and galloped off to take his test.

But Hunter still didn’t feel very great.
When Hunter got home from school his pesky little sister Anna was playing with his favorite hot wheel car.

“Anna!” Hunter yelled angrily. “Why are you always playing with MY cars!”

“I wish I could capture the greatness in the air and turn my pesky little sister into a great little sister who only played with her own toys!” Hunter wished.

This gave Hunter an Idea!

He ran to the garage and got his dad’s bike pump. This pumps air into my dad’s bike tires and he’s a great bike rider. Maybe if I pump air into Anna, she’ll become a great baby sister.

Hunter pumped and pumped and pumped but Anna just laughed and went along racing his favorite car down the track.

“I’ll never capture the greatness” Hunter sighed.

As Hunter got ready for bed that night a familiar uneasy feeling set in. It happened every night just before bedtime. Hunter was convinced a big scary monster lived under his bed, and Hunter was afraid that monster was going to snatch him up. As he left the safety of the lighted hallway, Hunter sprinted two steps into his dark bedroom and leaped into his bed.

“If I could only capture the greatness in the air I wouldn’t be so afraid of the dark” Hunter thought. This gave Hunter an idea.

He leapt off his bed and raced down the hallway to the kitchen to get a jar from the cabinet. He unscrewed the lid, “This will capture the greatness!” He swiftly swung the jar through the air and then quickly fastened the lid. “Finally! I caught the greatness!”
Hunter bravely strode down the lighted hallway clenching his jar of greatness tightly in his hands. As soon as he got to his dark doorway fear rushed into his body. He dashed across the carpet and leapt into bed. Feeling defeated Hunter thought, “I captured the greatness, so why am I not filled with great bravery?”

The next day at his brothers baseball practice Hunter marched up to his brother’s baseball coach. “How do I capture the greatness in the air?” Hunter questioned. The coach responded with a puzzled look, and then a warm smile crept across his face.

“Your belly is like a balloon and we want to fill that balloon with greatness. If you breathe air way down into your belly you can feel that balloon filling up. Hold the air in your balloon for a second and then breathe out and slowly let your balloon deflate.” Hunter followed the coach’s instructions and took a couple deep breaths.

There really was greatness in the air. As Hunter inflated his balloon he began to feel his heart rate slow, his muscles loosen, and his thoughts become more clear. Filling his balloon with air made Hunter feel different; he was calm, and energized, this did feel great!

While Hunter was in the on deck circle at his next baseball game he began to feel nervous. He could hear his coach getting frustrated with the player batting in front of him, he didn’t want to disappoint his coach or his team.

The words of his brother’s coach flashed through his head, “There’s a balloon in your belly and we want to fill it with greatness.” With a deep breath in, he captured a big ball of greatness in his belly. “I am great!” he thought.
He swung at the first pitch, and with a crack of the bat the ball soared past the pitcher and into centerfield. Hunter reached first base with a big grin on his face “I captured the greatness!”

At school the next day Hunter was just about ready to give up on a math page that was beginning to stump him. As defeat slowly crept over him, a light bulb when off in his brain, “There’s greatness in the air!” He quickly sucked in all the greatness he could get, and let it seep out slowly, “I am great!”

The math was still difficult but it didn’t seem as frustrating as it once was. It was now more comfortable to take his time, and focus on each number. Gradually he began to finish the page. “I captured the greatness!” he blurted out.

Hunter raced home from school. He couldn’t wait to try out his new trick at home. Sure enough, when Hunter walked through the front door, he immediately saw his pesky baby sister playing with his toy. Hunter was instantly filled with anger, and forgot all about his new trick.

“Give me back my toys Anna, they are mine!” he screamed.

Hunter’s mom heard the commotion and immediately took the toy away from both children. Upset, Hunter began to cry. “It’s not fair, it’s my toy!” he sobbed. With tears streaming from his eyes, a little voice in his head whispered, “There’s greatness in the air”. Between tears Hunter took in big breathes of greatness. His heart rate began to slow, and he could feel the anger releasing from his muscles. He began to feel a little bit better. “I shouldn’t have yelled at Anna.” he thought.

That night as Hunter was brushing his teeth before bed. He pictured himself capturing greatness and getting into bed without running and jumping. As he approached
his doorway he took a big breath of greatness in and let it out slowly, “I am filled with great bravery!” he thought. He slowly took a step towards his bed, then another and another, at the last second the fear got a hold of him and he hopped up into his bed.

With a loud sigh he captured another gasp of greatness, “I guess I wasn’t as much of a scardy cat as I thought I was” He snuggled into his covers, took in one last gulp of greatness, felt his heart rate slow and muscles relax, and fell fast asleep.

THE END
APPENDIX B
Hunter loved baseball.

He loved

staring down the pitcher with the meanest fastball in town,

[art: Hunter’s at “home plate” in his room across from a stuffed animal propped on a fake “mound.”]

rounding the bases, fans shouting his name,

[art: Hunter’s running from a rock to a stump in his backyard. Off-screen his mom is calling “Hunter! Time for dinner!”]

jumping high to turn line drives into pop flies,

[art: Hunter is running onto the field of another (his brother’s) team’s game to try and catch the ball]

and smacking home runs with his lucky Easton Bat.

[art: Hunter is alone on a diamond, at home plate, pointing out over the fence like Babe Ruth—should take us to a kind of poignant-feeling place]

Baseball! Hunter couldn’t wait for his first game.

He decided it would be a good idea to do some spring training.

