



VOLLEYBALLBC

# MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

Resources for volleyball  
programs to promote  
positive mental health and  
well-being





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## SECTION D – WEBINARS

We will be hosting and recording a number of webinars based on mental health topics that were identified by the volleyball community. As the recordings come available, they will be posted online with the toolkit. Additional resources and tools may be added to align with each targeted webinar or subject area.

## THANK YOU AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the support and input of the volleyball community, with a special thank you to the Safe Sport Working Group members who provided insight and feedback to shape the development of this toolkit.

We are deeply appreciative of the support from various mental health support agencies and organisations who graciously allowed us to reproduce materials and handouts for this toolkit.

**Dr. Shaunna Taylor & Emma Gibbons - October 2023**



## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

### Welcome to Volleyball BC's Mental Health Toolkit!

Sport has the power to positively change lives and build communities but it can only do this when the experience places physical, social, and emotional well-being at the very core. Supporting positive mental health is a key component of delivering participant-centred volleyball. While high performance sport is often resourced to support participants' mental health and well-being, the vast majority of volleyball programs, and activities are delivered at a community level by volunteer-based organizations with stretched resources and capacity. Our intention with this toolkit is to provide simple, easy-to-execute actions that any volleyball organization can take to promote positive mental health and well-being.

### Why is this important in volleyball?

Over the past few years, Volleyball BC has placed participant safety and well-being at the centre of our strategic plan. Our vision, mission and values emphasise our efforts to ensure that all participants receive a safe and positive volleyball experience in British Columbia. In particular, we created the specific goal of "Fostering a Safe Environment" in which *"there are leading standards and practices to protect the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all involved."* A key initiative for this area is to become a leader in safe sport, of which positive mental health and well-being is central.

*"The mental readiness of an athlete is equally important to physical readiness, and I witnessed 12 year olds lose their minds over their own mistakes, and those of their teammates, over the course of this season... if some behaviour is not addressed in these early years, I worry for their mental health down the road"*

*"The toughest challenge for volleyball is preserving the mental health of young players who are deeply affected by the stress of competitive volleyball in game situations. Their fear of making mistakes can be crippling and very stressful, leading to unhealthy coping mechanisms."*

*"I enjoy playing the sport, but sometimes teammates can put you down or give really unhelpful criticism that just takes the fun out of the sport."*

*"Overcoming insecurities and feeling good enough"*

From 2021 onward, Volleyball BC undertook surveys, focus groups, idea boards, and other means to gather information about mental health and well-being in volleyball. Through this work, we learned:

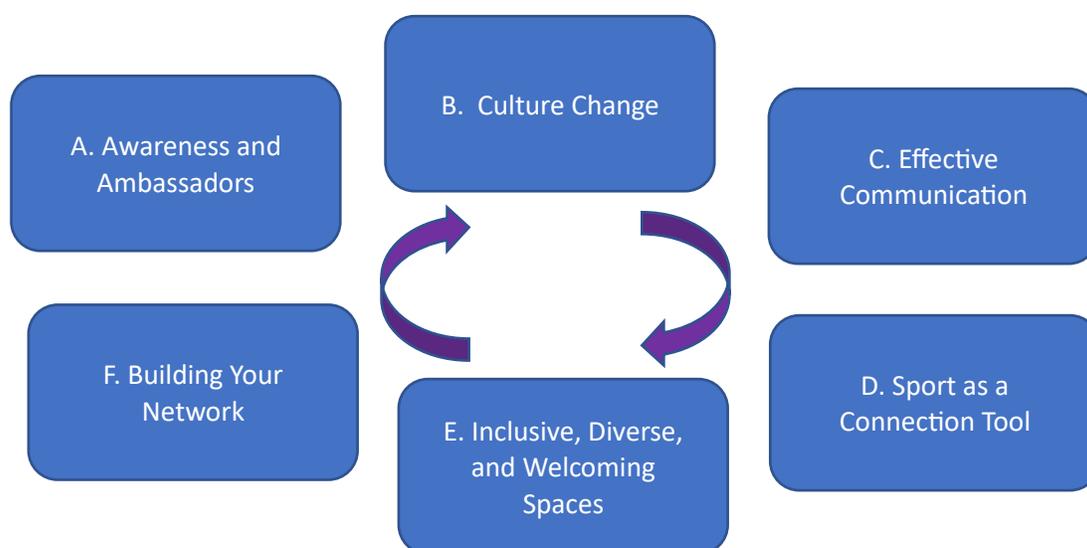
- From 2021 to 2023 **Fear of Failure** and **General Life Stress** were consistently identified as the top negative factors impacting Youth and Adult Players, Coaches and Referees, Males and Females while participating in volleyball.
- **Concerns about Body Appearance** and **Team Culture** were rated significantly higher by female than by male participants as factors impacting performance.
- **Mental Exhaustion** and **Physical fatigue** were the top two factors annually listed by all respondents as being experienced during a volleyball season.
- Coaches and Referees indicated that mental health and abuse and maltreatment are the areas where they have the **least resources, support and knowledge**.
- At our Provincial Championships, players were asked to name the biggest challenge they faced during the season. Overall the top 3 themes were **Performance Anxiety, Team Relationships, and Technical Skills**. In addition, youth said that they would welcome information or support in these three areas: **Performance Anxiety, Self-Care, and Team Dynamics/Relationships**

This research and listening formed the genesis of this toolkit which we hope will help organizations create a supportive volleyball environment for positive mental health and well-being. The content for this toolkit has been created with consideration of best practice and information from community, provincial, and national experts and organizations such as the Coaching Association of Canada, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport, Canadian Mental Health Association, Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Sport Psychology Association.

## What is in the toolkit?

The toolkit includes the following elements, all of which can be digested individually or as a whole.

- A. **Development Dashboard** to help volleyball organizations assess where there are gaps, identify areas of work, and track their progress
- B. Practical information across **6 key pillars** that inter-relate with each other



- C. **Navigation Tools and Resources** to help volleyball organisations identify mental health challenges and encourage help-seeking for their members
- D. **Targeted education webinars and workshops** to address priority areas such as performance anxiety, team dynamics, and body image. These webinars will be recorded and added over time in response to the volleyball community

The emphasis is practical tools which key influencers - parents, coaches, officials, administrators, and athletes - can use in order to affect positive change and provide an environment of well-being and a positive performance environment.

### **A Special Note: what do we mean by “club”?**

*We use the word “club” or “organisation” throughout this toolkit as a reference point for those that might read and use it. However, we acknowledge and recognise that there are multiple different entities that operate within the volleyball community in BC, including leagues, community groups, businesses, teams, and zones. This toolkit is not specific to “clubs” but rather can be used by any individual or entity that delivers participation in volleyball activities, whether it is playing, coaching, or refereeing. We sincerely hope that the word “club” will be seen in this spirit rather than as a limiting factor in who may use the toolkit.*

## Where do I start?

This toolkit is designed to be fully customizable and can be read in its entirety or in sections depending on your interest. However, if you are starting out here are some suggested first steps:

- Share the toolkit with your Board or group of interested individuals. Recognize that everyone is starting from a different place - some people may be very familiar with mental health concepts and information, others may not. Treat this as a learning and sharing opportunity to increase the mental health literacy among the group. Share with each other what you learned or felt was interesting or relevant.
- Review and complete the dashboard as a group. This will help you identify areas where you already have best practices in place and areas where you might be able to implement changes or adjustments.
- Identify a few areas or actions that you think might be a priority and ask your members or participants! Find out from them about what they think would be helpful to integrate or implement to create a supportive environment for positive well-being.
- Watch our webinar! In this video we introduce the toolkit and give an overview of the content and how it might be used. This might be a great starting point, especially for your group to do so collectively and to spark discussion.





# CLUB DASHBOARD

**INSTRUCTIONS:** This dashboard is meant to be of assistance in deciding what to include in your club’s approach to supporting mental health and well-being in volleyball culture. There is no “one size fits all”.

**STEP 1: AWARENESS** - Read through Dashboard and answer the questions. Read through each section and reflect on what your volleyball club currently does well and where it could improve. Refer to the relevant toolkit sections for more information or explanation where needed. Record notes in the space provided in each section.

**STEP 2: ASSEMBLE** – Make a call for engagement within your leadership and out to your membership to get people involved.

**STEP 3: ACTION** – Identify current gaps and places you may wish to start. Decide on tangible steps from the dashboard below. We recommend choosing one or two areas that you want to improve to kick things off in your club or program. Sometimes it can be most motivating by starting with smaller steps that can create momentum. Change takes time and this process can be done gradually.

**STEP 4: ASSESS** – Have a timeframe to evaluate how you are doing. Consider using surveys, discussions, meetings, and group work. Revisit this tool regularly to track progress and move to another section or strategic area that will build on the work you have already completed.

PILLAR 1: AWARENESS & AMBASSADORS	Yes!	Needs work	Relevant Toolkit Sections	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand what mental health and well-being look like in volleyball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1. Awareness and Ambassadors Introduction 1.1 Key Messages	<b>Example action</b> <i>Club Board members will be required to read section 1 of the toolkit. Coach on-boarding will involve review of section 1.1 Key Messages.</i>

Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand what mental health and well-being look like in volleyball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1. Awareness and Ambassadors Introduction 1.1 Key Messages	
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand key definitions and terminology that relate to mental health and well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.1 Key Messages on Mental Health 2.2 Policies and best practices	
Do you embed references to mental health and well-being into your written communications, including emails, website, and social media?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.1 Key Messages on Mental Health 1.2 Activities to enhance awareness of mental health in your volleyball club	
Do you integrate core mental health literacy messages into coach, parent, and athlete meetings at the start of the season or program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.1 Key Messages on Mental Health	
Do you have a proactive communications plan that aims to enhance awareness and understanding of mental health in volleyball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.2 Activities to enhance awareness of mental health in your volleyball club	

Do you have individuals in your club who are comfortable sharing their experiences and promoting mental health and well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.3 Assembling a team of mental health ambassadors	
<b>Best Practices</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 1.2 Awareness Activities and 1.1 Key Messages as core documents to increasing understanding of mental health and well-being.</li> <li>• Use active and integrated means for demonstrating your club or program’s commitment to mental health and well-being.</li> <li>• Don’t be afraid to join forces with other clubs, programs, leagues, or even partner sports to raise awareness and understanding in this area.</li> <li>• You may want to have someone who has experience in building mental health awareness to moderate meetings and initiatives when possible.</li> </ul>				

<b>PILLAR 2: CULTURE CHANGE – A FOCUS ON SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Relevant Toolkit Sections</b>	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand what creating a culture of support means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Culture Change – Introduction 2.1 Actions to Prioritise Mental Health and Wellness 2.2 Policies and Best Practices 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement	<b>Example action</b> <i>Club Board members will be required to read section 1 of the toolkit. We will dedicate a part of our next Board meeting to discussing and brainstorming activities that will contribute to a culture of support.</i>
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand what creating a culture of support means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Culture Change – Introduction 2.1 Actions to Prioritise Mental Health and Wellness 2.2 Policies and Best Practices 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement	

Do you proactively organise activities that foster a focus on mental health and well-being as part of achieving performance excellence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Culture Change – Introduction 2.1 Actions to Prioritise Mental Health and Wellness	
Do your communications activities and messages emphasise mental well-being as part of performance excellence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Culture Change – Introduction 2.1 Actions to Prioritise Mental Health and Wellness	
Do you have a commitment to a culture of support that is championed by your club leadership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.2 Policies and Best Practices 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement	
Have you examined club or program policies through a lens of well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.2 Policies and Best Practices 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement	
Do your policies and procedures reflect a diverse range of voices and lived experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.2 Policies and Best Practices 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement	

### Best Practices

- Ensure you have a leadership core that is diverse to ensure policies that respond to and include a diverse range of participant needs.
- Build in some accountability and if possible, assign key leaders for each activity.
- Include end-of-program surveys to all participants that include some questions about mental health and well-being.
- Where possible, engage with sector experts or those with lived experience to review policies and procedures and ensure that mental health and well-being is addressed.

<b>PILLAR 3: POSITIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Relevant Toolkit Sections</b>	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Do you practice positive communication skills during Board and staff meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3. Positive Communication Skills 3.1 Empathetic Communication 3.2 Active Listening	<b>Example action</b> <i>We will distribute the Empathetic Communication and Active Listening handouts to your Board. It is just as pertinent and important for Board leadership to understand this, as it is for coaches and parents to use these skills when communicating with athletes.</i>
Do you practice positive communication skills during Board and staff meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Positive Communication Skills 3.1 Empathetic Communication 3.2 Active Listening	
Are coaches or program leaders taught positive communication skills as part of their onboarding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Positive Communication Skills 3.1 Empathetic Communication 3.2 Active Listening	
Do you proactively organise activities that encourage athletes to model empathetic communication and active listening?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Positive Communication Skills 3.1 Empathetic Communication 3.2 Active Listening	
<b>Best Practices</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reward and acknowledge empathetic communication and active listening techniques when you see them take place</li> <li>Seek out opportunities to reinforce and highlight 3.1 and 3.2 checklists and skills in all club meetings and other general operations</li> </ul>				

<b>PILLAR 4: SPORT AS A TOOL FOR CONNECTION</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Relevant Toolkit Sections</b>	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Do you introduce a positive start to the year in your program, using activities or ideas that promote connection and safety early on?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. Sport as a Tool for Connection – Introduction 4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	<b>Example action</b>  <i>Representative athletes and coaches will meet in the pre-season to brainstorm ideas to start the year off with a positive connection and to reduce probability of people feeling left out, or feelings of exclusion, bullying, harassment or favouritism etc.</i>
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand how volleyball can be a tool for connection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Sport as a Tool for Connection – Introduction 4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	
Do your Board, staff, and volunteers understand how volleyball can be a tool for connection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Sport as a Tool for Connection – Introduction 4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	
Have your coaches or program leaders been trained in creating connection through volleyball?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	
Do you proactively survey or ask your membership about how you can improve their connection and belonging with the club?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	

Do you introduce a positive start to the year in your program, using activities or ideas that promote connection and safety early on?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Sport as a Tool for Connection – Introduction 4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection	
Do you proactively plan and deliver activities to encourage connection and engagement among athletes / players?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement	
Do you proactively plan and deliver mental health check-ins or peer-to-peer check-ins among athletes / players?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement Navigation Tool #13 – Continuum of Mental Health Indicators and Check in	
Do you have processes or steps identified for coaches or program leaders to take when an athlete starts withdrawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection Navigation Tools #1-5 - Managing an Emergency / Non-Emergency Mental Health Situation	
Do you proactively plan and deliver activities to encourage connection and engagement among volunteers and staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement	

#### Best Practices

- The best approach for ensuring diversity and inclusion adds to a powerful sense of belonging is to ensure you are hearing from a diverse audience.
- Clubs often cater to the most represented groups, but it is important to be aware of individual or underserved needs as well (See Pillar 5 – Inclusion)

<b>PILLAR 5: INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE, AND WELCOMING SPACES</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Relevant Toolkit Sections</b>	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Has your club done any form of audit to assess inclusion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Spaces – Intro 5.1 Club Audit Tool 5.2 Recommended Training	<b>Example action</b> <i>The club will send out a survey and create a small working group to ensure we are moving in the right direction.</i>
Has your club done any form of audit to assess inclusion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Spaces – Intro 5.1 Club Audit Tool 5.2 Recommended Training	
Are your Board, staff, and volunteers trained in creating inclusive, diverse, and welcoming spaces?			5.2 Recommended Training	
Do your coaches or program leaders get trained in enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion before they start?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.2 Recommended Training	
Have you reviewed all elements of your club experience with a lens of inclusion? (Consider: affordability, transportation, accessibility, collaboration, and safety)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Spaces – Intro 5.1 Club Audit Tool	

Do you have an action plan or identified measures to ensure that you are creating diverse, inclusive, and welcoming spaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Inclusive, Diverse and Welcoming Spaces – Intro 5.1 Club Audit Tool 5.2 Recommended Training	
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**Best Practices**

- This pillar is one of the most important, but also the most complex. By using the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion tool, your club/program can make targeted changes and efforts which are most important to your program, at a rate you can maintain.
- Change takes time and this process can be done gradually – but starting with some visible and concrete actions can build momentum and buy-in.
- Sharing ideas with other clubs across the province can also add to momentum and a united commitment to inclusive volleyball in BC.
- Take small concrete steps like having your club leadership take some of the cultural, diverse ability, gender equity training recommended in section 5.2 to guide other inclusive choices and actions.
- The Canadian Paralympic Committee and other BC-based disability sport organizations have resources and coach training to help encourage athlete and coach participation from equity-seeking groups.

<b>PILLAR 6: BUILDING YOUR NETWORK OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ASSETS</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Relevant Toolkit Sections</b>	<b>Actions</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
Does your club leadership understand what is meant by “external and internal mental health assets”?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Building Your Network – Intro 6.1 Internal Mental Health Assets 6.2 External Mental Health Assets	<b>Example action</b> <i>We will create a space on our website/sharing site where Board, staff, and coaches can easily access mental health information that is relevant to our community.</i>
Do you have a one-pager with your external mental health assets that can be provided to all coaches and club leaders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Building Your Network – Intro 6.2 External Mental Health Assets	

Have you identified someone responsible for ensuring it remains updated?				
Have you compiled and created checklists for coaches and club leaders to handle emergency and non-emergency mental health situations?			6. Building Your Network – Intro 6.2 External Mental Health Assets Section C: Navigation Tools #1-5 - Managing an Emergency / Non- Emergency Mental Health Situation	
Have you intentionally identified gaps in your club’s knowledge, understanding or resources about mental health and well-being?  Have you developed a plan of action and/or list of resources that can fill these gaps?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Building Your Network – Intro 6.1 Internal Mental Health Assets Section C: Navigation Tools – to be selected on the basis of the gaps identified. 6.3 Recommended Training	
Have you reviewed mental health training and identified any that is appropriate for Board, staff, and volunteers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.3 Recommended Training	
Do you survey your members and ask them about mental health and well-being topics that are of specific interest?  Do you have resources and information that you can provide on these topics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Section C: Navigation Tools – to be selected on the basis of the gaps identified.	

