



# Practical Tips for Mental Concerns

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# Disclaimer

- While today's talk will discuss some practical ways to manage mental disorders, if we fully understood how to deal with the minds of young adults we would have already written a book and retired. This presentation is meant as a starting point for athletic directors, coaches, parents, and athletes.

# Overview

- Overview of Mental Health in Secondary School Students
- Athletics & Mental Health
- Common Red Flags and Conditions
- Practical Tips to Implement

# Mental Health Facts

- 1 in 3 adolescents meet criteria for anxiety disorder
  - If you have a roster of 100 athletes, 33 of them will meet the criteria for anxiety disorder.
- 1 in 5 were affected by behavioral disorders
- 1 in 6 consider suicide
- 1 in 7 experiences mood disorders
- 1 in 8 had substance abuse disorders
- **Only 1 in 5 will seek help**
  - Of the 33/100 meeting the criteria, only 7 will seek help. The other 26 will not.

# Why Is This A Problem?

- Underdiagnoses & Under appreciation
  - Mental health concerns ignite negative emotions in parents, teachers, coaches, teammates
  - It's socially acceptable for Johnny to miss Friday's game for an ankle sprain but it's not socially acceptable for Johnny to miss Friday's game due to a mental health concern.
- Looking for Different Symptoms
  - Children display different symptoms for mental concerns than adults. Adults look for same symptoms they have
- Lack of Services
- Stigmas/Discrimination
  - Mental Health Disorders are viewed as weaknesses. A mental health concern is an injury to the brain. Just like an ankle sprain is an injury to the ankle.

# What Are Some Common Diseases and Symptoms?

# Eating Disorders

- Anorexia
  - Extreme Thinness
  - Compulsive Exercise
  - Dry & Yellowish Skin
  - Lethargic
- Bulimia
  - Chronic Sore Throat
  - Swollen Neck & Jaw
  - Dehydrated
  - “Normal” Appearance

# Anxiety & Depression

- Depression
  - Lack of Energy & Interest
  - Change in Eating and/or Sleeping
  - Decreased Performance
  - Difficulty with Academics and Concentration
  - Sensitivity to Rejection/Failure
- Anxiety
  - Feeling Apprehensive or Powerless
  - Changes in Body Processes
    - Heart Rate, Breathing Rate, Sweating



# What Triggers Should I Look For?

# Mental Health Factor For High School Athletes

- Triggering Events (Can all occur in a teenager's life, can be kept hidden)
  - Poor Performance
  - Conflicts with Coaches/Teammates
  - Class Concerns
  - Family Issues
  - Violence
  - Burnout
  - End of Playing Career
  - Change in Importance of Sport or Expectations

# Mental Health Factors for High School Athletes

- Athletic Identity
  - When removed (due to injury, end of career, cut from team) can leave individual not knowing who they are, how to act, how to socialize.
- Specialization & Training
  - Intense demands on time and energy can serve as triggering events.
- Weight Management
- Balance Demands
  - School, home, athletics, friends, multiple extracurricular activities, college decisions, social media...

# Injuries & Mental Health

- Normal Cognitive Response to Injury
  - Injury is viewed as a stressor
  - Response determines behavior and emotions
  - Can lead to mental concerns
- Social Support
  - Necessary for athlete to respond positively to an injury
  - Necessary from coaches, healthcare providers, family, and friends
  - Includes information on what will happen, how to cope, doctor's appointments, accommodations
- Loss of Connection to Team & Friends
  - No longer have same interactions and experiences

# Concussions & Mental Health

- Concussed Athlete = 3x more likely to be diagnosed with depression
- 10% of Concussed Athletes had depressive disorder within 6 months of diagnosis
- Importance of Return to Learn and Return to Play Policies

# What Can Be Done Within The High School?

# Practical Tips

- Include Screening Questions in Pre-Participation Exam
  - Trouble Sleeping?
  - Wish They Had More Energy?
  - Think About Things Over and Over
  - Feel Anxious/Nervous
  - Sad/Depressed
- Red Flag Those Forms with Answers Representing Possible Condition
- Adding these questions to your pre-participation exam will prompt physician to ask the student-athlete further questions, and begin the treatment process

# Practical Tips

- Questions to Ask Any Athlete You Feel May Have a Mental Health Concern
  - How are things going?
  - Tell me what is going on?
  - Tell me more about (incident)?
  - This (event/behavior) concerns me. Is there something I can do to help or need to know about?
- These are not easy conversations to have. But they are crucial conversations to have.



# Practical Tips

- Behaviors to Monitor
  - Changes in Eating/Sleeping/Weight
  - Social Withdrawal
    - Smartphones have made social withdrawal easier for adolescents.
    - Pay special attention when observing this behavior
  - Decreased Interest
  - Loss of Emotion
  - Irritable/Agitation/Mood Swings
  - Overuse or Frequent Injuries
    - The normally injury-free athlete is now sustaining consist

# Future Mental Health Services

- HF 690
  - Child Mental Health Bill
  - Increases Availability of Mental Health Services
- Telemedicine
  - Recently Expanded Within State
  - Some Practicality and Benefits for Telepsychiatry
  - Being Explored by Providers in Des Moines Metro

# Practical Tips

- Treat it like an injury.
- Involve, Educate, Plan
  - Done with parents, coaches, teachers, counselors, athletic trainers
- Return to Learn and Play Plans (<https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/32/Iowa%20Concussion%20Guidelines%202017%20-%20electronic.pdf>)
  - Required starting July 1, 2019. Will be a good time to plan for all mental health concerns.
- In the End, You Don't have to Diagnose, Just Recognize

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