[art: A full team of players is in a huddle. The coach is at the center. Very clearly a complete unit—very intent on seriously listening to coach. Hunter is somewhere funny, very clearly NOT part of the team. The idea is that he’s snuck over to some older kids’ practice to spy. Maybe he’s hiding in the ball bucket.]

Coach said, “Here are the three secrets to being a true baseball player."

Perfect, thought Hunter.

“One,” said Coach. “Hustle.”
I know that one already, thought Hunter.

“Two,” said Coach. “Play fair.”

I know that one too, thought Hunter. Maybe I already am a true baseball player.

“Three,” said Coach. “There’s greatness in the air, boys. All you have to do is capture it.”

Capture the greatness? thought Hunter. Now this was a secret. He had some work to do.

Later that day, while Hunter was taking batting practice,

[art: this can be somewhere funny, or text can change if there is a location that would be appropriate for a regular player but Hunter wouldn’t do yet. E.g. “at the cages” and he is somewhere that visually resembles batting cages but is not. Maybe he is standing in Anna’s crib.]

he thought about Coach’s secret. Capture the greatness, thought Hunter.

[art: he claps his hands, holding them in a globe like you would if you’d trapped a fly]

[page turn]

But when he picked up his bat, the greatness escaped. “Hmmm,” said Hunter.

On Friday, he figured he would capture the greatness before his show and tell presentation. This time he had a plan.
[art: He runs as fast as he could across the playground holding a balloon.]

[art: The balloon barely inflates.]

Hunter was so distracted trying to figure out how to capture the greatness that he accidentally told his class that the Chicago Cubs had been founded in 1871 instead of 1870, and he forgot all about showing them the inside of the left sleeve where Alejandro Aguirre had signed his #16 Chicago Cubs jersey.

When Hunter got home from school to find Anna slurping on his favorite hotwheel car he ran right to his bike pump and pumped air straight into Anna’s crib. “Come on, greatness, work!” But Anna didn’t get great and give him his car back. Anna kept slurping.

And as Hunter got ready for bed that night he wished more than ever that he’d been able to figure out how to catch the greatness. The monster in the closet would probably go away forever. “If I could capture greatness,” Hunter said, “then I’d never be scared of any dumb old monster.”
“Take that, monster! Greatness!” But the closet still looked dark and mean. And Hunter still felt scared.

Hunter hustled to practice the next morning.

He did his fair share.

“Maybe Coach will explain the greatness today,” said Hunter. “Today, I am not leaving until I get to the bottom of this secret.”

“Remember,” said Coach. “Hustle, play fair, and capture the greatness. Play ball!”

“But HOW!” said Hunter. Hunter tumbles out of ball bucket with balls, funny image. Words should be large

“It’s about time somebody asked that question, kid,” said Coach. “It’s simple. Your belly is like a balloon. That balloon is what we want to fill with greatness. So just breathe the air way down into your belly.” Coach sucked in all the air he could get. “Now. Can you can feel that balloon filling up?”

Hunter sucked in a breath.

"Now let it fly" coach is dramatically exhaling and Hunter is mimicking him

All of a sudden he felt it. There really was greatness in the air. He was calm. He was ready. He was a true baseball player.

On Tuesday, Hunter’s least favorite thing happened. “Let’s see,” said Ms. Lauck. “Hunter, will you lead the class in the Pledge of Allegiance?”

“Great!” said Hunter.

“Great,” said Ms. Lauck.

Hunter sucked in all the greatness he could get. “I pledge Allegiance, to the Flag . . .” And then the class joined in. He thought it’d never sounded better.

“It worked!” Hunter yelled.

“I am great!” sang Hunter as he raced down his street.

“I’m a true baseball player!” He could feel the greatness buzzing through him. Now that he’d figured out how to capture greatness, everything would be great!

But when he burst in the door, the greatness ended.

[art: Anna is slurping again.] “Anna!” Hunter said. “Not again!”

Hunter groaned. His heart pounded. Then he thought of Coach. “The greatness!” He captured as much as he could in one breath. The greatness started to work.

He let it fly. He felt calmer already. Then he sucked in a whole new breath. And another.

[art: Anna is watching him, looking baby-surprised] Then Anna joined in.

[art: Anna with puffed out cheeks, capturing the greatness]

And it’s hard to slurp cars while capturing greatness.

[art: Anna has dropped car, but Hunter hasn’t snatched it either. They’re sitting in the crib capturing greatness together. Or some sweet scene of the like.]

Hunter had no time for monsters that night. “Not the night before my first game,” thought Hunter. So he brushed his teeth. His heart pounded. He thought of Coach. The greatness, he thought. Then he yanked open his closet door, sucked in a breath and blew all the greatness in at the monster.

As he’d suspected, the monster had skedaddled.
“Every monster quails in the face of greatness,” said Hunter, and he gulped down greatness in his sleep all night.

The next morning, even Anna was nervous.

[art: Anna is not doing anything babylike, and just looks very nervous.]

“This is the biggest game of my life,” Hunter told Mom.

Because Hunter loved baseball. He loved hustling. He loved playing fair. He loved capturing the greatness. But was he really a true baseball player?

He worried and worried so long that his waffle turned spongy and cold, and then it was time to go.

Before he knew it, Hunter was in the dugout. “What if I strike out?” thought Hunter.

Then he was on deck. “What if I trip down the baseline?”

Then he was at the plate. “What if I run the wrong way?”