<p>Is someone in your club responsible for viewing the recorded and upcoming Mental Health webinars offered by Volleyball BC so that they can pass along relevant information?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Webinars posted on Volleyball BC's YouTube channel</p>	
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**Best Practices**

- Ensure you participate in Volleyball BC surveys and membership information-gathering so resources and community needs are matched as best as possible.
- Establish who will be the team, club, or program 'go to' for specific responsibilities such as disseminating information on upcoming webinars, coach resources, athlete tools, etc. Identifying a leader (or multiple leaders) in this area will increase the likelihood that follow through will take place and information will reach your participants.
- Whenever possible, reach out to students in training, expert practitioners, or those with lived experience in navigating the mental health systems in sport for support. By creating your External Network (Section 6.2), you will be more aware of who is in your area or available virtually from outside your region).



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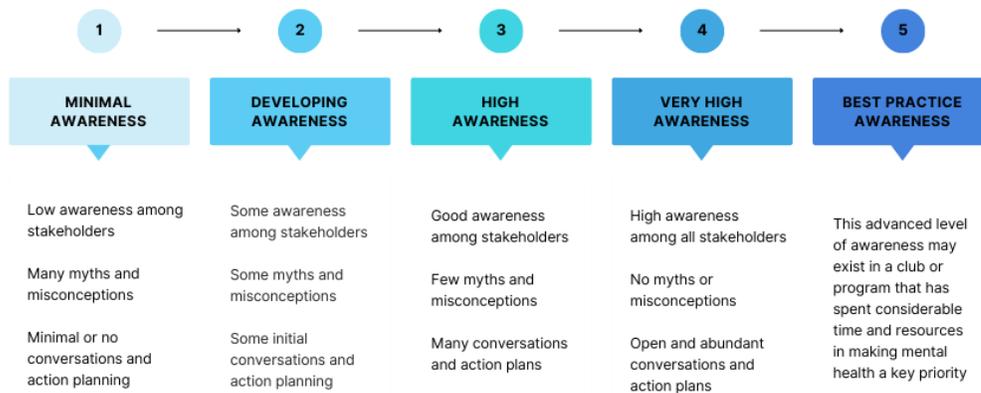
# PILLAR 1. AWARENESS AND AMBASSADORS - INTRODUCTION

Any important shift in culture in an organization requires awareness of the core issues at hand. Creating a sport community with better support for mental health and wellness must start by ensuring that there is a common understanding - or “**mental health literacy**” - among community members. Awareness of mental health is the beginning of this journey – and by including strategies and key messages from this section of the toolkit, you can ensure that you are creating a solid foundation on which you can continue to build in years to come.

## Enhancing Awareness in Your Program

Every organization will have a unique profile. Your club or program leadership can reflect on the current level of mental health awareness and understanding in your environment. Use the table below to start the conversation about where you think your level of mental health awareness is and then help guide you in how much work in building awareness needs to be done.

### Mental Health Awareness in Your Club or Program



Once a level of awareness has been identified, you can begin to explore the types of activities and strategies that might help raise awareness and increase knowledge. A ranking of “minimal awareness” will have more activities and events that cater to basic introduction and opening minds. However, if you have a club or program with “high” or “very high” awareness, you may want to focus on maintenance of an already strong mental health literacy level. One thing to note is that organisations can be made up of different groups - you may have “high” awareness at a leadership level, for example, but new members may not have such a strong understanding and awareness of mental health.

### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 1.1 Key messages on Mental Health
- 1.2 Activities to Enhance Awareness of Mental Health in Your Volleyball Club
- 1.3 Assembling a Team of Mental Health Ambassadors



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## 1.2 KEY MESSAGES ON MENTAL HEALTH

Below are some important messages to help you provide accurate information regarding mental health and well-being. It is important to deliver accurate and mind-opening information throughout the year as part of a broader strategy to improve supportive environments that honour mental health in sport. Use these broad concepts and messages to encourage open discussions within your organisation and participants

### Important Facts and Messages

- Mental health should be treated as part of global health care – it is an important part of holistic well-being in everyone.
- The teen years and early adulthood are key windows of development where most mental health issues typically develop and are seen by others.
- In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness. By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, 1 in 2 have – or have had – a mental illness (Lang, 2018).
- According to recent Canadian studies in mental health in sport, being a member of the sport community – and traits and practices associated with a stoic sport culture - may act as a barrier to acknowledging and seeking help for a mental health challenge (van Slingerland, 2019).
- It is important to get help and support for youth who are experiencing mental health challenges as soon as possible.
- Mental health issues do not discriminate. Anyone – all genders, races, ages, socioeconomic status, ethnocultural backgrounds – can experience mental health challenges.
- The earlier a person receives help and support for a mental health challenge, the better the chances of recovery.
- It is important to encourage seeking help and talking about mental health challenges. This reduces stigma which has been cited as one of the number one reasons why athletes and other members of the sport community do not seek help.
- There are many supports for people of all ages experiencing a mental health challenge across the province. Many services are free or low cost, and some are virtual and can be delivered to any community.

Sources:

Lang et al. (2018). *Global Burden of Disease Study trends for Canada from 1990 to 2016*. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 190: E1296-E1304.  
Van Slingerland, K., Durand-Bush, N., Bradley, L., Goldfield, G., Archambault, R., Smith, D., Edwards, C., Delenardo, S., Taylor, S., Werthner, P., Kenttä, G. (2019) Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS) *Position Statement: Principles of Mental Health in Competitive and High-Performance Sport*. Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine, 29(3):p 173-180.

## Next Steps

There are many effective ways that you can share these messages within your club or program. Suggestions might include:

- Integrate the importance of mental health and well-being into your club welcome letter or communication – this applies not just to athletes, but to coaches, leaders and volunteers.
- Feature some of these messages in your newsletter or social media - for example: “Did you Know?...”
- Implement Board, staff and coach education and training to raise understanding about mental health (see Pillar #5 and #6 for information on training courses).
- Integrate these key messages into in-person coach, parent and athlete meetings at the start of the season or program.





- E. Encourage stories of real life mental health challenges and recovery to be shared.
- F. Print, email, or digitally share accurate and compelling information (e.g. handouts at events, digital sharing, links on team share sites, downloadable information on club websites, etc.)
- G. Be aware of Mental Health Awareness campaigns in Canada, and promote or adopt them in your club or program. Examples include:
- First week of October is Mental Health Awareness Week
  - Mental Health Awareness Month is May
  - Bell Let's Talk Day is in January each year
  - Eating Disorder Awareness week takes place in February each year
  - Canadian Men's Mental Health Month is June each year
  - Addictions Awareness week is in November each year
- H. Fundraising and awareness events for mental health non-profits or charities, and promotion of local mental health services and supports in your community such as:  
Locations in BC with a Foundry (mental health services for youth, aged 12-25)  
<https://foundrybc.ca/>  
Your local Canadian Mental Health Association Branch <https://cmha.bc.ca/>

## 1.3 ASSEMBLING A TEAM OF MENTAL HEALTH AMBASSADORS

The list below contains ideas to help you create an Ambassador Team to help reduce stigma, increase awareness, and enhance buy-in for better understanding of mental health and well-being in sport.

### Why and how should we identify Mental Health Ambassadors?

The concept of role modelling is not new but it can be an important way of shifting culture, especially among young people. A team of individuals who are open and seen as supporting mental health awareness in your community can have a positive influence on others. Many studies support the notion that people may be more likely to seek help, or open up, if they feel safer to do so because of positive messaging from a role model.

Here is a list of some important considerations for assembling a Mental Health Ambassador Team:

- Ambassador Teams should represent many different aspects of the sport: athletes, coaches, Board Members, officials, and other sport leaders.
- Ambassador Team members should represent the diversity of your community, and come from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and sexual and gender identities.



### Create a team that represents your community

- Ambassador Team members should be encouraged to participate in opportunities where they can use exposure to share accurate and personal stories and information (when they feel it is appropriate and with their full consent).
- Ambassadors may want to share ideas of how they practice their own positive mental health self-care in person, via podcast, or on websites or in digital newsletters. Brief videos, quotes, or profiles on social media channels may also be impactful, particularly to capture youth attention.
- Ambassadors might also share a playlist of music that helps calm them or take a “mental health time out” and share it with your club as a resource for your members (\*\* See **Mood Music Playlist Activity Card** in *Navigation and Prevention Tools*).

## Next Steps

- Put out a call through email, social media, or mailing list for individuals interested and willing to act as Mental Health Ambassadors (\*Note: ambassadors do not have to share their own personal stories. However, they need to feel comfortable having frank and informed discussions around mental health and wellness).
- Have a meeting and open discussion with individuals who have expressed their capacity to be involved. Make sure to discuss what they do NOT want to share as much as what they do want to share. You may want to have someone who has experience in this area helping to moderate this meeting.
- Plan the introduction of the Ambassadors to your club: they could be featured in a club newsletter, they might appear at a club event, in a webinar on this topic to reach a broader audience, or making some appearances (either in person or online) with individual teams.



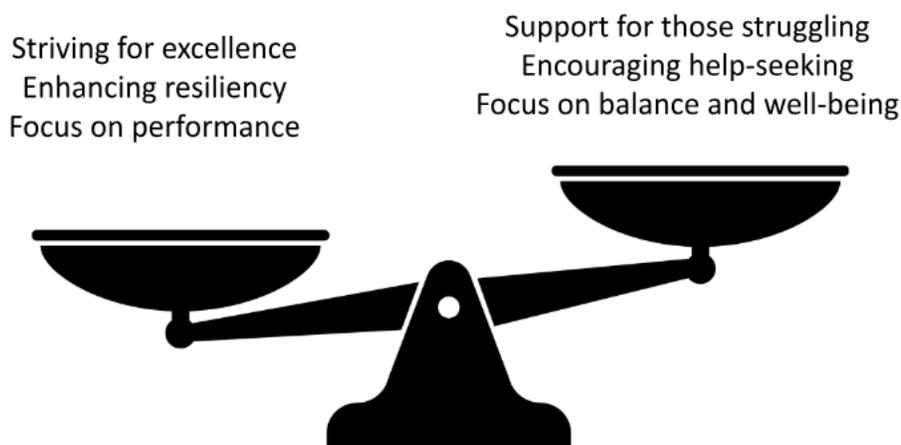


## PILLAR 2. CULTURE CHANGE: A FOCUS ON SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING

Sport can be a very positive experience but it can also be a very challenging and stress-filled environment. Traditionally it has been believed that a focus on mental health and well-being is incompatible with achieving optimal performance in competition. Fortunately this narrative is changing as we learn that the two are not mutually exclusive.

National Canadian sport organizations such as the Canadian Sport Psychology Association (CSPA), the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), and the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport (CCMHS) have all identified that **a focus on holistic wellness and better mental health literacy can all lead to a lift in performance outcomes for the long haul**. A recent position paper by Van Slingerland et. al. (2019), suggested that “with 7.2 million Canadians regularly engaging in sport, and one in 5 individuals annually experiencing a mental health disorder in Canada, **there could be as many as 1.4 million Canadian athletes struggling with mental health challenges each year.**” The same article addressed challenges associated with mental health in competitive and high-performance sport in Canada and presented a call to action for a unified address of mental health by the Canadian sport community.

Change does not come easily. Volleyball - like other sports - is due for a reset on the way mental health and wellness is fostered and acknowledged as an integral part of managing duty of care towards participants. This section includes practical ways that your club can start to create and foster this culture change. In the supporting tools, we look at how you can put in place language, policies, and practices that balance striving for competitive excellence and making sure that supportive, well-being-oriented practices are also taking place.



### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 2.1 Actions for clubs to prioritize mental health and wellness
- 2.2 Policies and Best Practices to Prioritize Mental Health and Wellness
- 2.3 Creating a Commitment Statement on Mental Health and Well-Being

## 2.1 ACTIONS FOR CLUBS TO PRIORITISE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

This resource provides suggestions for clubs about how they can promote a balance of striving for sporting excellence under the pressures of competition while simultaneously ensuring that there are supports in place for participants who might need extra help. These ideas and suggestions are aimed to help create a culture in your organisation that shifts our way of thinking about how to be “successful” in sport.

### Key Concept: We can strike a balance between promoting excellence AND support

Traditionally it was believed that supportive and well-being oriented programs do not produce champions or successful competitive programs. On the contrary: studies show that programs that strike this balance have better recruitment of athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers, and retain them for longer, with better long-lasting results and enjoyment.

In addition, the exact opposite has proved to be true - **supportive programs can enhance sporting excellence.** The model below explains Volleyball BC’s approach to building supportive environments. When we embrace a culture of support, we encourage help-seeking and early intervention. This leads to faster recovery, maintenance of positive mental health, and higher sport performance outcomes.



In order to embrace a culture of support, it is important to have consistent actions, activities, and messaging that upholds this concept across your club. Below are ideas and strategies for how you might bring a culture of support to life throughout your club but these are just a starting point.

Take some time to brainstorm and identify a range of activities that you might undertake to embed a culture of support. Complete the checklist to identify examples of how you might embed this. Here are some considerations when you review the list:

- Consider all your different participants - athletes, coaches, officials, staff, parents - they might have different needs for support.
- Identify the opportunities and touch points that you have with each participant group - how do they receive information from you? Which is the best form of communication for each group? Are there key activities or events you could review through a lens of providing support for mental well-being?
- Think about your schedule of activities - what makes sense in terms of the timing? What is achievable with your resources? Perhaps some actions can be implemented first with others following over time.

## Checklist for Creating a Culture of Support

*Complete each section below with your thoughts or suggestions about how to implement.*

- A. Develop a Commitment Statement that outlines and promotes your club's beliefs, actions, and commitment to creating a supportive environment for positive mental health and well-being. This is a powerful statement that sets a tone from the top. See section 2.3 for more information
  
- B. Ensure that storytelling around your club history and celebrations involves a mix of pride in sporting accomplishments but also in the types of people – with positive qualities and character - who emerge from the program.
  
- C. Encourage a spirit of support by including some of the communication messages from Pillar 1 in your messages around club programs and activities.
  
- D. Elevate the profile of mental health ambassadors who promote the message of the importance of a caring and supportive club or program culture. See Pillar 1 for more information on Ambassadors.
  
- E. Include family-friendly events and relationship-building opportunities: the better you know someone and have formed positive close relationships, the more likely a culture of caring and support can flourish.

- F. Include themes of support and awareness throughout your activities. One example from Tennis Canada is to create a “Mental Time Out” spot at events, where all participants can participate in activities, discussion and feedback centres to prioritize a positive environment and honouring mental health. Tennis Canada also has online content where they can encourage athletes, coaches, fans and all members of the tennis community to join them in creating a more mentally healthy competition and training environment. You can ensure that your club events and activities create safe spaces for participants to have a break and to discuss anything that is impacting their well-being.
  
- G. Include language in your club and program communications that reflects support: use messaging that reflects an open, supportive and holistic training and competition environment and culture.
  
- H. Encourage ongoing dialogue with participants and members about how everyone can create a more supportive culture for mental health and other challenges. This might include setting up suggestion boxes, questionnaires on support, portals on your website with resources, etc.

Other ideas:



## 2.2 POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES TO PRIORITIZE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Most volleyball clubs have policies and procedures in place to help govern and operate activities. These policies and procedures create a framework for decision-making, priorities, and behaviour. To create a culture of support for mental health and wellness, we need to ensure that policies and priorities include language and content that prioritizes this concept.

### Best Practices for Policy Reflecting a Culture of Support

Most volleyball clubs or programs already have policies in place that guide all forms of good sport organizational governance. These might be in the areas of sport technical development, managing conflict, elections and governance, recruitment and retention of members, officiating, roles and responsibilities, health and safety, financial responsibility and general operations of the training and competition environments. Designate a group of key individuals with a mix of governance and operational experience to review your current policies through a lens that reflects **a culture of support**. This should involve the following steps:

#### Step 1: Use Accurate Language and Definitions

An important part of drafting, communicating and implementing policy is understanding concepts and language surrounding the issues being addressed. The following is a list of important mental health terms (including the term “mental health” itself) that you may want to familiarize yourself with and ensure that your policies reflect.

**Mental Health:** More than the mere absence of a mental illness, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2004).

**Mental Illness:** Health Canada defines mental illness as: “changes in thinking, mood or behaviour, or a combination of these issues. Symptoms include: significant distress. inability to function as needed over an extended period of time.” The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines mental illness as “a condition that affects a person’s thinking, feeling, or mood,” and uses the term to refer collectively to all diagnosable mental disorders that significantly change one’s thinking, emotion or behavior, and creates problems functioning in social, work, or family activities.

**Mental Health Condition:** This term, along with “mental health diagnosis” or “mental health issue” is often favored over “mental illness” by individuals experiencing conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder, or other psychiatric conditions.

**Stigma:** The dictionary definition of stigma is “a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person”. Stigma is an act of physical or emotional social distancing that happens when we perceive a group as “other” and “not like us.” Stigma arises when two key ingredients are present: 1) a negative stereotype about a group of people or condition; and 2) actions people take to distance themselves from being associated with that group or condition.

**Self-Stigma:** Self-stigma occurs when a person with a mental health diagnosis becomes aware of public stigma, agrees with those stereotypes, and internalizes them by applying them to the self (Corrigan, Larson, & Kuwabara, 2010). The consequences include lowered self-esteem, a sense of empowerment, and confidence in one’s future.

