

RECOGNIZING MENTAL HEALTH IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT- ATHLETES

Physical/Psychological/Behavioral Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Significant weight loss/weight gain
- Complaints of frequent dehydration, being cold, weakness/fatigue
- Changes in energy level and sleep patterns (sleep during the day and awake at night)
- Rapid breathing, increased heart rate, sweating
- Changes in eating patterns - increased/decreased
- Difficulty with focus and concentration
- Apprehension, reduced confidence or diminished performance in sport and/or academics
- Preoccupation with weight and eating
- Irritability/feeling on edge and Restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities of enjoyment (e.g., sport, extracurricular activities)
- Reduced motivation
- Depressed mood, including or not including crying episodes
- Feelings of anger, worthlessness, helplessness, inadequacy
- Social withdrawal/avoidance from others
- Frequent worry/overly worried
- Unhealthy use of substances such as alcohol, drugs

Severe Symptoms Requiring Immediate Professional Help

- Thoughts or plans of suicide
- Suicide attempts
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling overly suspicious or fearful without evidence
- Hearing voices/seeing things that no one else can see or hear
- Unexplained changes in thinking, speech or writing
- Extreme depression
- Having a plan to end life
- Giving away personal possessions
- Threats of suicide - verbal, written, nonverbal
- Previous attempts
- Gathering of items to carry out act - pills, rope, gun, etc.

If someone you know is in immediate crisis intervention, please call
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

How to Help

Coaches of High School Athletes

Things to focus on when working with your athletes:

- Identify mental health resources and professionals in your area
- Monitor student-athlete behaviors - create routine mental health check-ins
- Offer mental skills training for members
- Place importance of culture on academic and person-focused over success-focused
- Offer information on physical health improvement and care
- Educate self and staff on mental health signs and symptoms
- Destigmatize seeking help for mental health concerns
- Provide support, empathy and respect for privacy when listening



Stressors to be aware of:

- Over Training
- Early Specialization
- Identity Crisis
- Demands to Balance other parts of life
- Maintaining Weight
- Hazing

Parents of High School Athletes

Injuries, emotional stress, and physical strain can put student-athletes at higher risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts than their non-athletic peers.

The pressure to succeed can lead athletes to put sports goals and expectations — especially winning — above their other needs, increasing the difficulty of discussing more significant issues with their coaches and mentors.

Sports participation, however, does not make an athlete immune from mental health conditions.



Things you can do to support your student-athlete:

- Remind your child they are a student first
- Encourage healthy food choices
- Encourage rest
- Let the coaches coach
- Focus on character building
- Be involved and show up

You are not alone in the journey of supporting your student-athlete(s). Below are resources that can be of further assistance.

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<http://blog.johnsonmemorial.org/6-ways-parents-can-support-student-athlete>