With his lucky Easton bat, Hunter tapped home plate. His heart pounded. When he looked at the dugout, Coach gave him a thumbs-up. The greatness! Hunter thought. The mean pitcher wound up his fast fastball. Hunter captured as much as he could.

[page turn]

[art: crack! home run. Scene is identical to elements of all opening ones—with stuffed animals, etc.—except now it’s real and fans really are cheering for him, etc.]

Hunter didn’t strike out, and he didn’t trip. He ran to first and then second and then third, rounding the bases, fans calling his name. He’d smacked that one good.

[page turn]

[art: Hunter jumping on home base]

Hunter was a true baseball player.
APPENDIX C
FREE SPIRIT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. A cover letter briefly outlining your project, the intended audience (including age ranges), and your relevant expertise.

2. A current résumé.

3. A detailed chapter-by-chapter outline.

4. At least two sample chapters. (If a full manuscript is available, you may send it.)

5. A market analysis with a comprehensive listing of similar titles and detailed explanation of how your project differs from available products.

6. A description of your personal promotion plan for the proposed book (including both in-person and social media outreach).

Note: For early childhood submissions, the entire text is required for evaluation. Bracketed art suggestions are also appreciated, though illustration samples should not be sent unless professionally competent.

Send copies, not originals. Free Spirit is not liable for work lost in the mail. If you want your work returned after evaluation, include a self-addressed return envelope with sufficient postage.

As you prepare a proposal, it may help to keep a few of our main considerations in mind:

Need: Why is the book needed? How is it different from similar available titles?

Purpose: Who will use the book? How will they use it?

Quality: Is the project well written and researched? Is the style similar to that of our other award-winning, jargon-free, solution-focused titles?

Relevance: Is the subject matter appropriate for our list? Does it compete with or complement other available titles from Free Spirit?
Query Letter Draft

The world of youth sport is producing disheartening statistics, 70% of kids participating in youth sport will drop out by the age of 13. These are kids who are missing out on the opportunity to be the game winning hero, to learn the benefits of teamwork, and how to be courageous in the face of fear or failure. Youth sport has become an ultra competitive race to the top where stress festers and youngsters forget what it’s like to just play baseball and love the game. The idea of a “Sandlot” childhood is quickly fading away and being replaced by expensive travel teams, college recruit camps, and angry unsatisfied coaches.

Maybe we could change all that. Young athletes need a coping mechanism so they can reignite their love of the game and forget the pressures that accompany it. My book does just that. Hunter loves baseball and he’ll do anything to learn the secrets of how to be a great ball player. He’s determined to make a splash in his little league debut. He did some spring training of his own and realized he’s got two of three secrets down pat; hustle and play fair. What he can’t figure out is how to capture the greatness in the air. It’s not just for baseball that he needs to be great, he needs it to excel at school and at home. Trap it in a jar or encase it in a balloon. Hunter learns through trial and error that greatness comes from within just in time for his first ever little league at bat.

In the field of sport psychology, research suggests that elite athletes successfully use deep breathing to alleviate the symptoms that accompany sport stress. Relieving the negative symptoms of sport anxiety has the potential to help athletes perform at higher levels and derive more enjoyment from their athletic performances. Unfortunately this
strategy isn’t being taught to today’s youth who are participating in sport. My picture book attempts to fill this void by creating a story that follows a young athlete to his first baseball game where he uses deep breathing to combat sport anxiety in his first ever little league at bat. As a sport psychology graduate student I have thoroughly examined the sport psychology research on using deep breathing in competition and sport anxiety in youth athletes. This allowed me to create an educational book that is researched based and reaches out to a virtually untapped market. My story is intended for children ages 5-8 in hopes to teach and reinforce the skill of deep breathing in situations that elicit intense emotion. My book is the perfect fit for Free Spirit Publishing as it compliments titles like “Take a Deep Breath” by Sue Graves and “Incredible Stories of Courage in Sport” by Brad Herzog by integrating their topics and giving kids a solution based story to achieve the outcomes in the Brad Herzog titles.

Query Letter Final

I hope you will consider reading my 1,000 word educational children’s book, Hunter The Great. Hunter is a young little league hopeful who is determined to discover what it takes to be a truly great baseball player. Hustling and playing fair he’s got down to a science, but capturing the greatness in the air? This baseball secret has Hunter stumped. Sealing it in a jar, blasting it from a bike pump, and simply clasping it in his hands are all dead ends, which is unfortunate, as Hunter is in need of some greatness for far more than just baseball. If only he could capture it.

Stories that demonstrate sport psychology strategies for young kids are rare, and those that bridge the gap between sports and life are even more so. Hunter The Great combines titles like “Take a deep breathe” by Sue Graves and “Incredible Stories of Courage in Sport” by Brad Herzog and gives kids an entertaining, silly, and straight forward guide of how to get the results they want.

As an M.A. in sport psychology, the statistics pertaining to youth sport are disheartening; 70% of kids participating in youth sport will drop out by the age of 13. Hunter The Great is a researched based story created in hopes to help kids excel and enjoy sport despite the pressures that come with it. I’ve thoroughly examined the sport psychology research on using deep breathing in competition and sport anxiety in youth athletes and I’m passionate about giving young kid the tools to succeed in sport and in life.
RÉSUMÉ

Sarah Marcia (707) 694-3820
64 Oxford Court Petaluma, CA 94952
marcia.sarah@yahoo.com

I am a hardworking and driven young lady who has dedicated her academic career to pursuing a future profession in inspiring achievement. I have combined my passion for inspiring with my extensive history in athletics and am working towards a career as a sports psychologist. My studies have brought forth the importance of properly developing our youth which makes me confident that I can bring a new perspective and dynamic to children’s’ books.