**Treatment:** Though the term “treatment” is still used in research and clinical settings and by medical professionals, some individuals living with mental health issues consider the term outdated. It is worth noting that not all mental health consumers opt for treatment, and treatment-seeking is not always the ideal outcome for someone with mental health concerns.

**Mental Healthcare Providers:** The number of different specialties and experts who can help support people in their mental health is long – it can begin anywhere from a family doctor, to psychiatrists (doctors specializing in mental health, who can diagnose and prescribe medications), to clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, clinical counsellors, social workers, and other allied professions like occupational therapists.

## **Step 2: Apply a Lens of a Culture of Support to Policy**

When examining your policies, use some of these best practices to create and review them with a “lens” of support and well-being:

- ✓ Develop a Commitment Statement as a form of policy that outlines and promotes your club’s beliefs, actions, and commitment to creating a supportive environment for positive mental health and well-being. This is a powerful statement that sets a tone from the top about the importance of creating a culture of support. See section 2.3
- ✓ Establish a working group that includes a diverse range of voices and lived experiences when you are creating policies and procedures. This will ensure that your policies respond to and include a diverse range of participant needs.
- ✓ If possible, have someone with a background in mental health education or service review your safety, return-to-play, and emergency action plan policies. They may be able to add practical sections and strategies that include mental health support.
- ✓ Include Mental Health Ambassadors (or other leadership members with a background or strong familiarity with mental health) in meetings, strategic planning, and in creating initiatives that promote holistic wellness in club or program policy.
- ✓ Don’t forget monitoring or evaluation of policies and their intended output, particularly around creating a supportive culture. Create mechanisms to monitor mental health and well-being in athletes, coaches and all participants so that you can assess whether your policies are having the desired impact. For example, this might include end-of-program surveys to all participants that include some questions about mental health and well-being.

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## 2.2 CREATING A COMMITMENT STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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One of the most tangible steps you can take in prioritising mental health and wellness is the creation of a commitment statement that shares your vision, intention, and actions that you will take. This can be a particularly impactful way to communicate and share the culture that you would like to set throughout your organization and membership.

### What is a Commitment Statement?

A commitment statement is a public communication that expresses the club's dedication to making sure that mental health and well-being is at the centre of the organization. A commitment statement can be large and detailed or it could be much simpler. Whatever you call it and however detailed, its core purpose is the same, to show that the club values mental well-being and is committed to taking steps to foster a supportive environment.

#### What are the benefits of a Commitment Statement?

- ✓ It provides an important reference point for current and prospective members, telling them that the club places their mental health and well-being at the centre.
- ✓ It is an important reminder for everyone involved in the organisation including Board, volunteers and club administrators. It helps keep everyone in the club accountable.
- ✓ It makes the club more attractive to community organizations or even sponsors who have similar values and who might be interested in partnership or funding opportunities.

#### What is the process for developing a commitment statement?

Developing a commitment statement can be done by just one individual. However, it is a great opportunity to get individuals together - and to even engage with your membership as a whole - so that they feel invested and involved. For example, consider sending out a survey to find out what your members think a "positive mental health and well-being" looks like. Or have a working session with your Board to brainstorm some of the concepts and actions that you want to include. The more that people are involved, the more that the Commitment Statement will be truly reflective of your organization's needs and the more accountable people will feel. At the end of the day a statement means nothing if people are not willing to take action.

### What should be included in a commitment Statement?

As already mentioned, a commitment statement might be very detailed or very simple. A small club could have a simple statement setting out a few key commitments while a larger organisation might have something more elaborate or detailed. At the end of this document we provide a template to get you started. However, here are some considerations for elements to incorporate:

- **Definition of mental health and well-being:** In section 2.2, we provide the technical definitions of mental health and mental illness. These are good starting points, however it is important to make sure that the definition is relevant to your organization. What does creating a culture of support for positive mental health and well-being mean to you? Are there tangible examples of what this might look like? How does your organization's vision or values relate to this?

- **Your commitments to action:** Include actions you will take to foster a culture of support for positive mental health and well-being. You can be as broad or as detailed as you would like in this section. You could use our mental health dashboard as a starting point to review your organization and to identify specific areas of focus that you will work on over the next while.
- **Inter-relationships with existing strategies and policies:** If you already have a strategic plan, key policies, or documents that refer to mental health and well-being, it is good to reference these so that
- **Define who and how you will be accountable:** This might include the role that the Board, staff, coaches, and members play in supporting and delivering the commitments. It can also be impactful to indicate how frequently you will share progress and updates with your members.

### **How should we share the Commitment Statement?**

Once you have developed and written the Commitment Statement, it is important to ensure that it is shared with your membership and wider community. This will ensure that everyone knows about your commitment and that you will be accountable to take action. Here are some thoughts about how to share the Commitment Statement:

- ✓ Ensure that your Board or leadership have formally adopted and approved the Commitment Statement. This is important to create buy-in from the highest levels and to put it on record as something of significance.
- ✓ Review and share the Commitment Statement with key staff and volunteers. This is likely to be the group that will be responsible for delivering the actions outlined in the document so they need to be fully informed and engaged. Be clear about what it means for their work and behaviour.
- ✓ Post it to your club's website and social media. Set up a schedule to share the commitment statement regularly. This might be, for example, in line with broader mental health awareness days such as Canadian Mental Health Awareness Week so that you can share what you are doing.
- ✓ Make a public announcement at your club's next event or social activity - or virtually in the newsletter.
- ✓ Share the document via your club's social media channels.
- ✓ If you have a facility or office, post hard copies so that there are visual reminders.
- ✓ Don't forget to put a reminder to review and share progress made on any actions with your members, particularly if your Commitment Statement includes a written commitment to sharing at set frequencies.

## Draft Template for a Commitment Statement

Sport has the power to positively change lives and build communities but it can only do this when the experience places physical, social, and emotional well-being at the very core. Our organization, [NAME], recognises that supporting positive mental health is a key component of delivering participant-centred volleyball.

### Statement and Definition of Mental Health and Well-being in Volleyball

[NAME] believes that a culture of support for positive mental health and well-being involves:

- Description #1 - eg. *“Ensuring that every player feels able to share when they are having a bad day with their coach.”*
- Description #2 - eg. *“Providing opportunities for all our members to learn more about mental health in sport”.*
- Description #3 etc.

### Commitments to Action

As evidence of our commitment, we agree to do the following:

- Action item #1 - eg. *“Assign a Mental Health Ambassador or Champion to promote mental health awareness.”*
- Action item #2 – eg. *“Create a Mental Health Emergency Action Plan that we will share and communicate to all coaches and managers so that they feel confident.”*
- Action item #3 etc.

### Scope and Inter-Relationships

This Commitment Statement applies to all Board, staff, volunteers, parents and families of [NAME]. It is supported by the following documents and policies:

- *Reference to plans/strategies/policies where applicable.*

### Accountability and Reporting

[NAME] staff will collate and share actions taken to further these commitments on an annual basis. This report will be shared with the [NAME] Board of Directors. We also commit to sharing our progress with our members on a [FREQUENCY] basis.

This Commitment Statement was approved by the Board of Directors on [DATE]. Review of this document will be undertaken each year.

[DATE]

## PILLAR 3. POSITIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is a skill that is fundamental to success in volleyball. We need to be able to communicate to each other on the court so that we work together as a team. However, communication off the court is just as important - we need to ensure that positive communication skills are practiced and embedded by everyone involved in volleyball so that we create a positive and supportive environment.

Research has shown that members of the sport community are less likely to seek help due to complex factors, such as gender, sport culture, and ethnocultural reasons (Van Slingerland et al, 2018 and 2019). It is therefore important that we create a volleyball community that acknowledges these potential barriers to help-seeking. This means identifying ways to better communicate at all levels from recreational to high performance volleyball and to reduce stigma so participants will feel comfortable and open to speaking freely about mental health and wellness the way they would any other health domain such as sport injury or nutrition, for example.

In this section, we introduce information and techniques to create positive communication skills. By teaching and modelling new ways of communicating, you can enhance open and authentic conversations and create a culture of positive support. As a result individuals are much more likely to seek and receive the help they need to overcome mental health issues.

### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 3.1 Cultivating Empathetic Communication in Volleyball
- 3.2 Active Listening Skills – Listening to Understand



### Next Steps

- ✓ Share these handouts with other leaders in your organisation - empathetic communication can be used at the Board table just as much as it can be used to athletes.
- ✓ Seek out further learning or training on empathetic listening if you would like to learn more or share with others in your organisation.
- ✓ Integrate practicing empathetic communication into coach or leadership training. Role play with each other on typical scenarios that come up on or off the court. Learn from each other about what works well or where changes might be needed.
- ✓ Encourage athletes to practice empathetic communication and active listening within the team environment. For example, set questions for team members to reflect upon and then share their answers in pairs, practicing techniques for empathetic communication and active listening. Reward and acknowledge techniques when you see them take place on and off the court.

## 3.1 CULTIVATING EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION IN VOLLEYBALL

**Emotional intelligence** (EI) has become an important part of sport coaching theory and practice in recent years, following the integration of emotional intelligence in almost every field of human performance from education to health care to law and order and the military. **Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you.** There are five key elements to EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

**Empathy**, or the ability to detect and understand how others are feeling, is critical to this broader concept of emotional intelligence. Empathy involves more than just being able to recognize the emotional states of others. It also involves your responses to people based on this information. When we harness our empathy when we are communicating with another person, we open the door to understanding and to forming trusting relationships.

Mental health can be seen as a sensitive topic for many people, particularly in sport. Using an empathic communication style can be a very helpful way to open up lines of communication and to change culture around how we talk about mental health and wellness in the volleyball community.

### What is empathetic communication?

Empathic communication is about being fully present, listening consciously, and hearing deeply. This can be a challenge at times - these skills may come easily for some people but not come as naturally for others. This is why it can be helpful for coaches, officials, parents, leaders, and peer athlete leaders to learn, model and teach these interpersonal life skills for use in and outside of sport.



### Why is empathetic communication important?

Empathic communication serves a number of important purposes in and outside the sport environment:

1. It can create a psychologically safe environment. *“Psychological safety is key to ensuring people are able to thrive, feel engaged with what they do, and feel connected to something larger than themselves.”*
2. It can raise awareness about diversity and inclusion. *“Listening to understand another person’s lived experience and point of view, is a powerful step towards embracing diversity and inclusive spaces in sport.”*
3. It can restore the human element to the sometimes cut-throat world of competitive sport. *“We often forget the ‘human’ side to ‘human performance’ – communicating with empathy recalibrates us to being people first, athletes/coaches/officials second.”*

## Steps to Practicing Empathic Communication

When examining your policies, use some of these best practices to create and review them with a “lens” of support and well-being:

- ✓ *“One moment, I am going to put away my phone. Let’s find a spot where you will be comfortable and we can focus well. This is important.”*  
**Be present** – remove as many distractions as you can, in order to be as available in the moment as possible.
- ✓ *“I’m not an expert in this, but I care about you and I will do my best to be clear and support you.”*  
**Be Yourself** – use your own authentic language and natural speaking style and language. This will put someone at ease (especially if they already know you)
- ✓ *“I want to make sure I understand how you are feeling. Is this what you meant? I have a few important questions to be sure.”*  
**Be curious and ask questions** – ask questions to best understand the situation and what the person is going through at that moment.
- ✓ *“I heard you say that it is hard to come to practice these days, and you are really struggling with some personal issues. You feel like you might need some extra support. Did I hear everything correctly?”*  
**Be an active listener** – listen to UNDERSTAND, not just to hear. Some ways to enhance this is to paraphrase what the person has said, and confirm back to them in your own words, so you can affirm that you understand where they are at, and what they are thinking and feeling (as best you can).
- ✓ *“I don’t know exactly how you are feeling, and everyone copes differently with big setbacks. What I do know is that it is very hard to manage, and we can talk about how you personally are feeling and what you are thinking.”*  
**Recognize other perspectives** – As we are beginning a conversation (particularly one with a sensitive topic), we often will hear information that is contradictory to our way of thinking. This is even more common when we are talking with someone who may be experiencing a mental health challenge or an emergency. It is important to acknowledge this tension and differences in perspective, without diminishing the other person, and judging their perspective.
- ✓ **Embrace diversity** - There are many forms of human diversity and they are important to take into consideration in any conversation, not just one concerning mental health. Listening with an open mind to better understand where a person is coming from (particularly if they come from a marginalized community) is important in having an empathic conversation. For example: setting aside your own biases because you cannot fully understand how another person is feeling, particularly when you do not share the same background.
- ✓ *“Losing someone we love is incredibly painful. But feeling this pain is to be expected, and you are not alone in feeling this way, even though it may feel like it. I’m here to listen to whatever you feel comfortable telling me.”*  
**Validate** – It is important when someone is sharing something that is difficult for them to express, that we meet them where they are. This is to say, someone is feeling or thinking a certain way and they want to be heard and understood. Validation can help build a bridge to better understanding and seeking help. We can help add to a sense of “normalizing” how they are feeling, while we avoid “minimizing” how they are feeling.

- ✓ *“I am here to listen and to see how I can help you. But I need you to know that if I am concerned for your safety – or the safety of anyone else – I may need to get more help.”*

**Be honest** – While we are listening with empathy, we are also listening with an authentic duty of care for another person’s safety. Be honest with them about your need to involve other steps if you are concerned about their safety or the safety of others.

All of these important tips for cultivating empathic communication above are particularly important when you are communicating with someone who is experiencing mental health challenges. You can use empathic listening when using some of the navigation tools in this toolkit, such as initiating a mental health emergency action plan (MHEAP), or building a mental health action plan (MHAP) for an individual.

### Next Steps

- Share this handout with other leaders in your organisation - empathetic communication can be used at the Board table just as much as it can be used to athletes.
- Seek out further learning or training on empathetic listening if you would like to learn more or share with others in your organisation.
- Integrate practicing empathetic communication into coach or leadership training. Role play with each other on typical scenarios that come up on or off the court. Learn from each other about what works well or where changes might be needed.
- Encourage athletes to practice empathetic communication and active listening within the team environment. For example, set questions for team members to reflect upon and then share their answers in pairs, practicing techniques for empathetic communication and active listening. Reward and acknowledge empathetic communication and active listening techniques when you see them take place.



VOLLEYBALLBC

## 3.1 ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS – LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

A complementary skill to empathic communication is using an **active listening style**. This can be incredibly important when you are trying to cultivate open conversations about mental health, and creating supportive and safe environments in volleyball.

### What is Active Listening?

Constructive communication involves active listening, being genuine, and having empathy. Active listening is a particular structured way of listening and responding to others. When actively listening, your attention is focused on the other person in an attempt to understand, interpret, and evaluate what they are communicating to you. An important part of this is trying to listen without judgment.



### Tips for Enhancing Active Listening

- **Eye Contact:** Do your best to make and maintain eye contact. Also bear in mind that in some cultures, excessive eye contact can be seen as dominating, aggressive, or rude. Be present and focussed but do not stare.
- **Focus:** Focus on what is being said. Remove other distractions like phones, computers, or other tasks you may have been doing.
- **Give space to the speaker:** Listen and allow the other person to express themselves. Avoid interrupting them. You may feel strongly that you want to “fix” things, but you must try and hear the entire situation from their perspective, and the primary focus is trying to understand the core issues at hand first.
- **Allow for pauses or breaks:** Some people may need time to think and reflect, particularly when discussing a difficult or distressing issue. Do not pressure someone to answer quickly.
- **Ask questions if you do not understand:** If something is not clear, asking for more detail in a friendly and non-judgmental way shows that you are genuinely interested and are concerned.
- **Repeat or paraphrase for confirmation and deeper understanding:** When you repeat what you heard you may reduce misunderstandings or confusion. Allow the other person to confirm or correct your interpretation.
- **Reflect:** Reflect on what you heard in order to take next steps. If appropriate, you could also take some time and space, however be clear with the individual that you will circle back.
- **Listen to what is not being said:** Listen between the lines by reading body language that might show how the person is feeling (posture, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.).

## Next Steps

- Share this handout with other leaders in your organisation – active listening can be used at the Board table just as much as it can be used to athletes.
- Seek out further learning or training on active listening if you would like to learn more or share with others in your organisation.
- Integrate practicing active listening into coach or leadership training. Role play with each other on typical scenarios that come up on or off the court. Learn from each other about what works well or where changes might be needed.
- Encourage athletes to practice empathetic communication and active listening within the team environment. For example, set questions for team members to reflect upon and then share their answers in pairs, practicing techniques for empathetic communication and active listening. Reward and acknowledge empathetic communication and active listening techniques when you see them take place.



## PILLAR 4. SPORT AS A TOOL FOR CONNECTION - INTRODUCTION

We know that sport is a powerful tool for holistic well-being. When we ask why people play volleyball, the top response is always because of the team relationships and social connections. This is the same response whether the individual is a player, coach, referee, or a volunteer in the volleyball community. The experience of coming together and connecting with others around the sport is one of the main drivers and motivators for individuals.

However, creating meaningful connections within a team or club does not always happen naturally or easily. Over the past years, respondents to the Volleyball BC Annual Member Survey have consistently told us that “team dynamics and relationships” is one of the top 3 factors negatively impacting their experience in a season. This in turn has a negative impact on mental health and well-being. Individuals can easily become disengaged or disenfranchised from a team or an organisation - and this is even more likely if an individual is struggling from a mental health perspective. Disengagement from a sport or activity that someone loves can be a key indicator that an individual is struggling from a mental health perspective.

Clubs play an important role in fostering positive relationships and connection in a number of ways across their programs and activities. They can also be powerful sources of support and connection for individuals who are experiencing challenges with mental health and well-being. In this section we provide tools and ideas for how you can take a proactive approach to building connections and engaging with participants, whether they are athletes, coaches, or other volunteers.



### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 4.1 Actions to Promote Connection and Engagement
- 4.2 Additional learning on Cultivating Connection



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## 4.1 ACTIONS TO PROMOTE CONNECTION AND ENGAGEMENT

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Take some time to brainstorm and identify a range of activities that you might undertake to promote connection and engagement throughout your club. Complete the checklist to identify examples or next steps of how you might implement each of them.

Here are some considerations when you review the list:

- Consider all your different participants - athletes, coaches, officials, staff, parents - they might have different needs for connection. We have divided the template below into two groups of participants but you may have others.
- Identify the opportunities that you have to connect with participants - Is it in-person, email, newsletters or social media?
- Think about your schedule of activities or season - are there natural points of the program where you can embed activities that promote connection?

### A. Connection and Engagement Activities for Athletes

*Complete each section below with your thoughts or suggestions about how to implement.*

- A. Creating a team connection. A stressful time for athletes is at the start of the season when teams are created and brought together for the first time. It is critical that positive relationships are formed that place caring and support at the centre of team activities. **What actions or ideas can you recommend to coaches to promote the creation of positive team relationships at the start of the season?**
- B. Feeling included, valued and connected is always important to athletes, but particularly when they might be struggling mentally or emotionally. Understanding the objectives for team practices and games is important. Having a sense of autonomy and inclusion in practice planning or game strategy (that is age and stage appropriate) can often keep athletes engaged and feeling included. **Who can draft guidelines or ideas for appropriate team objectives in your club?**

**Are there best practice tips that you can share with your coaches about how to engage and involve athletes in setting objectives and planning?**

- C. Monitoring mental health in athletes is as important as monitoring physical health. Look at some of the mental health “check in” tools in the Navigation Tools and Resources (Section C) to find out ways to identify signs and symptoms of fluctuations in mental health.

**How could Mental Health Check Ins be implemented in your program as a standard of care?**

- D. Coaches or club leaders can reach out to athletes who have been showing signs of not acting like “themselves” or having spotty attendance, and ask if there is anything they (or the club) can do to help. Peer to peer contact is also very powerful - consider implementing peer check-in programs like “Buddy Check for Jesse” (see Section C for more information).

**Who can take on this role in your club or program?**

**How can you embed or promote peer-to-peer check ins?**

- E. If an athlete has time off because of mental (or physical) health concerns, providing some flexibility in “return to play” can be beneficial in re-engaging an athlete. This might mean a reduction in playing time, a different role, or some adjusted expectations as an athlete returns. A flexible “middle ground” can often be reached if all parties are keeping long term retention and well-being as a grounding principle.

**Who can draft some guidelines for return to play in your club or program?**

- F. If you can see an athlete disengaging - when in doubt – ASK! Families of athletes are a source of important information-gathering and they often hold the answers (and some great ideas) for why an athlete is disengaging, and what barriers can be removed. Create an ongoing outreach process to allow your members to put forward suggestions about how to create engagement and connection. This might be through in person or virtual meetings, questionnaires, in person or virtual suggestion boxes, etc.

**How can you create opportunities for feedback?**

**Who can implement some of these ideas in your club or program?**

## B. Connection and Engagement Activities for Volunteers, Coaches, or Officials

Sport leaders deserve the same sense of feeling valued and respected as we strive for with athletes. A similar approach can be taken for the six tips above (reaching out, valuing, checking in, monitoring, providing flexibility, and asking for suggestions) for coaches, volunteers and officials.

**How might your answers in the section above differ for volunteers, coaches and officials?**

**Who can explore this concept in your club or program?**

In addition to those areas above:

- A. A mentor or “buddy system” can be a powerful retention and check-in tool for sport leaders. Clubs or programs can identify experienced and compassionate peer leaders, or compatible compatriots (either in a similar or complementary role in the organization) to help provide support, act as a sounding board, or even to act as teachers and mentors. An added benefit could be having these individuals take some of the recommended training suggested in this overarching mental health strategy.

**Who can explore this concept in your club or program?**

- B. Disseminate awareness and information about the essential roles that coaches, volunteer leaders, and officials play in volleyball. Many families are not aware of - or underestimate- the extra hours and effort required to run a sport program. Education and awareness can lead to enhanced gratitude and understanding. It also uplifts the sport leader, who may often feel overlooked and many are at high risk of burnout.

**How can you share information about the roles that individuals play in your club?**

- C. Create “Appreciation Days” or an appreciation program to recognise the essential role that coaches, volunteer leaders, and officials play in the daily functioning of your program or club.

**What are the ways that you can provide appreciation and recognition?**

**Who can implement this concept in your club or program?**

Other ideas:



## 4.2 ADDITIONAL LEARNING ON CULTIVATING CONNECTION

Clubs and program leaders can have a huge impact on participant mental health and well-being by developing fostering trust and connection through sport. Many national organizations have done extensive research on the power of connection through sport and developed high quality resources to guide sport organizations on ways they can foster deeper connection and fight disengagement. Outlined below are two key resources for you to learn more about creating connection through your volleyball program.

### **“She Belongs” Canadian Women and Sport**

Through positive sport experiences, girls are more likely to reap the benefits of sport participation and grow into confident and motivated leaders.

Creating a positive social environment that intentionally fosters a sense of belonging is integral to the retention of girls in sport and physical activity. For many boys, good performance creates a stronger sense of social belonging. In contrast, for many girls, feeling a strong sense of social belonging will enhance their performance.

In this resource, you will learn how to do the following:

1. Build the foundation for a positive culture.
2. Create an inclusive, safe environment for all girls.
3. See role models. Be role models.
4. Redefine girls’ relationship with risk taking.
5. Recognize and respond to the signs of disengagement.

[Download the resource here](#)

### **“Sport & Belonging” Community Foundations of Canada**

Belonging is fundamental to a sense of happiness and well-being. Each of us has a personal connection to the idea of belonging that is influenced by our experiences with the people, places and identities to which we feel connected.

This report examines the link between belonging, social, connection and support in communities across Canada. It provides practical statistics and recommendations that seek to start communities and citizens looking at:

What will it take for us to make sport more accessible, more inclusive, and more fun?

How will we use sport to help build communities where we all feel like we belong?

[Download the resource here](#)

### **Next Steps**

- Share these links with your Board or staff and set a date to regroup to discuss after you have all read them.
- Have a brainstorming session about ways your club or program creates connection, and build some opportunities you might be missing.
- Survey your membership to find out what helps them feel connected and a sense of belonging in the club and ways that you might improve this.
- Develop an action plan for prioritizing small changes or actions you can take.



VOLLEYBALLBC

## PILLAR 3. INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE, AND WELCOMING SPACES - INTRODUCTION

When sport is a welcoming and open space, diverse participation can flourish. However, Volleyball BC acknowledges that individuals and equity deserving groups have traditionally experienced barriers to participation in volleyball, as they have in other sports. Individuals with diverse gender, sexuality, ethnocultural, or physical/intellectual abilities already have a higher risk for experiencing poor mental health - if a volleyball program is unwelcoming, mental health outcomes for these participants can be even more challenging. Feeling “included and supported” and positive mental health outcomes go hand-in-hand. Actions must be taken by clubs and Volleyball BC to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.

In 2022 Volleyball BC launched a [Strategy for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) to identify actions to create a more welcoming and inclusive volleyball experience in British Columbia. In addition, Volleyball BC’s annual membership surveys include questions to focus on ways the volleyball community might enhance well-being and work towards being more inclusive. But how does this relate to your club or program?

### Assessing Your Club as a Welcoming Space

In light of Volleyball BC’ Strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we have developed a tool for self-assessment to help clubs and programs decide where you may want to start in the area of creating more inclusive and welcoming spaces.

#### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 5.1 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Audit and Action Tool for Clubs
- 5.2 Recommended training for a more welcoming club

1. Read through each section and reflect on what your volleyball club currently does well and where it could improve. Record notes in the space provided in each section.
2. Choose one or two areas that you want to improve to kick things off in your club or program. Sometimes it can be most motivating by starting with smaller steps that can create momentum. Change takes time and this process can be done gradually.
3. Once you’ve decided on a strategy and action you wish to focus on, decide how you will put it in place, including who will be in charge and what your timelines are for implementation. Add detail to the “Action” section with your concrete steps to take.
4. Take action by starting on your chosen strategy, and tracking your progress.
5. Revisit this tool regularly to track progress and move to another section or strategic area that will build on the work you have already completed. Sharing ideas with other clubs across the province can also add to momentum and a united commitment to inclusive volleyball in BC.
6. Review our list of suggested resources and learning opportunities to decide if there are ones that will support creating an inclusive and welcoming environment in your club/organisation.



## 5.1 DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION CLUB AUDIT AND ACTION TOOL

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accessible, welcoming environment</li> <li>2. Transportation</li> <li>3. Affordability</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Community collaboration / inclusion</li> <li>5. Encouraging equity / diversity</li> <li>6. Creating a safe environment</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club	Yes!	Needs work	<b>Action</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
<b>1. Being an accessible and welcoming club or program</b>			
Are your signs and promotion materials clear, easy to read and understand, and in languages reflecting diversity in your area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Example action</b> Club communication lead will contact <a href="#">Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C.</a> or applicable local club members to ask for assistance in translating important club communications into common local languages. Complete it within 3-4 months.
Do you have a welcome package, meeting, or process for new members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you encourage members with diverse (intellectual and physical) abilities to participate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you have a buddy system or peer support for new members? <i>(Consider Board, players, coaches, parents, volunteers)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you hold 'Give it a go' days or an 'open house'?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

More ideas and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Give it a go’ days can be a great way to increase awareness and interest with your local community. Consider attending a community cultural event or festival and running a ‘have a go’ session or exhibition game. Consider setting up a regular free informal game night.</li> <li>• Get advice and ideas from local organisations in your community that are charged with newcomer services. They can help get documents and promotional material translated into languages other than English and might be valuable partners for “give it a go” days. Check out Volleyball BC’s Newcomer Programs for ideas and information about programming.</li> </ul>

Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club	Yes!	Needs work	Action
<b>2. Transportation</b>			
Do you provide transport, have a car pooling roster or buddy system for players to training and games?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Example action</b></p> <p>Nominate the common local schools that players attend as a regular pick up place for training sessions. Team managers or parent volunteers/coaches can determine who will be responsible for weekly pickups. Communicate this system to families at the start of the training season or upon joining the club.</p>
Do you plan activities and training with public transport in mind?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
<b>More ideas and support</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing each team to develop their own appropriate carpooling system that incorporates a “rule of two” and safety first.</li> <li>• Review training and competition schedules and locations to see if there are changes that can make car pooling or public transport access easier.</li> </ul>			

Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club	Yes!	Needs work	<b>Action</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
<b>3. Affordability</b>			
Do you provide equipment and uniforms for free or at a low-cost?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Example action</b> Create a club stock of second hand uniforms. Club managers can also source from local shops and ask for old uniform and equipment donations from past and current players, coaches, officials. Members will be advised that uniforms are available for free on an exchange basis (i.e. return once they need a new size/leave club).
Do you provide family membership rates?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you provide sports equipment and uniforms free or low-cost?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you keep down the costs of club social events or other related activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Have you explored funding and grant opportunities to subsidize membership fees, uniforms or equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
<b>More ideas and support</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact your local municipality, <a href="#">viaSport BC</a>, <a href="#">ISPARC (Indigenous Sport Council)</a>, or other local non-profit charitable granting society for advice in seeking sponsorship or grants. Encourage families to apply for <a href="#">JumpStart Funding</a> or <a href="#">KidSport Funding</a> from their local chapters.</li> <li>• Consider holding regular fundraising events and/or dedicating an existing fundraising event to raising money for uniforms, equipment or special memberships.</li> <li>• Consider asking current members with means to pay an extra registration fee to the club for families in need.</li> </ul>			

<b>Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Action</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
<b>4. Working with community groups to increase ethno-cultural diversity</b>			
Do you promote your club and sport with local community organizations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Example action</b> Organise for coaches visit local schools to provide information on free club activities, joining a team and what support is offered.
Do you promote your club and sport with local community organizations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you participate in local community events, Pride festivals, or cultural celebrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you run joint initiatives with local community organisations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Does your club feature or celebrate diverse cultural celebrations in your calendar?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do your activity times clash with significant religious celebrations, observances or practices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Does your club have a flexible uniform policy, including supporting girls/women who wear a head scarf or observe a dress code?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

Does your catering reflect different cultural or religious requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Does alcohol consumption play a large role in your club culture? Do you hold alcohol-free events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

### More ideas and support

- Current club members who are from migrant or refugee backgrounds are an excellent source of information on what local community organisations may exist and can provide insights into the best way to engage with their community. Supporting current members to ‘spread the word’ in their own community can work well. As your membership becomes more diverse, it will be easier to form community partnerships.
- The best approach to catering for diversity is to ask the current members or consider the specific backgrounds and diversity of the young people in your area that you hope to attract to your club. Find out from them what their specific requirements are: e.g. would changing the time of training make it easier for your target group to attend so it doesn’t clash with a regular community or faith-based commitment?
- See the [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion’s](#) resources and calendar for more information and ideas.

Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club	Yes!	Needs work	<b>Action</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
<b>5. Increasing gender equity, cultural, and abilities diversity</b>			
Do you actively seek, develop and encourage coaches and officials across the gender spectrum to get involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Example action</b> The club will write an advertisement for a position prioritizing a female coach and promote it in appropriate media over the next 3 months.
Do your management, volunteers and members reflect the cultural diversity of your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.

Do you capture demographic information about your members at registration (optional-only)? <i>(See Volleyball BC's membership registration form for ideas about how to frame these questions)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Are there spaces at your club rooms, training sites or game events where women can sit separately to men?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do your policies, signage and participation processes include language that is welcoming across the gender spectrum (*including non-binary or other gender identification?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you encourage your leadership and membership to use their pronouns to help with safety and inclusion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do you have female coaches and officials involved? Do you hold female-only training opportunities for coaches or referees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Does your club offer sitting volleyball or opportunities for players with diverse abilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Are your members regularly made aware of your policies, statements and strategies supporting cultural diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
<b>More ideas and support</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good starting point is to talk with players along the gender spectrum in your club to discover whether anything about your club makes it hard for them or their friends or family members to participate.</li> <li>• Offer club leaders the opportunity to take some of the cultural, diverse ability, gender equity training listed in the Recommended Training section in 5.2.</li> <li>• The Canadian Paralympic Committee and other BC-based disability sport organizations have resources and coach training to help encourage more athlete and coach participation.</li> </ul>			

<b>Actions to increase equity, inclusion, safety, and belonging in your club</b>	<b>Yes!</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Action</b> List your club/program actions here: WHAT steps need to take place? WHO will lead this initiative? HOW will you do it? WHEN will it be accomplished?
<b>6. Creating a harassment-free, and safe environment</b>			
Does your club have a Commitment Statement or policy that encourages diversity and inclusion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Example actions:</b> The committee chairperson will review and update the old multicultural policy and table new policy for discussion at next Executive meeting.
Does your club have a code of conduct and/or an anti-discrimination policy relating to targeting various forms of diversity? <i>(Note: All clubs that are part of Volleyball BC are required to uphold this <a href="#">Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy</a>).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Are club volunteers and members aware of the code of conduct and/or anti-discrimination policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Do your members know where to get help in the event of discrimination, harassment or all forms of abuse? <i>(Note: All clubs or participants that are part of Volleyball BC can <a href="#">file complaints</a> regarding abuse and maltreatment with the Abuse Free Sport Program).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
Does your club promote a culture that does not tolerate abuse, harassment or discrimination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click here to enter text.
<b>More ideas and support</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the <a href="#">Volleyball BC Safe Sport Handbook</a> for information about how to promote and support an abuse-free volleyball community.</li> <li>• Visit the <a href="#">viaSport BC website</a> for ideas on safe sport practices, tools for assessing boundary transgressions or safe sport issues, and tools for crafting policy to foster inclusion (disability sport, LGBTQ2iS inclusion, etc.)</li> <li>• There is a list of further resources on preventing discrimination in sports on page 31 of the Game Plan Resource Kit or in the <a href="#">Resources document</a> available on the Game Plan website.</li> </ul>			



VOLLEYBALLBC

## 5.2 RECOMMENDED TRAINING FOR A MORE WELCOMING CLUB

Clubs and program leaders can have a huge impact on participant mental health and well-being by developing. When clubs embrace a safe, welcoming culture, diverse participation can flourish.

Feeling “included and supported” and positive mental health outcomes go hand in hand. You may benefit from taking training designed for athletes, coaches, and all leadership roles in order to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in all levels. Below is a list of activities, resources, and training that you can take to enhance your understanding and awareness.

### Coaching Association of Canada

[Anti-racism in coaching eLearning](#)  
[Bystander Empowerment eLearning](#)

[Coaching Athletes with a Disability](#)

[Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ+ Athletes and Coaches](#)

### Canadian Women and Sport

**Gender Equity in Coaching (webinar)**  
<https://womenandsport.ca/learning-opportunities/webinars/gender-equity-in-coaching/>

**Gender Equity LENS (training):**  
<https://womenandsport.ca/learning-opportunities/e-learning/gender-equity-lens/>

### viaSport BC

viaSport BC have multiple resources on diversity, equity, and inclusion in sport. [Check out the resource centre here](#). Current topics include:

- ✓ Trans Athlete Inclusion Guidelines
- ✓ Creating Inclusive Environments
- ✓ Accessibility Audit Tool
- ✓ Rural and Remote Programming Tips
- ✓ 2SLBTQ+ Coaching Tips
- ✓ Ready, Set, Coach: Supporting children with ASD in community recreation
- ✓ Adopting Inclusive Language Policy
- ✓ Becoming Para Ready
- ✓ All Youth Matter Inclusion Training

### ISPARC BC

ISPARC BC is the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council for BC.

