



# Athletes and Mental Health

Breaking Barriers and Promoting Well-  
Being



# Note from BC2M

**This presentation includes material that may be more difficult for some of us to engage with. That's OK. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, in any way, and for any reason, please take liberties to remove yourself from the space and find someone you trust to talk to.**

**With love, BC2M**



# Imagine This!



You're watching your favorite athlete perform flawlessly on the field, but beneath that display of athleticism lies a hidden battle with anxiety and self-doubt. Mental health challenges can affect even the most accomplished athletes.

**MENTAL WELL-BEING IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS  
PHYSICAL ABILITY!**

## PRIORITIZING ATHLETES MENTAL HEALTH

- Mental health plays a crucial role in the overall well-being and performance of high school athletes.
- Athletes face unique stressors and pressures, including intense competition, performance expectations, balancing academics and sports, and managing injuries.
- Ignoring mental health can lead to negative consequences, such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and impaired athletic performance.
- By prioritizing mental health, we can empower athletes to thrive both on and off the field, promoting their long-term success and happiness.

## OVERVIEW

Provide Insight

Break the Stigma

Identify signs and symptoms

Share strategies

Highlight the role of the team and coaches

Discuss the importance of developing a whole sense of self

Foster resilience

Empower!

# Understanding the Challenges

## Collegiate student athlete stats

39.5%

Reported symptoms of depression

24.5%

Reported symptoms of anxiety

8%

Reported symptoms of low self-esteem

The prevalence of these conditions as well as eating disorders is higher among athletes compared to non-athletes.

## Impact of sports-related stress and pressure

- Intense sports-related stress and pressure can significantly impact the mental well-being of athletes.
- The pressure to perform well, meet expectations, and achieve success can lead to increased anxiety and stress levels.
- Excessive focus on winning, college scholarships, or professional aspirations can contribute to a heightened sense of pressure and burnout.
- The fear of failure and the constant need to prove oneself can negatively affect self-esteem and self-confidence.

Wolanin, A., Hong, E., Marks, D., Panchoo, K., & Gross, M. (2016). Prevalence of clinically elevated depressive symptoms in college athletes and differences by gender and sport. *British journal of sports medicine*, 50(3), 167–171.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2015-095756>

Weber, S. R., Winkelmann, Z. K., Monsma, E. V., Arent, S. M., & Torres-McGehee, T. M. (2023). An Examination of Depression, Anxiety, and Self-Esteem in Collegiate Student-Athletes. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(2), 1211. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20021211>

# Thought Experiment!



**Imagine being a high school athlete, juggling rigorous training schedules, competitions, and academic responsibilities. Consider the intense pressure to perform at a high level while facing the scrutiny of coaches, teammates, parents, and even the public. Reflect on the sacrifices made, such as spending less time with friends, missing social events, and dealing with physical injuries. Visualize the internal struggle of balancing personal expectations, the pressure to perform, and maintaining mental well-being.**



# Breaking the Stigma



Stigma is a significant barrier that prevents many athletes from seeking help for their mental health concerns.

- Promote Empathy
- Normalize Conversations
- Empower Mental Health Education

## Stigmatizing Phrases

"NO EXCUSES."

"TOUGHEN UP."

"JUST PUSH THROUGH."

## CHAMPIONING MENTAL HEALTH

Athlete Mental Health Advocates



# Signs and Symptoms



## COMMON SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AMONG ATHLETES:

Increased fatigue

Changes in behavior

Loss of interest

Anxiety and excessive worry

Persistent decrease in  
performance

Difficulty concentrating

Changes in appetite

Emotional instability

Sleep disturbances

## ENCOURAGING OPEN DIALOGUE AND SEEKING

### HELP

Normalize conversations

Educate on available resources

De-stigmatize seeking help

Supportive environment

Confidentiality and trust

Encourage self-care practices

Provide peer support



# Strategies for Promoting Mental Well-being


bring  
change  
to mind



## Self-care practices

- Sleep Well: Prioritize rest for recovery.
- Eat Healthy: Fuel body and mind.
- Stay Active: Exercise for mind-body balance.
- Manage Stress: Try relaxation techniques.

## Balancing academics, sports, and personal life

- Time Management: Strategize to balance academics, sports, and personal life.
  - Prioritization: Prioritize your focus. Rank your tasks.
  - Realistic Goals: Align commitments with achievable aims.
  - Seeking Support: Reach out to teachers, coaches, peers.
  - Boundaries: Prevent burnout, maintain balance.
- 

# Strategies for Promoting Mental Well-being

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to mind

## BUILD A SUPPORT NETWORK

### COACHES, TEAMMATES, AND TRUSTED ADULTS

- **Foster Open Communication:** express concerns and emotions to coaches, teammates, and trusted adults.
- **Team bonding activities:** team-building exercises or social events enhance camaraderie and create a supportive environment.
- **Seek mentorship:** find mentors who can provide guidance, support, and advice.
- **Utilize school resources:** Research the availability of school counselors or Mental Health Professionals who can offer support and guidance.