Teaching Experience
  One on One Instructional Aid – Special Education
  Substitute Instructional Aid – Special Education
  Instructional Aid – Remedial Education

Educational Experience
- California State University Chico, Chico, California
  MA degree in kinesiology, Sport Psychology (21 Units) 2012 - Present
  San Jose State University, San Jose, California
  MA Degree in Kinesiology, Sport Psychology (9 units) 2013 - 2013
- California State University Chico, Chico, California
  BA degree in Kinesiology with a minor in Exercise Science 2009 - 2011

Coaching Experience
- Santa Rosa Junior College Softball Team 1 year Assistant Coach 2011 - 2012
- California Haze Gold Junior Olympic Softball, Fairfield, California
  4 year Assistant Coach 2009 - 2012

Athletic Experience
- 4 Year Collegiate Athlete
  o Chico State University Softball Team 2009 - 2011
  o Santa Rosa Junior College Softball Team 2007 – 2009

Writing Experience
- Sports Psychology Blog - Onegameonelove12.com 2012 – Present
- Youth1.com – Sport Psychology articles for Youth athletes 2013 - Present
Hunter loved baseball.

He loved staring down the pitcher with the meanest fastball in town,

[art: Hunter’s at “home plate” in his room across from a stuffed animal propped on a fake “mound.”]

rounding the bases, fans shouting his name,

[art: Hunter’s running from a rock to a stump in his backyard. Off-screen his mom is calling “Hunter! Time for dinner!”]

jumping high to turn line drives into pop flies,

[art: Hunter is running onto the field of another (his brother’s) team’s game to try and catch the ball]

and smacking home runs with his lucky Easton Bat.

[art: Hunter is alone on a diamond, at home plate, pointing out over the fence like Babe Ruth—should take us to a kind of poignant-feeling place]

Baseball! Hunter couldn’t wait for his first game.

He decided it would be a good idea to do some spring training.

[art: A full team of players is in a huddle. The coach is at the center. Very clearly a complete unit—very intent on seriously listening to coach. Hunter is somewhere]
funny, very clearly NOT part of the team. The idea is that he’s snuck over to some older kids’ practice to spy. Maybe he’s hiding in the ball bucket.]

Coach said, “Here are the three secrets to being a true baseball player.”

Perfect, thought Hunter.

“One,” said Coach. “Hustle.”

I know that one already, thought Hunter.

“Two,” said Coach. “Play fair.”

I know that one too, thought Hunter. Maybe I already am a true baseball player.

“Three,” said Coach. “There’s greatness in the air, boys. All you have to do is capture it.”

Capture the greatness? thought Hunter. Now this was a secret. He had some work to do.

Later that day, while Hunter was taking batting practice,

[art: this can be somewhere funny, or text can change if there is a location that would be appropriate for a regular player but Hunter wouldn’t do yet. E.g. “at the cages” and he is somewhere that visually resembles batting cages but is not. Maybe he is standing in Anna’s crib.]

he thought about Coach’s secret. Capture the greatness, thought Hunter.

[art: he claps his hands, holding them in a globe like you would if you’d trapped a fly]

[page turn]

But when he picked up his bat, the greatness escaped. “Hmmm,” said Hunter.

On Friday, he figured he would capture the greatness before his show and tell presentation. This time he had a plan.

[art: He runs as fast as he could across the playground holding a balloon.]

[art: The balloon barely inflates.]

Hunter was so distracted trying to figure out how to capture the greatness that he accidentally told his class that the Chicago Cubs had been founded in 1871 instead of
1870, and he forgot all about showing them the inside of the left sleeve where Alejandro Aguirre had signed his #16 Chicago Cubs jersey.

When Hunter got home from school to find Anna slurping on his favorite hotwheel car he ran right to his bike pump and pumped air straight into Anna’s crib. “Come on, greatness, work!” But Anna didn’t get great and give him his car back. Anna kept slurping.

And as Hunter got ready for bed that night he wished more than ever that he’d been able to figure out how to catch the greatness. The monster in the closet would probably go away forever. “If I could capture greatness,” Hunter said, “then I’d never be scared of any dumb old monster.”

[art: Hunter pulls out a jar and screws the cap on triumphantly.]

“Take that, monster! Greatness!” But the closet still looked dark and mean. And Hunter still felt scared.

Hunter hustled to practice the next morning.

[art: The sun is barely up; Hunter is running, first to arrive to his spy practice.]

He did his fair share.

[art: team is unloading equipment from dugout/container/etc., Hunter is lugging the ball bucket over to wherever it was in its first appearance. Bucket is as big/bigger than he is; no one notices his presence.]

“Maybe Coach will explain the greatness today,” said Hunter. [art: he’s in the ball bucket] “Today, I am not leaving until I get to the bottom of this secret.”

“Remember,” said Coach. “Hustle, play fair, and capture the greatness. Play ball!” [art: the team disperses]

“But HOW!” said Hunter. [art: Hunter tumbles out of ball bucket with balls, funny image. Words should be large]

[art: everyone finally sees Hunter and have various degrees of reaction to him. Kids are kind of weirded out, coach thinks it is funny but is taking Hunter seriously.]