[Aboriginal Cultural Relations Module](#)  
[Aboriginal Coaching Module](#)

### Next Steps

- Don't be overwhelmed by all the different options. Consider the demographics of your club and community as a starting point for considering what additional training might be helpful.
- Share these links with your Board or staff and identify training that will benefit your leaders and participants.
- Consider taking a course together as a club so that you can debrief afterwards and identify next steps to put your training to use.



## PILLAR 3. BUILDING YOUR NETWORK OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSETS - INTRODUCTION

Creating a community of care in sport means learning about and identifying **internal** and **external mental health assets**. Mental health assets are internal and external mechanisms to maintain positive mental health outcomes and well-being in an individual. They are tools, or support that can help you to promote and to maintain positive mental health outcomes and well-being. These might include the following:

### Mental Health Assets

- **Internal** – eg. Self-regulation and coping skills. Check out our Navigation Tools for examples and support for internal training, detection and prevention.
- **External** – eg. Support system, compassionate leaders, experts

In this section, we share our **Build Your Club Network** tool that will allow you to identify the individuals, resources, education, and support that form the basis for your club's network of support for mental health. When you work through the tool, here are some important points to consider:

- ✓ Your network should be made up of a wide variety of stakeholders such as the following:
  - expert practitioners
  - researchers
  - sport sector leaders (coaches, sport organization leadership)
  - athletes and parents navigating the system in their lived experience

Note: This team should represent the diversity of the sport and the mental health sector in your community.
- ✓ Include organizations and support agencies where you can refer individuals for specialized care and expertise if appropriate. In some cases, our role is not to “solve” but rather to support an individual to get help from those trained to respond.
- ✓ Consider a range of resources that are culturally sensitive and based on inclusive principles – for example: a holistic athlete approach which is introduced in resources from Indigenous communities such as [ISPARC BC](#) and the [San'yas: Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program](#).
- ✓ Don't forget about sport-specific mental health resources in BC such as [Buddy Check for Jesse](#) which provides -based mental health in sport advocacy and peer support groups
- ✓ The different sections of this toolkit also can form part of the resources that you gather for your support network, including training, skills, strategies, and techniques that can be used as part of your internal and external assets.

## Next Steps

### Tools and Templates in this Pillar

- 6.1 Identifying and Building Internal Mental Health Assets
- 6.2 Identifying and Building your External Mental Health Assets
- 6.3 Training and Resources for Enhanced Mental Health Literacy

- Work through the two next sections: Identifying and *Building your Internal Mental Health Assets* and *Identifying and Building your External Mental Health Assets*. These might be helpful to do in a small group so that you can source information and identify support together.
- Complete the “Build Your Club Network Tool” so that you have a document that summarises external support in one place. Distribute this to program leaders, coaches, and other key individuals - and consider adding the *Mental Health Emergency Action Plan* tool from the Navigation Tools so that every person has a written guide to how to handle mental health emergencies and situations.
- Use the checklist in the *Identifying and Building your internal Mental Health Assets* section to educate and share training, tips, and resources throughout your organisation. Don’t forget that this does not need to happen all at once! Plan out a phased implementation that is reasonable for you.



### 3.1 IDENTIFYING AND BUILDING INTERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSETS

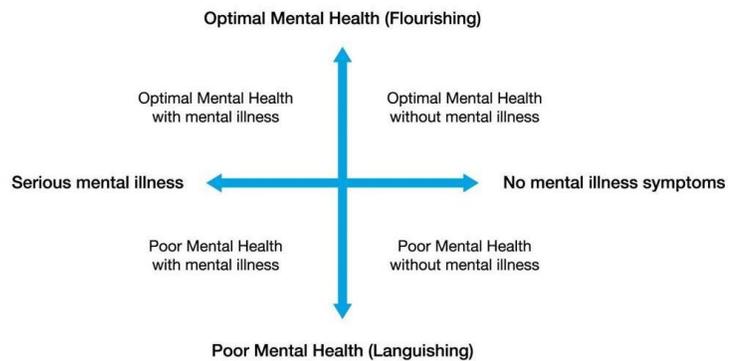
Clubs and programs can encourage individuals to maintain positive mental health by identifying and nurturing a range of “internal mental health assets” that help create positive mental health outcomes and well-being.

#### What are Internal Mental Health Assets?

Internal mental health assets are tools, training, and skills that individuals can develop within themselves to support themselves through challenging situations.

A great starting point is to focus on strengths and resiliency you are building in your athletes, participants and stakeholders. While it is important to talk about mental illnesses and mental health issues, it is critical that sport programs also focus on the strengths of their participants, and not just drawing attention to challenges.

By focussing on strengths, and normalizing challenges that may arise for individuals, you are cultivating a **Growth Mindset** culture in sport (Dweck, 2009). In a Growth Mindset culture, things like collaboration, problem-solving, and embracing adversity are encouraged. By working together, individuals can share knowledge and ideas, and feel free to ask for help when they need it. This leads to continual growth, and a culture of caring.



The Canadian Mental Health Association’s dual continuum model seen above (2013) is a visual teaching tool that shows how you can focus on an individual’s strengths, while also encouraging support and development of mental health challenges. According to the dual-continuum model, mental health is not merely the presence or absence of mental illness (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). An individual’s ability to thrive and flourish is not negated by a diagnosis of a mental illness or by experiencing mental health challenges. This means an individual might have a medically diagnosed mental illness but still might have strong mental health - and conversely, an individual may not have a diagnosis of mental illness but may have very poor mental health.



## How do we identify and build Internal Mental Health Assets?

Internal Mental Health Assets help us to maintain positive mental health outcomes and well-being. They include a wide variety of self-regulation and coping skills, and may vary from person to person.

This toolkit has a variety of resources, tools, and information that can form part of your internal mental health assets. Below is a checklist of the training, awareness, or education sheets, and resources that you can find in this toolkit to encourage mental health awareness and resilience. Use this checklist to identify those internal mental health assets that you would like to use or develop within your volleyball organisation:

- ✓ Your Club Dashboard is a good starting point to identify where there are gaps in your organisation's knowledge, understanding or resources.
- ✓ Consider the age, background, demographics, and nature of your program as you identify those assets that you think might be most relevant.
- ✓ Once you have identified the internal mental health assets that are most appropriate, navigate to the relevant sections to learn more about each one.
- ✓ Plan how to communicate and share the information in each internal mental health asset.

### REMEMBER

- These tools do not need to all be shared or communicated at once! You can take your time and work through the list at a pace that is manageable.
- Work as a small group to review this checklist so that you have a few perspectives about which assets or tools may be most appropriate for your organisation.
- If you or someone you know is experiencing mental health distress, these tools - and all approaches and checklists included in this toolkit - are not to be considered a substitute for seeking professional help. One of the best ways to make a full recovery and return to positive mental health and wellness is early intervention. Do not delay in seeking additional help.

## **Internal Mental Health Checklist**

### **Awareness and Response to Mental Health Distress**

#### **1. Increase your understanding of global mental health (mental health literacy)**

See 6.3 - Recommended Training and Resources for Enhanced Mental Health Literacy  
Mental Health Literacy Tools - Appendix A: Mental Health Continuum and Check In

#### **2. Checklists on managing a mental health issue**

Managing Non-Emergency Mental Health Intervention  
Managing an Emergency Mental Health Intervention  
Using a Decision-Tree for a Mental Health Intervention  
Follow up after a Mental Health Intervention  
Navigating Consent in Minors and Adults

#### **3. Inform yourself and your organization on top mental health issues in volleyball**

Mental Health Handout: Depression  
Mental Health Handout: Performance Anxiety  
Mental Health Handout: Body Image and Disordered Eating (plus associated Body Talk worksheets)  
Mental Health Handout: Addiction and Substance Misuse  
Mental Health Handout: Sport Burnout (plus Building Balance worksheet)  
Youth and Suicide  
Bullying and Suicide

### **Mental Health Self-Care and Mental Skill-Building**

Mental Health Literacy Tools - Appendix B: Athlete Self Care Worksheet  
Stress Perception Worksheet: Resiliency and Awareness  
Activity Card: Mood Music Exercise

### **Webinars**

We will be hosting and recording a number of webinars based on mental health topics that were identified by the volleyball community. As the recordings come available, they will be posted online with the toolkit. Additional resources and tools may be added to align with each targeted webinar or subject area.

Performance Anxiety  
Managing Anxiety & Stress in Officiating  
Self-Care and Mental Health and Well-being  
Body Image and Disordered Eating  
Positive Team Dynamics



## 3.1 IDENTIFYING AND BUILDING EXTERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSETS

Volleyball clubs can educate themselves on warning signs of mental health issues and prepare in advance to address them by creating a network of helpful experts, practitioners, researchers and internal organizational champions. **External Mental Health Assets** refer to compassionate leaders, experts, or organisations that can make up a support system in your community to provide support for mental health and well-being.

### How do we identify and build External Mental Health Assets?

We have provided a template on the following page for you to complete to identify your External Mental Health Assets. Fill in blank spaces with contact names, phone numbers, addresses that are specific to your organisation's and community's needs.

- ✓ Designate an individual or small group to commit to gathering network names, phone numbers, and addresses for your club or program.
- ✓ Reach out to organisations that you identify to find out about waiting lists, pricing, process for referrals, and any other important information
- ✓ Provide the completed document to all team/program members to print out and keep as part of their Emergency Action Planning and team/program information binder.

### Who should we include in our External Mental Health Assets?

Consider all support agencies in your community, including the following:

- If an individual has provincial health coverage, they can see a family doctor (or a walk-in clinic doctor) who can refer to province-covered mental health care.
- You may be located near a college or university with a sport psychology or mental health program – supervised students and faculty may be looking for practical hours and/or research opportunities
- Cultural and spiritual leaders (elders, mentors) can provide ethnoculturally sensitive support to ensure your network reflects the diversity of the participants in your program.
- Students can access a school counselling department.
- There may be local services provided by your health authority that can be accessed.
- Call 2-1-1 or visit 211.ca (Canada's primary source of information for government and community-based non-clinical health and social services in your area).
- Youth-oriented free access mental health services (ages 12-24 years) such as The Foundry (<https://foundrybc.ca/>)
- Canadian Sport Psychology Association – Fee-for-service specialists in mental health and performance in sport. See member biographies for their areas of specialty and certifications. BC Chapter Members: <https://www.cspa-acps.com/professionalmembersbritishcolumbia>
- You can book directly with any psychology or counselling practitioner of your choice on a fee-for-service basis. You can find Registered Psychologists in BC listed here: <https://referral.psychologists.bc.ca/>

## Useful Website Resources

- [Canadian Sport Helpline](#)
- [Cybertip.ca](#)
- [Kids Help Phone](#)
- [Commit To Kids: Reporting Child Sexual Abuse and Misconduct](#)
- [Respect Group: 1.888.329.4009](#)
- [NeedHelpNow.ca](#)
- [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#)
- [First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness](#)
- [Trans Lifeline](#)
- [Canadian Centre on Substance use and Addiction](#)
- [Victim Services Canada](#)
- [Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention \(CASP\)](#)

## Next Steps

- ✓ Once you have researched and completed the template, distribute this to program leaders, coaches, and other key individuals in your organisation.
- ✓ Provide the completed document to all team/program members to print out and keep as part of their Emergency Action Planning and team/program information binder.
- ✓ Consider printing the *Using a Decision-Tree for a Mental Health Intervention* handout and *Checklists for Managing Mental Health Interventions* to accompany this template. This set will ensure that every leader has a written easy-to refer guide to how to handle mental health emergencies and situations.





# MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

Club or Program Name:

## 10 MENTAL HEALTH WARNING SIGNS

1. Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks.
2. Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still.
3. Severe out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors.
4. Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason and/or intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities.
5. Not eating, throwing up or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or weight gain.
6. Seeing, hearing or believing things that others aren't experiencing.
7. Repeatedly using drugs or alcohol.
8. Drastic changes in mood, behavior, personality, sleep habits.
9. Thoughts plans, and/or attempts of self-harm or suicide.
10. Recurring thoughts, dreams, or distressing memories about a stressful or traumatic event.

## CRISIS LINES

- **BC Suicide Line: 1-800-784-2433.** Available 24 hours a day.
- **BC Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789** (No area code required). Emotional support and resources for mental health & substance misuse. Available 24 hours a day.
- Helpline for Children: 310-1234 (No area code required). Available 24 hours a day.
- **Talk Suicide Canada: 1-833-456-4566** (24 hours, toll free)  
Text: **45645**

## EXTERNAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSETS

### A. EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

**If it is an emergency, go to your nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1.**

**Nearest Hospital:**

### B. NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

For non-urgent care, refer to contacts below for support.

**Family or team doctor**

Name / Contact info:

**Walk-in clinics**

Name / Address

**Mental health practitioners with experience in sport**

Names/contact info:

**Affiliated Schools – Counselling contacts**

Names/contact info:

**Research or post-secondary partners**

Names/contact info:

**Cultural Leaders**

Names/contact info:

**Other Local Resources or Organisations**



## 5.2 RECOMMENDED TRAINING AND RESOURCES FOR ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

Training and support from experts is a great way to improve your understanding and become more “literate” about mental health. When volleyball clubs encourage mental health literacy, mental health outcomes can improve significantly for all participants!

The following is a list of training and programs which your club may want to explore as part of your commitment to learning and increasing understanding of mental health and wellness in volleyball for all your members.

### A. Sport-Specific Training and Resources to enhance Athlete or Coach Mental Health

**Mental Health in Sport eLearning** – National Coaching Certification Program accredited. Free.

**Coach Stress and Well-Being** – Coaches Association of Ontario – infographic, strategies and self-assessment tool. Free.

**Coaching Association of Canada Mental Health Resource Hub** – Online resource hub. Free.

**Friends and Family Mental Wellness Workbook** by GamePlan and the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport. Free.

Resources at the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport – Free for all participants:

- **Self-Care** <https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/resources/selfcare>
- **Mental Health Resources** <https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/resources/mental-health-resources>

**Buddy Check for Jesse** – Buddy Check for Jesse is a BC-based program that pays tribute to Jesse Short-Gershman, and provides important messaging to enhance support for mental health and wellness in sport, by employing a simple and powerful model. You do not need to be a mental health specialist to receive or deliver the messages from Buddy Check for Jesse. The program is for all sport stakeholders, including athletes, parents, coaches and other leaders. The powerful messages in the curriculum seek to better educate, de-stigmatize talking about mental health, and enhancing confidence around talking about mental health in the sport community.

### B. Global Mental Health Literacy Training for all Participants

**ASIST – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training** - Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Chapters. Fee for Service and cost may vary.

**Psychological First Aid** – Canadian Red Cross. Online and self-directed learning at your own pace. Fee for Service. Two Psychological First Aid courses are available online to learn at your own pace: **Self-Care** and 2. **Caring for Others**

These courses are for anyone interested in self-care practices that promote psychological wellbeing, including professional responders, people in the workplace, and youth. Must be 14 years of age and older, adult support recommended for younger audiences. At the end of these courses, you will complete a knowledge evaluation and receive an electronic certificate of completion.

**[How to Talk About Suicide](#)** – Centre for Suicide Prevention. Fee for service – price may vary.

This training (A Conversation Guide) is a virtual, 1.5-2 hour synchronous small group training. This webinar explores common myths and facts around suicide, who is impacted and why, as well as steps to begin a conversation about suicide. This webinar supports participants in:

- Exploring common myths and facts about suicide
- Building awareness of how and why people are impacted
- Understanding dynamics of protective and risk factors
- 4-step model for starting a conversation about suicide through case studies and discussion
- Identifying community resources for further help

**[Mental Health First Aid](#)** – Mental Health Commission of Canada. Fee for Service – price may vary.

These courses are 2-day courses which may be more suitable for adults working in specific populations, including in a professional capacity with specific populations (youth, seniors, First Nations, Inuit, Northern Peoples, etc.).

### Next Steps

- Don't be overwhelmed by all the different options. Consider the demographics of your club and community as a starting point for considering what additional training might be helpful.
- Share these links with your Board or staff and identify training that will benefit your leaders and participants.
- Consider taking a course together as a club so that you can debrief afterwards and identify next steps to put your training to use.





VOLLEYBALLBC

# NAVIGATION TOOLS & RESOURCES ON MENTAL HEALTH





## MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST FOR SPORT LEADERS: MANAGING A NON-EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

When a member of the sport community (athlete, coach, official, volunteer) comes to you in emotional distress and they do not present an immediate threat to the safety of themselves or others:

### 1. Show Compassion and Empathy

Helpful tips for calming the individual in distress, and showing compassion and empathy are:

- Remaining calm yourself — use calm body language and tone of voice.
- Listen to the individual. Allow them to express their own thoughts. Provide a forum in which they can feel heard. This might include silence as well – it may take time for them to collect their thoughts or express themselves. Leave space for that time if necessary.
- Avoid judging the individual – pay attention to using non-judgmental language.
- Provide unconditional support. You do not have to solve the immediate problem – but you are there to listen and show compassion.
- Normalize their experience and offer hope, without minimizing their experience (see Pillar #3 – Positive Communication for other tips on communication).

### 2. Gather Accurate Information

- Ask questions, including questions of safety, by asking them outright, and with a calm tone (“Are you thinking of hurting yourself?” and “Are you thinking of suicide?”)
- Asking these important and critical questions will NOT plant the idea or increase the probability they will follow through on them. In fact, showing concern and asking these questions may do quite the opposite.
- By asking questions about suicide, you will receive valuable information. If the individual hesitates or confirms, you know to elevate the intervention (see “*Checklist for Leaders: Managing an Emergency Mental Health Issue*”).