# DEVELOPING A WELL-ROUNDED IDENTITY BEYOND SPORTS

ATHLETES ARE MORE THAN JUST THEIR PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE



FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF AND KNOWING WHO YOU ARE MAKES YOU A WELL-ROUNDED PERSON

Explore      Art      Friends

Musi      Volunteer

<sup>c</sup> Theater

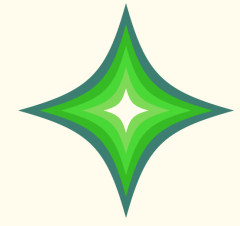


 **CREATE A BEAUTIFUL COMPLETE PICTURE OF WHO YOU ARE!** 

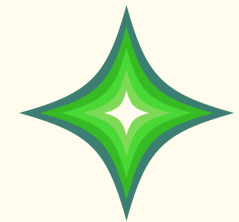


HAILEY VAN LITH- LSU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

# DISCUSSION QUESTION!



Beyond sports, what other hobbies or activities have you explored that contribute to your holistic identity as an individual, outside of being an athlete? How do these activities or hobbies enhance your overall development and well-being?



# Seeking Professional Help

Receiving the right help matters!

**School Counselor**- Play a crucial role in offering mental health support to students on campus, address a wide range of concerns, guide individuals through challenging situations.

**School Social Worker** - Play an important role in providing guidance, support, and connecting therapeutic resources to help individuals navigate and improve their mental well-being.

**Sports Psychologist**- Specialize in providing mental health support for athletes, helping them manage performance anxiety, enhance focus, develop mental resilience, and ultimately achieve peak performance and overall mental well-being.



# CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

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change  
to mind



- Coach's Role: Vital in cultivating a positive atmosphere for athletes.
- Trusting Relationships: Open communication to support athletes' mental health.
- Goal Setting: Establish achievable expectations for athlete growth.
- Athlete's Role: Foster appreciation, support, and inclusivity for enhanced mental well-being.



COACH GORRELL MENTAL PERFORMANCE COACH

LEBRON

# THE POWER OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK AND MINDSET

Overcoming Challenges and Building

Resilience



The way we talk to ourselves matters!  
Positive self-talk enhances focus, confidence,  
and motivation during competition



### TECHNIQUES!

Breathing exercises and mindfulness techniques to calm nerves

Visualizing success and focusing on the process rather than the outcome

### POSITIVE SELF TALK PHRASES:

"I am capable and prepared"

"I am resilient and can overcome any obstacle"

"Every challenge is an opportunity for growth and improvement"



Create a growth mindset by focusing on  
effort, learning, and continuous  
improvement.



## EMPOWER YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE SELF-TALK!

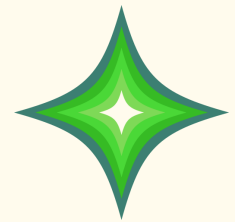


AARON DONALD- LA RAMS

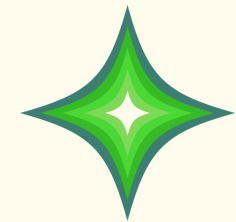


JAZMIN SWAYERS- BRITISH OLYMPIC TRACK AND FIELD

# DISCUSSION QUESTION!



What ways can you help to create a positive and mentally healthy environment?





# PRIORITIZE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH!



# RESOURCES



## SOCIAL MEDIA

IG- @SPORTSMENTALADVOCATE

TIK TOK- @THEINVISIBLEATHLETE

LINKEDIN- ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

## PODCAST

NIKE'S NO OFF-SEASON

REAL POD- VICTORIA GARRICK BROWNE

VOICE IN SPORT

## ARTICLES

MENTAL HEALTH BEST PRACTICES

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL WELLNESS-

[HTTPS://NCAAORG.S3.AMAZONAWS.COM/SSI/MENTAL/SSI\\_MENTALHEALTHBESTPRACTICES.PDF](https://NCAAORG.S3.AMAZONAWS.COM/SSI/MENTAL/SSI_MENTALHEALTHBESTPRACTICES.PDF)

## WEBSITES

SOCIETY FOR SPORT, EXERCISE, & PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY-  
[APADIVISIONS.ORG/DIVISION-47](http://APADIVISIONS.ORG/DIVISION-47)



# GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

## **988 Suicide & Crisis lifeline**

call 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

<https://988lifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

## **Crisis text line**

TEXT "BC2M" TO **741741**

<https://www.crisistextline.org/get-help/emotional-abuse>

## **Love Is Respect National dating abuse Helpline**

Call **1-866.331.9474**

Text "Loveis" to **22522**

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-relationship-help/>

## **The trevor Project**

Call **1-866-488-7386**

Text "START" to **678678**

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>

## **FIND A LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST IN YOUR AREA**

[HTTP://LOCATOR.APA.ORG/](http://locator.apa.org/)

## **Substance abuse and mental health services administration**

call **1-877-SAMHSA** (1-877-726-4727).

<https://www.samhsa.gov/>