“It’s about time somebody asked that question, kid,” said Coach. “It’s simple. Your belly is like a balloon. That balloon is what we want to fill with greatness. So just breathe air way down into your belly.” Coach sucked in all the air he could get. [art: he’s clearly pursing his lips, exaggerating holding it in]. “Now. Can you can feel that balloon filling up?”
Hunter sucked in a breath.

"Now let it fly" [art: coach is dramatically exhaling and Hunter is mimicking him]

All of a sudden he felt it. There really was greatness in the air. He was calm. He was ready. He was a true baseball player.

On Tuesday, Hunter’s least favorite thing happened. “Let’s see,” said Ms. Lauck. “Hunter, will you lead the class in the Pledge of Allegiance?”


“Great!” said Hunter.

“Great,” said Ms. Lauck.

Hunter sucked in all the greatness he could get. “I pledge Allegiance, to the Flag . . .”

And then the class joined in. He thought it’d never sounded better.

“It worked!” Hunter yelled.

“I am great!” sang Hunter as he raced down his street.

“I’m a true baseball player!” He could feel the greatness buzzing through him. Now that he’d figured out how to capture greatness, everything would be great!

But when he burst in the door, the greatness ended.

[art: Anna is slurping again.] “Anna!” Hunter said. “Not again!”

Hunter groaned. His heart pounded. Then he thought of Coach. “The greatness!” He captured as much as he could in one breath. The greatness started to work.

He let it fly. He felt calmer already. Then he sucked in a whole new breath. And another.

[art: Anna is watching him, looking baby-surprised]

Then Anna joined in.

[art: Anna with puffed out cheeks, capturing the greatness]
And it’s hard to slurp cars while capturing greatness.

[art: Anna has dropped car, but Hunter hasn’t snatched it either. They’re sitting in the crib capturing greatness together. Or some sweet scene of the like.]

Hunter had no time for monsters that night. “Not the night before my first game,” thought Hunter. So he brushed his teeth. His heart pounded. He thought of Coach. The greatness, he thought. Then he yanked open his closet door, sucked in a breath and blew all the greatness in at the monster.

As he’d suspected, the monster had skedaddled.

“Every monster quails in the face of greatness,” said Hunter, and he gulped down greatness in his sleep all night.

The next morning, even Anna was nervous.

[art: Anna is not doing anything babylike, and just looks very nervous.]

“This is the biggest game of my life,” Hunter told Mom.

Because Hunter loved baseball. He loved hustling. He loved playing fair. He loved capturing the greatness. But was he really a true baseball player?

He worried and worried so long that his waffle turned spongy and cold, and then it was time to go.

Before he knew it, Hunter was in the dugout. “What if I strike out?” thought Hunter.

Then he was on deck. “What if I trip down the baseline?”

Then he was at the plate. “What if I run the wrong way?”

With his lucky Easton bat, Hunter tapped home plate. His heart pounded. When he looked at the dugout, Coach gave him a thumbs-up. The greatness! Hunter thought. The mean pitcher wound up his fast fastball. Hunter captured as much as he could.

[page turn]

[art: crack! home run. Scene is identical to elements of all opening ones—with stuffed animals, etc.—except now it’s real and fans really are cheering for him, etc.]

Hunter didn’t strike out, and he didn’t trip. He ran to first and then second and then third, rounding the bases, fans calling his name. He’d smacked that one good.
Market Analysis

Children’s picture books written with a focus on sport psychology are almost non-existent. Sport psychology is a relatively new field, and although it’s common practice for professional athletes to use a sport psychologist, sport psychology in youth sport is a rare find. Peak Performance Sports has released a digital e-book series, “The Confident Sports Kids Picture Book Series” that teaches sport psychology tactics through picture books. These books differ from Hunter The Great in that they are only digital versions, and the learned sport lesson isn’t transferred to other life situations off the field.

There are children’s book that focus on deep breathing for relaxation like; “Take a Deep Breath” by Sue Graves, “Breathe” by Simon and Suisha and “Calm-Down Time” by Elizabeth Verdick. These books are simple “How to” books; there’s no story for a children to immerse themselves into and identify with. The ones that do tell some kind of story are rare and none of them are depicted in a sports setting;

Many instructional books exist which are aimed at helping parents create a healthy sport experience for their children, such as; “Changing the Game: The Parent’s Guide to Raising, Happy, High Performing Athletes, and Giving Youth Sport Back To Our Kids” by John O’ Sullivan. Instructional guides for coaches to help their athletes enjoy sport and perform to their potential are also common, “Positive Coaching: Building
Character and Self-esteem through Sport” by Jim Thompson. However, there is a lack of books written specifically for a youth audience.

_Hunter the Great_ fills this void by offering a story with a character that young children can identify with and learn from. Hunter’s story incorporates relaxation techniques in everyday life as well as in sport, showing kids that sports skills are transferable to life. Research suggests that sport psychology is beneficial to young athletes. _Hunter the Great_ is a researched based book to help familiarize young athletes with proper coping mechanisms to combat sport anxiety.

**Personal Promotion Plan**

Promoting _Hunter the Great_ will start before the book is even published. As a mental game consultant, coach, author of a sport psychology blog, and teacher’s aid I already have an audience that is suitable and interested in my story.

My consulting website and “One Game, One Love” blog already have a plethora of information about who I am and what I do. They are great platforms to use in order to raise awareness of my book as I already have a consistent audience with interests that would draw them to purchase and recommend _Hunter the Great_. I plan to add information about _Hunter the Great_ to my sites as well as ordering information and appearance requests.