### 3. Make a Referral – Encourage Help-Seeking

- Present the individual with mental health support options (Use the network of options that you have identified in your *External Mental Health Assets* worksheet).
- When you identify someone who would benefit from mental health services, but they don’t appear to be aware of this need:
  - Inform them matter-of-factly that you believe they would benefit from counseling and additional support. Base your recommendation on their behaviors, or name specific behaviors that you have noticed (or may have been reported to you) and that you are concerned about.
  - Ask them how they are feeling, how their actions are affecting their life, and if they have done anything about it so far.
  - Leave open the option for the individual to accept or also to refuse the recommendation.

- Encourage some time to “think it over.” But, remember to follow up after a certain period of time.
- If they refuse to attend counseling, leave the issue open for possible reconsideration.
- Depending on the age, mental health state, and role of the participant, you may want to notify a specific “circle of care” - individuals who can help provide advice and support such as: the program’s trainer or any affiliated health care provider if you have one, the head coach, and a mental health provider affiliated with your team or program. This may be an opportunity for you to source members of your community who can help to guide you in this area. If the person is a minor, parents may also be notified. For more information on consent and mental health of minors in British Columbia, see *“Navigating Consent in Minors and Adults.”* It is important to note that mental health – like all health concerns – is a person’s private information, but with trusting relationships, and established protocols, teams can navigate what is best for the welfare of participants by creating a caring and united community.
- If the recommendation is accepted, help create a plan to schedule an appointment, and follow up with them in a timely manner. You may call the mental health provider with the individual.
- Inform whomever is included in this individual’s “circle of care” that you have connected them with a mental health service provider.

#### 4. Respect Boundaries and Abilities

- Know what you are personally comfortable doing, and what you’re not comfortable doing.
- Do not promise secrecy. If necessary, you can say to the individual, “It took courage for you to disclose this information to me. By telling me, it says you want to do something about what is going on. The best thing we can do is to inform someone else, such as a mental health provider, who can give you the care you need.”

Adapted from NCAA, APA, CPA 2023



## Sources of Support

Below are options in British Columbia to source support for sport community members who require additional mental health support:

### If you have extended benefits that cover mental health:

- Check with your benefits provider to see if you have coverage for psychology or counselling services
- Check the policy requirements for the types of practitioners they will cover (policies may vary)

### If you do not have extended benefits that cover mental health:

- If you have provincial health coverage, you can see your family doctor or a walk-in clinic doctor who can refer you to province-covered mental health care.
- You can book directly with any psychology or counselling practitioner of your choice on a fee-for-service basis. For a list of Registered Psychologists in BC see <https://referral.psychologists.bc.ca/>
- You can access a school counselling department if you are a student.
- There may be local services provided by your health authority that you can access: Call 2-1-1 or visit 211.ca (Canada's primary source of information for government and community-based non-clinical health and social services in your area)
- You can access youth-oriented free access mental health services (ages 12-24 years) such as The Foundry - <https://foundrybc.ca/>
- The Canadian Sport Psychology Association has contact information for fee-for-service specialists in mental health and performance in sport. See member biographies for their areas of specialty and certifications. BC Chapter Members <https://www.cspa-acps.com/professionalmembersbritishcolumbia>

### If you are a provincially-carded athlete, coach, or team member:

- You may be eligible for mental health support through your provincial team. You could ask your Provincial Team coach for more information.
- You may be eligible to request services (free or fee-for-service) through the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport
  - Eligibility: 16 years or older, Canadian citizen or permanent resident, competitive or high-performance athlete, experiencing mental health challenges
  - Fees: <https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/fees>
  - Referrals: <https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/refer>

### If you are a Sport Canada-carded athlete:

- AAP carded athletes have access to subsidized mental health care through Game Plan (including up to 2 years following retirement/loss of carding)
- Talk to a counsellor now: 1-844-240-2990 (24/7/365, through LifeWorks)
- Connect with a confidential and secure mental health practitioner who knows sport: [mentalhealth@mygameplan.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@mygameplan.ca)

### **If your experience is related or linked to abuse or maltreatment:**

- Volleyball BC has an independent third-party to expertly and confidentially review complaints that concern abuse and maltreatment. This is [Abuse-Free Sport](#), a “one stop shop” for managing complaints of abuse and maltreatment. Where appropriate, the organisation will conduct independent investigations and recommends sanctions against individuals. You can report any incidents or suspected incidents of abuse and maltreatment directly to the helpline and they will provide you with advice and handle the complaint

### **If you are complainant or respondent to a case admissible to the Abuse Free Sport Program OR you are a victim/survivor of Prohibited Behaviour (as defined in the [UCCMS](#)) in a situation that would be admissible to the OSIC, regardless of whether a complaint has been filed:**

- You may be eligible for mental health services through the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport. Eligibility criteria are here: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/mental-health>.
- If you are eligible, you can apply for support by contacting the Canadian Sport Helpline from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (ET), 7 days a week:
  - Phone/SMS: 1-888-83SPORT (77678)
  - Email: [info@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:info@abuse-free-sport.ca)



## MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST FOR SPORT LEADERS: MANAGING AN EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

### 1. Identify whether there is an immediate threat to safety

To identify whether the situation is an immediate threat to safety, ask the following:

- Am I concerned the individual may harm themselves?
- Am I concerned the individual may harm others?
- Did they make verbal or physical threats?
- Do I feel threatened or uncomfortable?
- Are they exhibiting unusual ideation or thought disturbance that may or may not be due to substance use?
- Do they have access to a weapon?
- Is there potential for danger or harm in the future?

### 2. Manage Immediate Risks

In the case of an immediate risk to safety:

- Keep yourself safe — do not attempt to intervene.
- Keep others safe — try to keep a safe distance between the person in distress and others in the area.
- Get help from colleagues or other individuals nearby.
- If the individual seems volatile or disruptive, alert a colleague/another adult for assistance. Do not leave them alone. However, do not put yourself in harm's way if they try to leave.
- Call 911 or a security service (if you are on a university campus), or have the person taken directly to the emergency department at the nearest hospital.

When you call, be prepared to provide the following information:

- The individual's name and contact information.
- Their physical description (height, weight, hair and eye color, clothing, etc.)
- Description of the situation and assistance needed.
- Their exact location
- If they leave the area or refuse assistance, note the direction they are heading to.
- If possible, offer a quiet and secure place to talk.

### 3. Listen to the Distressed Individual and Maintain a Consistent, Straightforward and Helpful Attitude

#### How to ask about suicide:

- “Are you/Have you been thinking about suicide?”
- “Are you/Have you been thinking about killing yourself?”
- “Sometimes when people are (state the things you have observed or heard), they are thinking about suicide. Is that what you’re thinking about?”

#### How not to ask about suicide:

- “You’re not thinking about suicide, are you?” – This is a leading question and it adds stigma and raises the likelihood they may not be truthful with you.

#### If the individual is expressing suicidal ideation:

- Listen.
- Show genuine concern.
- Emphasize risk to safety.
- Do NOT leave the person alone.

### 4. Contact a Mental Health Care Provider

- Make arrangements for appropriate intervention and aid.
- Call a mental health provider to initiate next steps of care.
- If medical care seems appropriate, head to the nearest hospital or call 911.
- If the individual is expressing suicidal ideation, refer for a suicide risk assessment.
  - On-site mental health professional, where possible.
  - Local hospital.
  - Local crisis line/mobile assessment team.
  - Call the Crisis Services Canada 24-hour hotline: 1-833-456-4566 / Text 45645

### A Word about Consent

Depending on the age, mental health state, and role of the participant, you may want to notify a specific “circle of care” - individuals who can help provide advice and support such as: the program’s trainer or any affiliated health care provider if you have one, the head coach, and a mental health provider affiliated with your team or program. This may be an opportunity for you to source members of your community who can help to guide you in this area. If the person is a minor, parents may also be notified. For more information on consent and mental health of minors in British Columbia, see *“Navigating Consent in Minors and Adults.”* It is important to note that mental health – like all health concerns – is a person’s private information, but with trusting relationships, and established protocols, teams can navigate what is best for the welfare of participants by creating a caring and united community.

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  - Phone/SMS: 1-888-83SPORT (77678)
  - Email: [info@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:info@abuse-free-sport.ca)

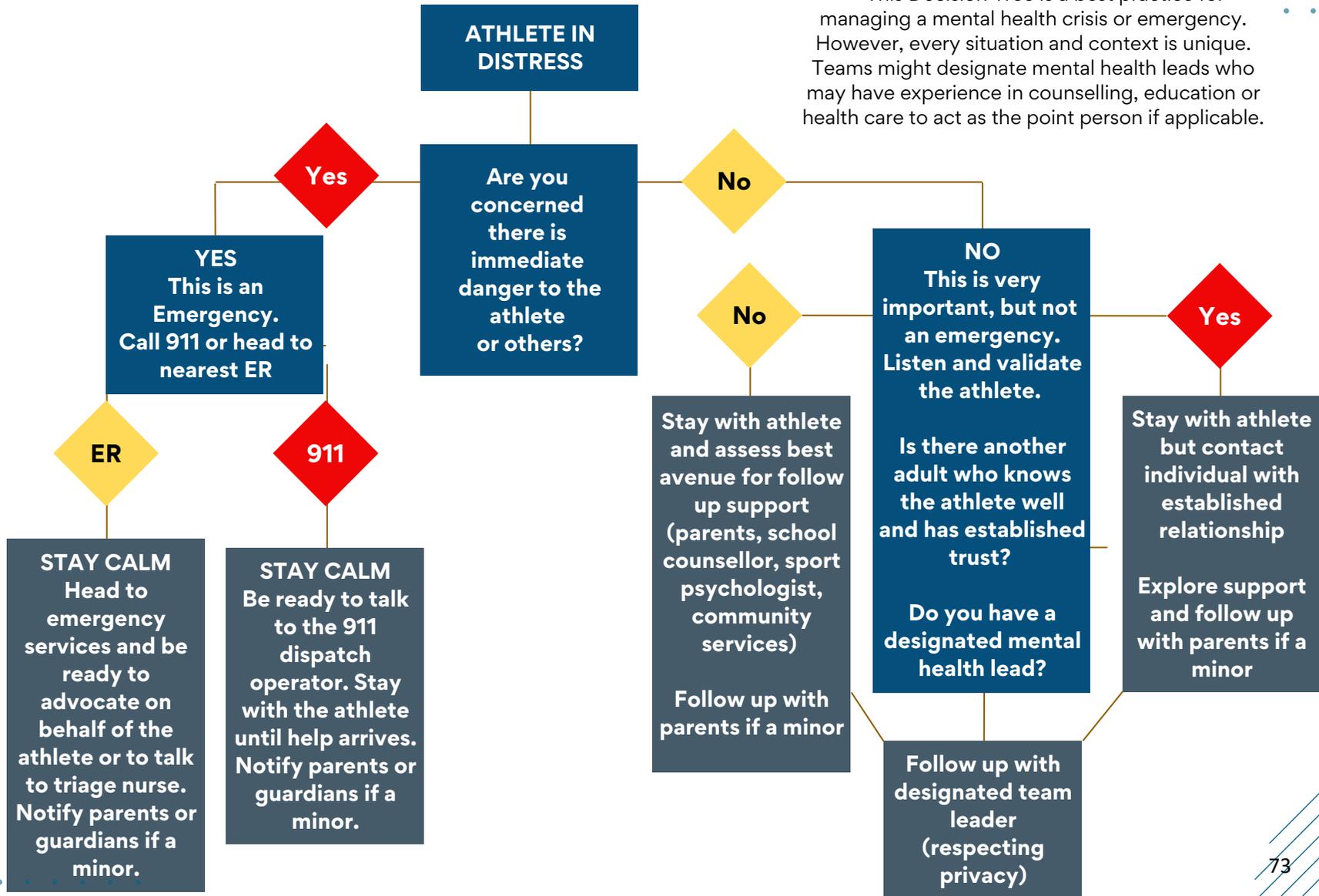
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# Mental Health Action Plan DECISION TREE



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\*\* This Decision Tree is a best practice for managing a mental health crisis or emergency. However, every situation and context is unique. Teams might designate mental health leads who may have experience in counselling, education or health care to act as the point person if applicable.





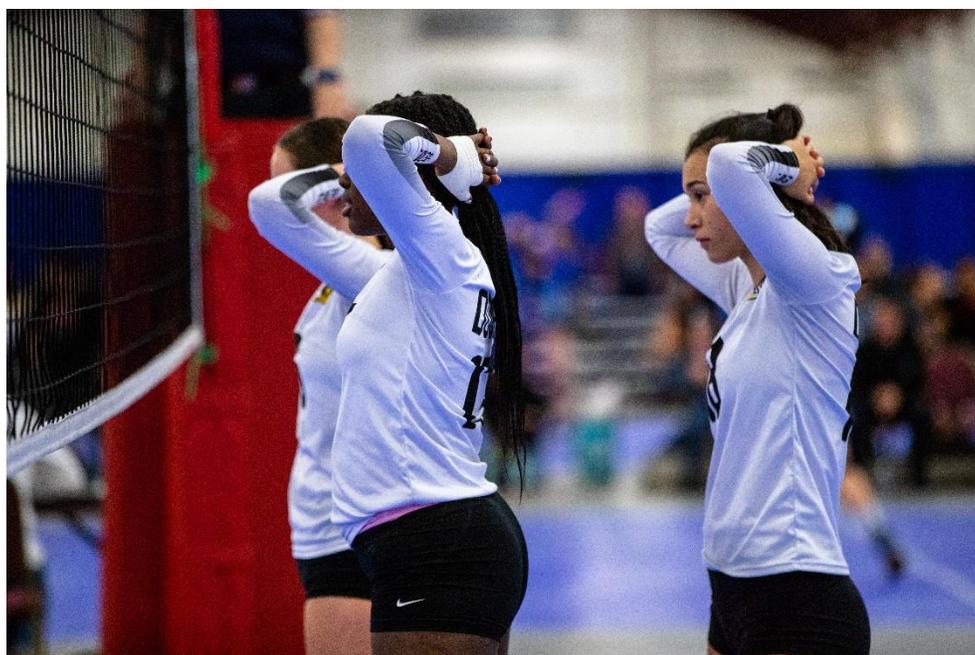
## MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST FOR SPORT LEADERS: FOLLOW UP AFTER MANAGING A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

### 1. Initiate any follow-up care

- Identify what is needed for follow-up care from a club/program perspective.
- Identify available resources – share with all parties involved in the “circle of care”
- Initiate continuity of care:
  - How is the mental health issue going to be managed within the club/program? (if applicable)
  - If the issue is not to be managed within the club/program, how do you make appropriate referrals and transitional steps to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved?  
**Remember:** not just the person experiencing the mental health distress may need follow up support – particularly in emergency settings, support may need to be provided for individuals who were attending to the person in distress.

### 2. Debrief and Plan for the Future

- Schedule a meeting with staff/individuals involved with the intervention and anyone who will be involved moving forward.
- While maintaining appropriate confidentiality:
  - Identify the strengths of the intervention approach.
  - Identify what did not work with the intervention approach.
  - Identify what improvements could be made to the protocol for prevention, early detection and management of mental health issues.





## MANAGING CONSENT IN MINORS AND ADULTS

While the Emergency and non-Emergency Mental Health Checklists in this toolkit are easier to navigate when dealing with legal adults, many sport organizations work with youth and minors, where issues like consent are less clear.

**In BC, a child under age 19 may consent to their own health care, if the child is capable.** Learn what this means and other issues of health care consent.

### Consent to Treatment

Treatment, such as counselling, medication, or psychotherapy, cannot be provided to a young person without consent. If the young person is capable, they can decide if they want to give or refuse consent to treatment. In other words, as long as a young person understands the treatment, why it's being recommended, and what will happen if they accept or refuse treatment, the health care provider and family must respect the young person's decision.

### Informed Consent

For consent to be valid, it must be:

- Related to the treatment
- Informed
- Given voluntarily
- Not obtained through misrepresentation or fraud

### A (capable) minor does not need their parent to consent to health care

In BC, a child who is capable does not need their parent or guardian to consent to their health care. The child can consent to their own health care, without the consent or knowledge of their parents or guardians. A capable child can normally get medical treatment for things like birth control, mental health problems, and alcohol and drug addiction problems.

If a parent or guardian is limiting a child's access to health care, it could amount to abuse or neglect and the child may need protection. Anyone who knows of such a situation must report it to a child welfare worker. You can do so by calling the Ministry of Children and Family Development's screening line at 1-800-663-9122. You can find more information [here](#).

A consent to treatment is informed if, before giving it, the person received information about the nature of the treatment, the expected benefits, the material risks and side-effects, alternative courses of action, and the likely consequences of not having the treatment.

Moreover, the person proposing the treatment must answer all of the patient's questions fully and honestly.

## The Age of Consent

There is no general age of consent to treatment or counselling; instead, the issue depends on whether the young person is capable of consenting. A young person will be found to have capacity to consent or to refuse consent if they both:

- Understand the information relevant to the proposed treatment in issue, and;
- Appreciate the reasonably foreseeable consequences of consenting or refusing consent.

For obvious reasons, a baby or young child does not have the capacity to consent. As a child gets older, however, the issue becomes more complicated. It is up to the person proposing the treatment to decide if the young person or child is capable of consenting or refusing consent. The issue of capacity requires the practitioner to consider the child's age, maturity and general level of understanding. An individual's capacity may also vary over time. A young person may be capable of making certain decisions but not others.

In the counselling, psychotherapy / psychology community, there are specific criteria and professional standards to follow in order to assess a minor's ability to (1) consent to counselling and (2) consent to disclose personal information, which involve the practitioner assessing whether or not they are a "mature minor" (capable of understanding and self-advocating for counselling) and if it is in the best interests of the minor.

### When a Young Person is judged not capable of Suitably Informed Consent or Refusal

If anyone is found to be incapable of making a treatment decision, then a substitute decision-maker is asked to decide on that person's behalf. If the person is under the age of 16, the substitute decision-maker must consent to or refuse the treatment based on the young person's best interests. The wishes of the young person should also be taken into consideration.

The substitute decision-maker for a young person under 16 will likely be one or both parents. In some cases where the parent is unable or incapable of making treatment decisions, a court may appoint a legal guardian to decide on the child's behalf.

Adapted from resources from: CMHA BC, Healthlink BC, Legal Aid BC, BC Children's Hospital



## INFO SHEET

# UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

### WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a serious yet common mental illness that negatively impacts how someone feels, the way they think, and how they interact with the surrounding environment. Depression may contribute to a wide variety of physical and emotional problems.

### WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS FOR DEPRESSION?

The biopsychosocial factors of an individual:

- Biology – genetic, biological and physiological
- Psychology – mindset and mental state of being
- Social Factors – stressors, disruptions in the environment and related factors

A mental illness such as depression often consists of three interrelated factors as listed above.

### WHAT ELSE MAY BE AFFECTED BY DEPRESSION?

- Physical health and performance
- Risk of injury
- Sport, work, and school participation and motivation
- Suicidal risk

### TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Psychotherapy
- Medication

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Athletes, coaches, and sport leaders tend to set high expectations (for themselves and others) and recent research has shown that the stoic and competitive culture of sport has often served as a barrier to getting mental health support. It is important that athletes, parents, coaches and sport leaders are familiar with the signs and symptoms of depression and other mood disorders, and that they feel confident in taking action to encourage help-seeking (for themselves, and others)..

Every person is unique, but below is a list of common signs and symptoms of someone who might be experiencing depression:

- Feelings of worthlessness, helpless, & hopelessness
- Low or sad moods which may or may not be accompanied by episodes of crying
- Irritability or anger
- Eating and sleeping disturbances
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Fatigue, loss of interest, and loss of energy
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or a suicide attempt



## CASE ILLUSTRATION

Jake is the captain of a club volleyball team and is one of the leading setters in BC. Jake had been known to be outgoing, highly motivated, and punctual. However, recently he was late and even absent for several practices in the past month. As a result, his coaches were upset and added an extra load to his practices as punishment when he was there. Jake found it difficult to talk to anyone about how he was actually feeling. Instead, he said he was tired and had been waking up too early in the morning and found it hard to get out of bed. Things he used to find enjoyable no longer interested him. Jake's academic and athletic performance started to decline, and his teammates noticed Jake was often angered by simple behaviours and was withdrawn from team activities off the court. Jake had made comments to teammates and friends about being a failure and felt the easy way out was to not wake up in the morning at all.

### HOW AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP IF YOU SUSPECT DEPRESSION IN SOMEONE YOU KNOW

- Ensure a private and safe space to approach the person you're concerned about
- Express concern in behavioural and non-judgemental terms ("I've noticed you have seemed (tired/withdrawn/sad, etc.) lately - is everything ok?")
- Listen, in a sensitive and non-threatening manner. Encourage expression and remain calm and supportive
- Show empathy and seek clarity by repeating back and paraphrasing (to be sure you understand the details)
- Normalize but don't minimize what they are saying. Express that many people experience these challenges, and encourage sharing (this can de-escalate the situation and may open the door to help-seeking and more open sharing of information)
- Avoid judging, evaluating, or criticizing - keep statements supportive and/or neutral
- Depending on the relationship and age of the person, have resources and a referral pathway on hand, and reinforce how getting help is a sign of strength and that you are there for them and can help facilitate finding someone best suited to help
- If you are concerned about suicide, ask questions openly and supportively - it is a myth that speaking about suicide will trigger action - speaking up can save lives
- If they are a minor, include other caring adults as per the situation (school counsellors, parents, coaches, etc.)
- Your family doctor, school, local public health authority, private practitioner network, or other services such as the Foundry (<https://foundrybc.ca/> for youth aged 12 - 24) can help

### FOR AN IMMEDIATE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- Call the BC Crisis Centre at 1-800-784-2433
- Go to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911

Sources

NCAA, NATA, Eklund & Defreese, 2017



**LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES & FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

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## TIPS FOR COACHES

# PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN COMPETITION

### What is Stress & Performance Anxiety?

Stress is the subjective interpretation of an event by a person. In order to perceive something to be stressful the athlete must:

- Perceive an event as threatening (to their physical, mental, or emotional well being) and,
- Perceive that they do not have the resources to cope with the event.

Some stress is useful. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, an optimal level of stress (arousal) is needed in order to reach peak performance. However, too little stress can lead to under-activation of the athlete (boredom, disinterest), whereas an overwhelming amount of stress can lead to performance anxiety and “distress”. Distress or unmanageable levels of stress lead to higher risks of physical and mental injury and illness. Regardless of whether the stressors are real or imaginary, athletes' reactions are similar.

Many athletes who perform well during training or practice may still suffer from performance anxiety on game day. Performance anxiety in sports, sometimes otherwise known as “choking” is described as a decrease in athletic performance due to too much perceived stress. Mental stress on gameday is typically rooted in at least one of several factors (see list on right). Many of these have more to do with everything surrounding the game, before and after, than the actual game itself.



**Having an audience** (particularly one that is loving and supportive): Athletes can become overly self-aware of every play they make when they're on the athletic stage.

**Fear of disappointing others:** Even when a parent or coach is supportive, athletes may be anxious about disappointing them.

**High expectations:** Every athlete wants to do their best, but internal self-talk may create stress when they set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.

**Post-game analysis:** Whether it is from a coach, parent, teammate, or themselves, the post-game analysis weighs on an athlete's mindset.

**Recovering from an injury:** After an athlete gets hurt, it can take a long time to restore their confidence.



Performance anxiety is often a result of the way the athletes interpret the situation. It is rarely the external situation that causes stress, but rather the way the athlete's self-talk describes the situation that creates feelings of stress, anxiety and fear.

For athletes who choke during competition it is important to they understand the thoughts they have regarding an event can be modified, adjusted or controlled with the right mental practice.

## Tips for Supporting Athletes

- **Focus on the task at hand.** Some athletes allow outside problems/distractions to affect their performance. Crowd noise, opponents and hovering parents often cause tremendous stress for an athlete. During the competition, an athlete's focus needs to be on the responsibilities in the moment, and not outside distractions. Come up with a plan to handle distractions.
- **Consider the language you use before, during, and after games.** Be wary of only praising athletes when things go right – a good rule of thumb is to praise effort instead of the result. As a coach, it can help to avoid instruction that adds extra pressure to a game situation (e.g., "we have to score right now!").
- Studies have shown that we stay out of our heads more when performing actions we might describe as "muscle memory." At practice, **having athletes do many repetitions** of the movements they will be expected to do on gameday is a good way to ensure they become second nature.
- **Simulate game-type pressure in practice** by playing music or recorded crowd noise, having parents stay to watch, or adding in other elements that will get athletes used to performing under stress. It's important to make sure athletes are familiar with and confident in the strategies that are going to be used on gameday.
- **Set expectations for competition that are process-oriented.** This gives players tangible things to focus on that they can control in a game. The more in-control your athlete feels, the calmer they will be. To reduce anxiety, focus on processes like positive self-talk, game day tactics or strategies, techniques, imagery and visualization, getting better, and having a learning mentality. When athletes focus on learning those things and perfecting them out of the love of the game, there's always a successful outcome regardless of how an athlete plays.
- **Help your athletes create rituals.** To calm their nerves and focus on the process rather than outcome, encourage your athletes to come up with their own rituals and stick to them on game day. For younger athletes, helping them write a mantra or practice visualization might work best.
- **After the competition, review performance and recall the things athletes did well.** Focus on any actions, thoughts and behaviors that helped them perform. Acknowledge things that hindered performance but look where you want to go, not where you don't. If you focus on the negative aspects, you will continue to do the same things over again. Focus on the times when players get it right.
- **Enjoy volleyball!** Don't place too much emphasis on winning and losing - the primary reason most athletes play is because they enjoy the game. While there is a time and a place for an emphasis on winning and losing, most athletes need to appreciate the experience and friendships made rather than the win-loss record.

Sources

[www.truesport.org](http://www.truesport.org)

[www.expandthereach.ca](http://www.expandthereach.ca)



**LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES & FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

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# Handling Performance Anxiety

*Do you perform well during training or practice but feel anxious on game day?*

Performance anxiety, sometimes otherwise known as “choking”, is described as a decrease in athletic performance due to too much perceived stress. Mental stress on gameday may be rooted in:

- **Having an audience** - You may become overly self-aware of every decision and play you make when you're on the athletic stage.
- **Fear of disappointing others:** Even when a parent or coach is supportive, you may be anxious about disappointing them.
- **High expectations:** Everyone wants to do their best, but internal self-talk can create stress when you set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.
- **Post-game analysis:** Whether it is from a coach, parent, teammate, or yourself, the post-game analysis weighs on your mindset.
- **Recovering from an injury:** If you get hurt, it can take a long time to restore your confidence.

## **Remember: Performance anxiety is normal!**

It is rarely the actual game but rather the way our self-talk describes it that creates feelings of stress, anxiety and fear. If you choke during competition, understand that you can adjust or control the thoughts you have with the right mental practice.

*Turn over for some useful tips!*

# Helpful Tips

**Accept and validate** rather than fight or minimize the nervous energy you feel. Know that the adrenaline rush you feel is normal and part of your body's natural preparation. Notice it, but don't focus on it.

**Prepare both mentally and physically before an event.** Arrive with plenty of time so you aren't rushed. Get a thorough warm-up, do some stretching, and know what is expected.

**Practice visualization.** Mentally see yourself doing everything right. Positive self-talk is very powerful and can change your attitude and have a positive outcome on your performance.

**Focus on the task at hand** rather than the outcome. Be present in the moment and avoid thinking too far into the competition or the results.

If you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, **stop and focus only on your breathing.** Focusing on your breathing rhythm will automatically pull you back into the present.

**Force a smile.** Something as simple as making yourself smile when you are thinking negatively can change your attitude in a split second.

**Perform as if you don't care about the outcome.** This may help you to enjoy your sport for what it is, another day in your life... not the most important thing in your life.

([www.truesport.org](http://www.truesport.org) [www.expandthereach.ca](http://www.expandthereach.ca))



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**Leading in safe sport  
practices & fostering  
a safe environment**

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## TIPS FOR REFEREES

# HANDLING STRESS



### What is Stress?

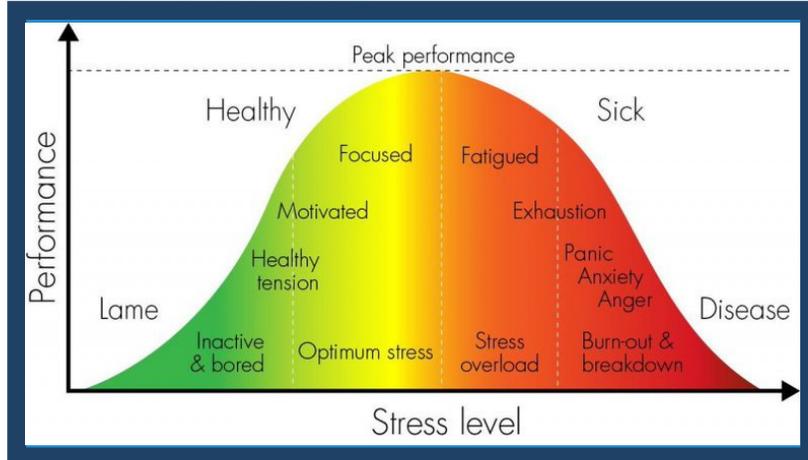
Stress is the subjective interpretation of an event by a person. In order to perceive something to be stressful you must:

- Perceive an event as threatening (to your physical, mental, or emotional well being) and,
- Perceive that you do not have the resources to cope with the event.

Some stress is useful. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law (shown on right), an optimal level of stress (arousal) is needed in order to reach peak performance. The right amount of pressure can help you perform which, in turn, can support your well-being.

Too little stress can lead to under-activation (boredom, disinterest). However, too much stress which might mean you become tired, irritated and experience heightened anxiety and an overwhelming amount of stress can lead to “distress”. Distress or unmanageable levels of stress lead to higher risks of physical and mental injury and illness. Regardless of whether the stressors are real or imaginary, your body's reaction is similar.

Stress isn't a medical diagnosis but severe stress over a long period of time may lead to depression or anxiety. Therefore, recognising that you are stressed and acting early is important to your wellbeing.



### Causes of Stress

**Having an audience:** You can become self-aware of every call you make when you're on the court.

**High expectations:** Every referee wants to do their best, but internal self-talk may create stress when you set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.

**The impact of others:** The external environment can be stressful. Poor behaviour or criticism from coaches, parents, or even other referees, can add to the pressure that you are feeling.

**Daily Life:** Outside refereeing, you might be feeling stressed as a result of day-to-day life (e.g. exams, relationships or work) or having to balance your refereeing with everything else you do.



## WHO DO I CONTACT FOR SUPPORT?

**Pre-match** - your personal mentor or the referee mentor on your set of courts.

**During the match** - your referee partner or the referee mentor on your set of courts.

**Post-match** - the referee mentor on your set of courts, the Head Referee, or the Assignor for the Tournament.

**VBC Contact:** [referee@volleyballbc.org](mailto:referee@volleyballbc.org)

## Tips for Handling Stress

- **Be organised:** e.g. plan your journey, leave on time, pack all the right referee gear – don't leave anything until the last minute.
- **Have a planned pre-match routine:** Visualise particular situations e.g. meeting the coaches pre-match, dealing with players wearing incorrect uniforms, jewellery and potential illegal equipment.
- **Have a 'what if' plan to help deal with potential stressors:** e.g. plan what you're going to say and do if you are verbally abused by a parent, or how you might deal with dissent from a coach.
- **Look after yourself:** e.g. eat the right food, get enough sleep, exercise regularly, breathing exercises.
- **Do something different:** Rather than focusing all your energies on refereeing, do something different and distracting, e.g. spend time with friends/family, engage in different activities.
- **'Control the controllables':** Accept that there are some things you can't change/influence and try not to worry about them.
- **Postpone your worries:** Rather than thinking constantly about things that are worrying you, write them down (in a 'Worry Diary') and deal with them at one point only for a fixed time period (e.g. for 15 minutes each evening).
- **Put things in perspective:** For most referees, it's a hobby. Also, don't be afraid to say 'no' if there are times that you want to take a break.
- **Self-talk:** Have a set phrase or set of words to help you through potentially stressful situations in a match and to help you remain positive – this could be something as simple as counting to 10.
- **Use association:** If you feel down or anxious pre-match, listen to some music that you associate with happiness to boost your mood.
- **During your break, focus on the positive and learning experiences.**
- **Turn off social media:** What are you really going to gain from knowing what people think post-game?

Sources

[www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com)

[www.thethirdteam.co.uk](http://www.thethirdteam.co.uk)



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## INFO SHEET

# BODY IMAGE & DISORDERED EATING

### EATING, EXERCISE, BODY IMAGE ISSUES

Disordered eating & body image issues often begin as a preoccupation with losing weight, gaining weight (or muscle mass) or as an intense fear of becoming fat. It is considered disordered eating when this fear or concern leads to abnormal eating and exercise patterns. These patterns can include bingeing (eating large amounts of food), purging (ridding the body of food), fasting, significantly restricting the amount and/or the types of foods eaten, and/or the use of products or overexercise to lose or gain weight (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012).

### WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Eating disorders: such as anorexia nervosa (starvation), bulimia nervosa (bingeing / purging), and binge eating disorder (compulsive eating) are at the extreme end of disordered eating. Someone who experiences disordered eating is worried, or constantly thinking about their body weight, shape, physical appearance, and food intake. They think about these things to a point where it gets in the way of happiness and daily life. Typically, treatment is required for healing.

### WHAT IS THE FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD?

The Female Athlete Triad is a condition that affects girls and women (and athletes who menstruate of all genders) in a wide range of sports. The Triad is among the most serious health concerns facing these athletes in sport. It includes disordered eating, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis.

### Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S) SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

This often unrecognized or misdiagnosed disorder can occur in any athlete (all genders) and may include:

- low energy availability (inadequate caloric intake);
- with or without disordered eating;
- amenorrhea (lack of menstrual periods);
- low bone mineral density;
- frequent illnesses or injuries;
- poor recovery.

\*When it comes to RED-S, disordered eating includes:

- intentional (on purpose) under-consumption of calories.
- non-intentional (not on purpose) under-consumption of calories.

This can happen both as a function of inadequate fuelling and also as a function of too intense exercise.

This disorder is complex, affects all genders and abilities, and requires a full medical and psychological examination in order to be properly diagnosed and addressed.

Source: NCAA, NEDIC, NEDA, IOC



## CASE ILLUSTRATION

The athletic trainer of a volleyball team learned that a new recruit (Sarah) would not eat before a competition, saying she would feel "too heavy" to perform. Sarah also declined to eat (or ate only small amounts) while they were on the road, providing a different reason for not doing so each time. When Sarah did consume food, she rushed to the washroom by herself almost immediately after. Her teammates also noticed that Sarah was often cold and complained of muscle cramps in the change room. She was struggling with her performance and confided in teammates that she thought she could improve by losing weight and becoming leaner. Her family and coach seemed to praise her weight loss at first, so she just kept going. The athletic trainer did a medical screen, which concluded an irregular menstrual cycle, and a significant weight loss of 14 lbs over the season. Sarah often had trouble focussing, and often struggled with a very low mood.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EATING, EXERCISE OR BODY IMAGE ISSUES

Volleyball is a "body conscious" sport, which means athletes may be at a higher risk for body image issues or disordered eating due to a potential preoccupation with body shape and size, and wearing body conscious uniforms.