Facebook is another perfect platform to promote _Hunter the Great_ as I already have a plethora of connections within the site. Along with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are perfect places to draw attention to my book by creating accounts, and posting information about my children’s book and myself.
I plan to also promote my book by contacting the schools around my current residing location and offer to make appearances. These appearances will consist of reading my book, educating the children on what sport psychology is, and discussing the ways they can reduce stress in sport. This is a perfect opportunity for me as I am familiar with educating youth on sport psychology due to my career as a mental game consultant and elementary school teacher’s aid.

This book will be a good addition to the current curriculum I teach to my high school athletes. I plan to share my book during the sessions with my clients when we focus on relaxation strategies. Although the content may be a little young for the athletes I work with, everyone can appreciate and enjoy a children’s book. It is a fun and different way to teach relaxation strategies.

I also plan to contact local bookstores and sell the fact that I am a local author who would be willing to come in and do readings, speaking engagements, and signings. This will promote my book and hopefully get all the local bookstores to carry my story on their shelves.
We are seeking: Fiction and nonfiction manuscripts for picture books for children ages 1 to 8.  
**Word count:** Up to 1000 words.

**Cover letter (in body of email) should include the following:**
- Brief description of story
- Short bio mentioning previous publications or other background information relevant to your story
- Please provide titles for up to three comparative books published in the past five years. These should be books that have a similar audience to your book and that you feel will compare with your book in the marketplace. Explain how your manuscript is different from these books.

**Important note regarding illustrations:**
- It is NOT necessary to provide illustrations with the story text
- If the story is illustrated, we will review text and art separately (Note that we may be interested in the story but not the artwork, or vice versa)
- Send illustrated work in PDF or JPEG attachments. File size not to exceed 4MB.

**EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS:**
- Send email and attachments to submissions@awhitmanco.com
- **Subject line should read:** “PICTURE BOOK: (story title) by (author name).”
Description of Story

I hope you will consider reading my 1,000 word educational children’s book, *Hunter The Great*. Hunter is a young little league hopeful who is determined to discover what it takes to be a truly great baseball player. Hustling and playing fair he’s got down to a science, but capturing the greatness in the air? This baseball secret has Hunter stumped. Sealing it in a jar, blasting it from a bike pump, and simply clasping it in his hands are all dead ends, which is unfortunate, as Hunter is in need of some greatness for far more than just baseball. If only he could capture it.

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As an M.A. in sport psychology, the statistics pertaining to youth sport are disheartening; 70% of kids participating in youth sport will drop out by the age of 13. *Hunter The Great* is a researched based story created in hopes to help kids excel and enjoy sport despite the pressures that come with it. I’ve thoroughly examined the sport psychology research on using deep breathing in competition and sport anxiety in youth athletes and I’m passionate about giving young kid the tools to succeed in sport and in life.

Short Bio

The author of *Hunter the Great*, Sarah Marcia, has been dedicated to sport since the young age of eight. The game of softball has guided her path in life as she played
collegiate ball for Chico State, graduated with a BA in Kinesiology and a focus in coaching, has been coaching competitive softball and giving private pitching lessons since 2009, and recently finished her Masters degree in sport psychology. Her experiences and expertise in sport have ignited a passion to create positive experiences for all young athletes, after all “The trophies will collect dust, but the memories will last forever” – Mary Lou R. Sarah has been expressing this passion and offering tips to coaches, parents, and athletes on her sport psychology blog: onegameonelove12.com for the past two years. As well as writing for other sport websites like youth1.com to help athletes have an optimal experience in sport.

**Comparative Books**

Books such as: “Take a Deep Breath” by Sue Graves, “Breathe” by Simon and Suisha and “Calm-Down Time” by Elizabeth Verdick are all books that cover the topic of breathing for relaxation. However these books are simple “How to” books; there’s no story for a children to immerse themselves into.

Lori lite, author of titles such as “Angry octopus” and “Bubble Riding”, creates stories for children to immerse themselves into while they learn relaxation, however her books serve the purpose of relaxing for bedtime and also don’t take place in a sport setting.

Hunter the Great fills the gap in children’s literature as it brings sport psychology to the forefront and gives children a researched based approach to learning the skill of deep breathing. It not only effectively teaches children how to use deep breathing through sport, it also gives the children a story to enjoy, hopefully one they will enjoy enough to read over and over again.
Hunter loved baseball.

He loved

staring down the pitcher with the meanest fastball in town,

[art: Hunter’s at “home plate” in his room across from a stuffed animal propped on a fake “mound.”]

rounding the bases, fans shouting his name,

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[art: Hunter pulls out a jar and screws the cap on triumphantly.]

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He did his fair share.

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“But HOW!” said Hunter. [art: Hunter tumbles out of ball bucket with balls, funny image. Words should be large]

[art: everyone finally sees Hunter and have various degrees of reaction to him. Kids are kind of weirded out, coach thinks it is funny but is taking Hunter seriously.]

“It’s about time somebody asked that question, kid,” said Coach. “It’s simple. Your belly is like a balloon. That balloon is what we want to fill with greatness. So just breathe air way down into your belly.” Coach sucked in all the air he could get. [art: he’s clearly pursing his lips, exaggerating holding it in]. “Now. Can you can feel that balloon filling up?”
Hunter sucked in a breath.

"Now let it fly" [art: coach is dramatically exhaling and Hunter is mimicking him]

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And it’s hard to slurp cars while capturing greatness.

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[page turn]

[art: crack! home run. Scene is identical to elements of all opening ones—with stuffed animals, etc.—except now it’s real and fans really are cheering for him, etc.]

Hunter didn’t strike out, and he didn’t trip. He ran to first and then second and then third, rounding the bases, fans calling his name. He’d smacked that one good.
[page turn]

[art: Hunter jumping on home base]

Hunter was a true baseball player.
APPENDIX E
WHAT WE WANT
We are committed to expanding our picture book, chapter book, and middle-grade fiction lists. We’re interested in great stories with engaging characters in all genres (mystery, fantasy, adventure, historical, etc.), especially those with particularly American subjects.

WHAT TO SEND
Please send either the complete picture book manuscript, or a synopsis and two sample chapters of your fiction work.
All submissions are sent at the sender's risk; we can accept no responsibility for lost or damaged manuscripts so please ensure you keep a copy of your work. Please do not send originals.

WHERE TO SEND IT
EMAIL:
submissions@kanemiller.com
Your cover letter, manuscript or synopsis and sample chapters should be in the body of your email. Please do not send attachments or links.

USPS:
Editorial Department
Kane Miller
4901 Morena Blvd Ste 213
San Diego, CA 92117
Please do not send anything requiring a signature.

AND MORE
Please do allow us up to 90 days for a response. A self-addressed stamped envelope must be included if you send your submission via USPS; otherwise you will not receive a reply.

ART SUBMISSIONS
Illustrators may send postcards (preferred) or other non-returnable illustration samples via USPS, or links to external websites via email to the above addresses. Please do not send original artwork, or samples on CD.
**Cover Letter**

I hope you will consider reading my 1,000 word educational children’s book, *Hunter The Great*. Hunter is a young little league hopeful who is determined to discover what it takes to be a truly great baseball player. Hustling and playing fair he’s got down to a science, but capturing the greatness in the air? This baseball secret has Hunter stumped. Sealing it in a jar, blasting it from a bike pump, and simply clasping it in his hands are all dead ends, which is unfortunate, as Hunter is in need of some greatness for far more than just baseball. If only he could capture it.

Stories that demonstrate sport psychology strategies for young kids are rare, and those that bridge the gap between sports and life are even more so. *Hunter the Great* creatively presents Terry Orlick’s (2002) Jelly Belly technique as the solution to capturing the greatness while also demonstrating that greatness comes from within.

As an M.A. in sport psychology, the statistics pertaining to youth sport are disheartening; 70% of kids participating in youth sport will drop out by the age of 13. *Hunter the Great* is a researched based story created in hopes to help kids excel and enjoy sport despite the pressures that come with it. I’ve thoroughly examined the sport psychology research on using deep breathing in competition and sport anxiety in youth athletes and I’m passionate about giving young kid the tools to succeed in sport and in life.
Hunter the Great
By Sarah Marcia

Hunter loved baseball.

He loved

staring down the pitcher with the meanest fastball in town,

[art: Hunter’s at “home plate” in his room across from a stuffed animal propped on a fake “mound.”]

rounding the bases, fans shouting his name,

[art: Hunter’s running from a rock to a stump in his backyard. Off-screen his mom is calling “Hunter! Time for dinner!”]

jumping high to turn line drives into pop flies,

[art: Hunter is running onto the field of another (his brother’s) team’s game to try and catch the ball]

and smacking home runs with his lucky Easton Bat.

[art: Hunter is alone on a diamond, at home plate, pointing out over the fence like Babe Ruth—should take us to a kind of poignant-feeling place]

Baseball! Hunter couldn’t wait for his first game.

He decided it would be a good idea to do some spring training.

[art: A full team of players is in a huddle. The coach is at the center. Very clearly a complete unit—very intent on seriously listening to coach. Hunter is somewhere}
funny, very clearly NOT part of the team. The idea is that he’s snuck over to some older kids’ practice to spy. Maybe he’s hiding in the ball bucket.]

Coach said, “Here are the three secrets to being a true baseball player.”

Perfect, thought Hunter.

“One,” said Coach. “Hustle.”

I know that one already, thought Hunter.

“Two,” said Coach. “Play fair.”

I know that one too, thought Hunter. Maybe I already am a true baseball player.

“Three,” said Coach. “There’s greatness in the air, boys. All you have to do is capture it.”

Capture the greatness? thought Hunter. Now this was a secret. He had some work to do.

Later that day, while Hunter was taking batting practice,

[art: this can be somewhere funny, or text can change if there is a location that would be appropriate for a regular player but Hunter wouldn’t do yet. E.g. “at the cages” and he is somewhere that visually resembles batting cages but is not. Maybe he is standing in Anna’s crib.]

he thought about Coach’s secret. Capture the greatness, thought Hunter.

[art: he claps his hands, holding them in a globe like you would if you’d trapped a fly]

[page turn]

But when he picked up his bat, the greatness escaped. “Hmmm,” said Hunter.

On Friday, he figured he would capture the greatness before his show and tell presentation. This time he had a plan.
[art: He runs as fast as he could across the playground holding a balloon.]

[art: The balloon barely inflates.]

Hunter was so distracted trying to figure out how to capture the greatness that he accidentally told his class that the Chicago Cubs had been founded in 1871 instead of 1870, and he forgot all about showing them the inside of the left sleeve where
Alejandro Aguirre had signed his #16 Chicago Cubs jersey.

When Hunter got home from school to find Anna slurping on his favorite hotwheel car he ran right to his bike pump and pumped air straight into Anna’s crib. “Come on, greatness, work!” But Anna didn’t get great and give him his car back. Anna kept slurping.

And as Hunter got ready for bed that night he wished more than ever that he’d been able to figure out how to catch the greatness. The monster in the closet would probably go away forever. “If I could capture greatness,” Hunter said, “then I’d never be scared of any dumb old monster.”

[art: Hunter pulls out a jar and screws the cap on triumphantly.]

“Take that, monster! Greatness!” But the closet still looked dark and mean. And Hunter still felt scared.

Hunter hustled to practice the next morning.

[art: The sun is barely up; Hunter is running, first to arrive to his spy practice.]

He did his fair share.

[art: team is unloading equipment from dugout/container/etc., Hunter is lugging the ball bucket over to wherever it was in its first appearance. Bucket is as big/bigger than he is; no one notices his presence.]

“Maybe Coach will explain the greatness today,” said Hunter. [art: he’s in the ball bucket] “Today, I am not leaving until I get to the bottom of this secret.”

“Remember,” said Coach. “Hustle, play fair, and capture the greatness. Play ball!” [art: the team disperses]

“But HOW!” said Hunter. [art: Hunter tumbles out of ball bucket with balls, funny image. Words should be large]

[art: everyone finally sees Hunter and have various degrees of reaction to him. Kids are kind of weirded out, coach thinks it is funny but is taking Hunter seriously.]

“It’s about time somebody asked that question, kid,” said Coach. “It’s simple. Your belly is like a balloon. That balloon is what we want to fill with greatness. So just breathe air way down into your belly.” Coach sucked in all the air he could get. [art: he’s clearly pursing his lips, exaggerating holding it in]. “Now. Can you can feel that balloon filling up?”
Hunter sucked in a breath.

"Now let it fly" [art: coach is dramatically exhaling and Hunter is mimicking him]

All of a sudden he felt it. There really was greatness in the air. He was calm. He was ready. He was a true baseball player.

On Tuesday, Hunter’s least favorite thing happened. “Let’s see,” said Ms. Lauck. “Hunter, will you lead the class in the Pledge of Allegiance?”


“Great!” said Hunter.

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Hunter sucked in all the greatness he could get. “I pledge Allegiance, to the Flag . . .”

And then the class joined in. He thought it’d never sounded better.

“It worked!” Hunter yelled.

“I am great!” sang Hunter as he raced down his street.

“I’m a true baseball player!” He could feel the greatness buzzing through him. Now that he’d figured out how to capture greatness, everything would be great!

But when he burst in the door, the greatness ended.

[art: Anna is slurping again.] “Anna!” Hunter said. “Not again!”

Hunter groaned. His heart pounded. Then he thought of Coach. “The greatness!” He captured as much as he could in one breath. The greatness started to work.

He let it fly. He felt calmer already. Then he sucked in a whole new breath. And another.

[art: Anna is watching him, looking baby-surprised]

Then Anna joined in.

[art: Anna with puffed out cheeks, capturing the greatness]
And it’s hard to slurp cars while capturing greatness.

[art: Anna has dropped car, but Hunter hasn’t snatched it either. They’re sitting in the crib capturing greatness together. Or some sweet scene of the like.]

Hunter had no time for monsters that night. “Not the night before my first game,” thought Hunter. So he brushed his teeth. His heart pounded. He thought of Coach. The greatness, he thought. Then he yanked open his closet door, sucked in a breath and blew all the greatness in at the monster.

As he’d suspected, the monster had skedaddled.

“Every monster quails in the face of greatness,” said Hunter, and he gulped down greatness in his sleep all night.

The next morning, even Anna was nervous.

[art: Anna is not doing anything babylike, and just looks very nervous.]

“This is the biggest game of my life,” Hunter told Mom.

Because Hunter loved baseball. He loved hustling. He loved playing fair. He loved capturing the greatness. But was he really a true baseball player?

He worried and worried so long that his waffle turned spongy and cold, and then it was time to go.

Before he knew it, Hunter was in the dugout. “What if I strike out?” thought Hunter.

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With his lucky Easton bat, Hunter tapped home plate. His heart pounded. When he looked at the dugout, Coach gave him a thumbs-up. The greatness! Hunter thought. The mean pitcher wound up his fast fastball. Hunter captured as much as he could.

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[art: crack! home run. Scene is identical to elements of all opening ones—with stuffed animals, etc.—except now it’s real and fans really are cheering for him, etc.]

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Please note: do not mail hard copies to our office unless requested. Unrequested hard copies will be returned unopened.

Many of you have asked what we are looking for, so here are some ideas. This list will evolve and change as we begin to sell our early lists, so check back occasionally for new information.

We will consider picture books, early readers, midgrade novels, novelties, and informational books for all ages. Although we are not searching for YA fiction in particular, we would consider projects that tied in with the subject areas in which we are publishing. We are mainly publishing single titles but are open to series ideas.

Our parent company publishes many excellent books in the fields of ecology, independent living, farm living, wilderness living, recycling, and other green topics, and this will be a theme in our children’s book line. We are also searching for books that have strong educational themes and that help inform children of the world in which they live. We are also interested in books with special needs themes, such as autism, ADHD, food allergies, and so forth.
Introduction Letter

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My experience as a writer consists of writing articles for my own personal sport psychology blog, onegameonelove12.com, where I share my perspectives, passion, and expertise with athletes, coaches, and parents in hopes to enhance their sporting experience. I have also provided sport psychology articles for youth1.com for the past year; these articles are focused on creating a positive experience in sport for young athletes.
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