### Physical signs & symptoms

- Amenorrhea (missed menstrual periods)
- Dehydration
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hypothermia (feeling cold often)
- Stress fractures
- Weight loss or body composition changes
- Muscle cramps, weakness, or fatigue
- Dental and gum problems
- Frequent illnesses (colds, flus)
- Delayed growth and development (youth/teens)

### PROTECTION AND PREVENTION FACTORS

- Set a good example: focus on personal qualities and true performance indicators (work ethic, good technique, good communication skills, leadership)
- Use neutral words to describe foods (crunchy or sweet/salty vs. good/bad) and eating practices; no "dieting" language or behaviours
- Avoid critical remarks about body shape and size (in others but also in yourself)
- Encourage self-expression and communication
- Teach positive coping skills for stress and pressure
- Provide flexibility in uniform types and sizes to suit the comfort of the participant

### Psychological/behavioural signs & symptoms

- Avoidance of social eating situations
- Reports "feeling fat" despite being thin
- Excessive use of restroom
- Preoccupation with weight and eating
- Use of weight loss products
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increase in mood changes

The key is getting a support system and addressing the behaviours and underlying mental health issues in an athlete struggling in this area. A doctor who understands these concerns in athletes, a mental health professional, sport dietician, the coach, and the athlete (and their families) may work together to return the athlete to optimal health.

### FOR AN IMMEDIATE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- Call the BC Crisis Centre at 1-800-784-2433
- Go to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911

Sources

NCAA, NATA, Eklund & Defreese, 2017



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## INFO SHEET

# SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS



**While drugs such as alcohol and cannabis are legal in Canada, managing their misuse is critical in sport**

### ALCOHOL

Signs and Symptoms:

- Irresponsible regarding commitments or responsibilities to school, sport, and relationships
- Using alcohol in situations where it is dangerous (e.g., drinking and driving, mixing medications and alcohol)
- Problems with increased aggression, rule or law-breaking behaviour

Effects on Sport Performance:

- As a central system depressant, alcohol can decrease/impair concentration, coordination, reaction time, strength, power, and endurance
- Alcohol can also impact the body's ability to absorb nutrients

### CANNABIS

Signs and Symptoms:

- Red eyes
- Lethargy
- Apathy
- Increased appetite

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Slowed reaction time
- Decreased hand-eye coordination
- Impaired time perception

### STIMULANT SUBSTANCES

This broad group of drugs include many forms of “party drugs”, such as cocaine, ecstasy, or amphetamines. Athletes may take them for an energetic and mood boost, or thinking this will lead to better performance, helping to cope with stress, low mood, or trauma.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Shakiness
- Rapid speech and/or movements
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Irritability

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Athletes sometimes believe these drugs can positively affect their performance
- Increased nervousness can negatively impact performance
- Increase heart rate and blood pressure
- Significant rise in body temperature and heat production
- Can result in overexertion, injuries, or death.

Sources: NCAA, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse



## CASE ILLUSTRATION

Markus enjoyed spending time with his team training, competing, and in social settings. He became involved in more recreational alcohol and marijuana use (both with and without his team around him). Some of his teammates and friends outside of sport started to notice how often he was using. He knew his sport organization tested for pot, so he focused on alcohol as it "helped him relieve stress." He is now showing up for practice hungover, or skipping altogether. His friends have noticed that he is becoming defensive, choosing to drink in secret, and hiding how much he is drinking.

His teammates are concerned about him, but are not sure who to talk to about it: alcohol seems very normalized in post-game celebrations, and not just among players, but also families, coaches and fans.

### A GROWING CONCERN: OPIOID USE

British Columbia is facing a huge societal challenge with a growing opioid crisis. Opioids may be procured legally (by being prescribed by a doctor for pain management) or a street version, purchased by the illicit drug trade. Opioids don't just relieve pain, they release endorphins, leading to "feel good" moods or a "high" sensation, making users susceptible to substance use disorders. To further the dark reality of opioid addiction, the illicit drug supply in British Columbia is increasingly toxic.

Athletes were among many populations who were exposed initially to opioids as part of a pain management strategy. Unfortunately, they can be highly addictive, and they can be difficult to wean off of, regardless of the reason they were initially taken. Part of the issue with those taking opioids is that there is shame surrounding dependency. Like all issues with addiction, see the section below on ways to address opioids in someone you know and care about.

### IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

- Express concern in behavioural and non-judgemental terms ("I've noticed you have seemed (tired/restless/irritated, etc.) lately - is everything ok?")
- Listen, in a sensitive and non-threatening manner. Encourage expression; remain supportive/calm
- Avoid judging, evaluating, or criticizing - keep statements supportive and/or neutral
- Depending on the relationship and age of the person, have resources and a referral pathway on hand, and reinforce how getting help is a sign of strength and that you are there for them and can help facilitate finding someone best suited to help

### FOR MORE HELP AND SPECIALIZED CARE

- Go to the nearest Emergency Room for an emergency or call 911
- BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service: Call 604-660-9382 in the Lower Mainland or 1-800-663-1441 toll-free anywhere in B.C. Available 24 hours a day.
- HealthLink BC: Call 8-1-1 (toll-free) if you need non-emergency health information or advice. Available 24 hours a day.
- BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information: For help and support via email at [bcpartners@heretohelp.bc.ca](mailto:bcpartners@heretohelp.bc.ca)

Sources

Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse; BC Government



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## INFO SHEET

# MENTAL HEALTH LINKS TO ATHLETE BURNOUT



### GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCERN

- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- Feeling disconnected and withdrawn from others
- Changes in appetite (loss of appetite or overeating)
- Increased irritability and frustration
- Changes in energy level and sleep patterns and quality (for example, up at night and sleepy during the day)
- Feeling sad, worthless, empty or without hope
- Light, sound, touch and smell sensitivity

### URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

- Suicidal thoughts or planning
- Unexplained changes in speech, writing or thinking
- Feeling of paranoia or deep fear
- Significant drop in school, sport or work performance
- Light, sound, touch and smell sensitivity
- Sudden and/or strange personality changes

### WHAT IS ATHLETE BURNOUT?

Athlete burnout is a cognitive-affective syndrome characterized by: (1) perceptions of emotional and physical exhaustion, (2) reduced sense of accomplishment, and (3) devaluation of sport.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ATHLETE BURNOUT

- Physical signs such as higher resting heart rate & blood pressure
- Plateaued or reduced performance or conditioning; loss of strength and stamina
- Chronic feelings of fatigue or "feeling exhausted"
- Mental challenges such as difficulties paying attention, performing in school tasks, or remembering things
- Frequent illnesses (weakened immune system response)
- Volatile emotions (irritability, mood swings, feeling "flat")
- Negative sense of self; increased depression and anxiety over not meeting sport demands

Sources

NCAA, NATA, Eklund & Defreese, 2017



# PREVENT AND TREAT BURNOUT

Athletes often juggle busy lives and outside pressures, including school and other pursuits. In addition, many programs may be unknowingly over-training athletes - particularly if they are unaware of the volume of training an athlete is doing in or outside volleyball.

Research shows that the best immediate treatment for athlete burnout is:

- **ADEQUATE REST AND RECOVERY TIME**
- **SOME TIME AWAY FROM SPORT**

## WHERE TO SEEK HELP IF YOU SUSPECT ATHLETE BURNOUT

- Family doctors can help athletes manage burnout, particularly if they have experience in sport.
- Mental health service providers with a background in sport (counsellors, psychologists, mental performance consultants) can support athletes and help create a treatment plan.
- Supportive coaches, team leaders, athletic trainers (physios, athletic therapists) can also refer athletes for help.

## FOR AN IMMEDIATE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- Call the BC Crisis Centre at 1-800-784-2433
- Go to the nearest Emergency Room or call 911



Sources

NCAA, NATA, Eklund & Defreese, 2017



**LEADING IN SAFE SPORT PRACTICES & FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

Visit [www.volleyballbc.org/safe-sport](http://www.volleyballbc.org/safe-sport) for more information about what we are doing to address concussion, injury, abuse and maltreatment, and mental health in volleyball.



# Youth and suicide

Young people face significant internal and external stressors, including social, physiological, and neurological change. Being an adolescent can involve many challenges. When facing them, some may feel trapped and need support to help them see hope for the future. Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts are key warning signs. If young people show these signs, it is crucial to offer support and connect them to help as soon as possible (Bennett et al., 2015).

## Why are youth at risk?

Certain factors can place some people at a higher risk for suicide than others, and when multiple risk factors outweigh the factors that build resiliency, there is an increased likelihood that a person may think about suicide (Sharam et al., 2021).

### A few factors put youth at risk of suicide:

- Internal stressors such as overwhelming emotional pain, feelings of hopelessness, mental illness, trauma, impulsivity, or struggles with gender identification or sexual orientation
- External stressors such as bullying, exposure to suicide, homelessness, or a recent stressful event (especially actual or perceived losses)
- A tendency for “tunnel vision” that prevents them from being able to see past the difficulties of today and into the future
- A vulnerability to “suicide contagion” (or imitation) that may put them at risk in reaction to the suicide of a loved one, celebrity, or a fictional character they strongly identify with (Zenere, 2009)

In 2019, among those in the 15-19 age group,

**129** males  
(11.9 per 100,000)

&

**71** females  
(6.9 per 100,000)

died by suicide.  
(Statistics Canada, 2019)

Youth are admitted to hospital for suicide attempts more than any other age group (as many as one in four admissions) (Kutcher & Szumilas, 2008).

Suicide accounts for

**25%**

of all deaths among 15-24 year-olds (Statistics Canada, 2019)

## Warning signs

Any significant change in behaviour or mood is a warning sign that someone may be thinking about suicide. In the following examples among young people, some characteristic behaviours may be symptoms of an emerging mental health concern, including thoughts of suicide:

- **Significant mood changes:**
  - › being really sad when usually they're happy, or being really happy when they're usually down or melancholic
  - › getting angry, annoyed, or easily frustrated
- **Risk taking, spontaneous behaviour that is out of the ordinary:**
  - › drinking more alcohol or taking more drugs than usual
  - › wanting to run away from home
- **Conversation or statements that indicate hopelessness, psychological pain, feelings of worthlessness, or being a burden:**
  - › "What's the point of even trying?"
  - › "Nobody cares about me."
- **Talking about or making plans for suicide**
- **Marked changes in behaviour or worrisome behaviour:**
  - › withdrawal (from activities they normally enjoy, social media)
  - › changes in sleep patterns
  - › anger or hostility
  - › recent increases in agitation or irritability

(Suicide Awareness Voices of Education et al., 2015)
- **Reaching a point where self-harm (non-suicidal self-injury) is no longer an effective coping mechanism (Whitlock & Knox, 2007)**

**Historically**, adolescent females attempted suicide far more often than males. While males died more often, that gap is narrowing as females increasingly use more lethal means of suicide (Skinner & McFaul, 2012).

## What can reduce risk?

Suicide risk in youth can be reduced in four basic ways: reducing psychological pain, increasing hope, enhancing connection, and reducing the capability for suicide (Klonksy, personal communication, 2020).

### Other factors that may reduce risk:

- A strong family connection
- A positive school environment
- Strong, supportive relationships (with friends, trusted adults)
- Good self-esteem
- Hope for the future
- Recognition that emotions are not static, that one's emotional state constantly changes
- Involvement in positive activities outside regular school hours (e.g., volunteering, participating in cultural activities, sports) (Armstrong & Manion, 2015)

**Suicide is the second leading cause of death** among 15–19-year-olds, second only to all unintentional injuries (accidents) combined, including unintentional drug overdoses (Statistics Canada, 2019).

## What can we all do to help reduce suicide among youth?

If a young person you know is exhibiting warning signs, talk with them.

You can start the conversation by mentioning your concerns and using direct and open-ended questions: “I noticed you’re getting more frustrated about your school work lately. How are you doing?” Take time to listen, and let them express themselves without lecturing them. Be patient if what they’re saying is not immediately apparent or reasonable to you. Remember their perspective and validate their feelings. Be aware that the young person may also express themselves using body language.

If you’re still worried about them, ask “Are you thinking about suicide?” If they say “yes,” don’t react with shock or anger or try to solve their problems. Ask if they have a plan for how they would die by suicide. If they say yes, ask if they are able to follow through with their plan. If they say “yes,” get help immediately and do not leave them alone. Take them to the emergency department or call a crisis line for advice. Otherwise, enlist the help of others, such as a family member, friend, or crisis centre. You can also help them create a safety plan ([bit.ly/3qgfh0H](http://bit.ly/3qgfh0H)).

### At home and at school

#### Ways to help prevent suicide in a young person you know:

- Help them build connections with family, other adults and youth, and create a network of support
- Guide them in identifying their strengths
- Develop or strengthen your relationship with them
- Provide support, communicate positive expectations, and invite their participation
- Demonstrate attitudes and messages of optimism, strength, and overcoming difficulties
- Pinpoint and treat underlying disorders that may be contributing to their mental health challenges
- Identify and resolve ongoing or historical trauma

### In a healthcare setting

Up to two-thirds of all youth who die by suicide never receive mental health services. Strategies that have proven to be effective for reducing suicide rates, such as early intervention with mental health disorders, are not often available (Kutcher & Szumilas, 2008). Since healthcare workers see young people most often, these settings need to have better and more accurate screening to identify youth who are thinking about suicide (Wagner, 2009). These workers should also be educated in suicide prevention. Our goal must be to get the youth most at risk the help they need.

## What can youth do to stay mentally healthy?





# Bullying and suicide

## What is it?

Bullying is related to negative psychological, emotional and behavioural outcomes. These outcomes can eventually make youth feel as though they can no longer cope (Wade & Beran, 2011).

Bullying is linked to several precursors to thoughts of suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010):

- depression and hopelessness;
- low self-esteem;
- loneliness and isolation;
- anger and frustration;
- humiliation;
- embarrassment; or
- trauma.

# 85%

of bullying takes place in front of other people (Craig & Pepler, 1997).



*Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate, repeated and hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm and/or threat of aggression.”*

(Alberta Human Services, 2015)

## Types of bullying

### VERBAL BULLYING

- sarcasm;
- threats;
- negative, insulting, or humiliating comments; or
- unwanted sexual comments.

### SOCIAL BULLYING

- spreading rumours or damaging someone's reputation;
- excluding others from a group;
- humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti; or
- damaging someone's friendships.

### PHYSICAL BULLYING

- intentional physical aggression towards another person;
- destroying or stealing belongings; or
- unwanted sexual touching.

### CYBERBULLYING

- Using electronic communication (e.g., internet, social media or text messaging) to:
  - » intimidate;
  - » put-down;
  - » spread rumours;
  - » make fun of someone; or
  - » disseminate private or embarrassing information or images of a person without their permission (Alberta Human Services, 2015).

Cyber bullying victims are

# 2x

more likely to attempt suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

When bullying is accompanied by other risk factors, it often causes suicidal ideation (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Olson, 2012; Holt et al., 2015). Risk factors for suicidal ideation include:

- bullying;
- sexual abuse;
- physical abuse;
- drug abuse; or
- depression.

Both bullying victims and those who perpetuate bullying are at a higher risk for suicide. Kids who are involved as both victims and perpetrators of bullying are at the highest risk for suicide (Holt et al, 2015, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, n.d).

Because of the strong connection between bullying and suicide, the development of bullying prevention and intervention programs is vital (van Geel, et al., 2014).

## Helping out

### What to do if a youth is being bullied or in emotional distress or suicidal

#### ADVICE FOR ADULTS – IF A YOUTH IS BEING BULLIED:

- Offer comfort and support; tell youth they are safe.
- Ask whoever oversees the group in which the bullying happens to monitor the situation.
- Make arrangements for the victim to be safe, either with an adult or older child near where the bullying takes place.
- Help develop confidence, build self-esteem and encourage communication (Alberta Human Services, 2015).

#### ADVICE FOR ADULTS – IF THE BULLYING VICTIM IS SUICIDAL:

- Ask the bullying victim directly if they are thinking of killing themselves.
- If they say yes, connect them with help immediately. Call your local crisis centre, and connect them with the suicidal youth.
- If the youth tells you they have a plan of how they will kill themselves, call 9-1-1 (Centre for Suicide Prevention, 2015).

#### ADVICE FOR YOUTH:

- If you see someone being bullied, decide on the safest course of action and act. You might tell the person who is bullying to stop, and/or offer the victim help, and/or seek help from an adult.
- If you are being bullied, stand up for yourself by looking confident, making eye-contact, and using a calm but assertive tone. Tell the bully to stop, then walk away. Seek help from an adult. Do not keep bullying a secret (PREVNet.ca, n.d.).

## RESOURCES

#### FOR PARENTS

- *Indigenous Youth Cyberbullying Special Feature*, Centre for Suicide Prevention [csprev.ca/2bZXxVe](http://csprev.ca/2bZXxVe)
- *Cyberbullying Special Feature*, Centre for Suicide Prevention [csprev.ca/2c00h4l](http://csprev.ca/2c00h4l)
- [B-Free.ca](http://B-Free.ca)
- [BullyFreeAlberta.ca](http://BullyFreeAlberta.ca)
- [PREVNet.ca](http://PREVNet.ca)

#### FOR YOUTH

- [KidsHelpPhone.ca](http://KidsHelpPhone.ca) 1 (800) 668-6868
- [B-Free.ca](http://B-Free.ca)
- [BullyFreeAlberta.ca](http://BullyFreeAlberta.ca)
- [PREVNet.ca](http://PREVNet.ca)

#### FOR SCHOOLS

- [KindCampaign.com](http://KindCampaign.com)
- [StopaBully.ca](http://StopaBully.ca)
- [PREVNet.ca](http://PREVNet.ca)

1 in 3

youth are bullied (Statistics Canada, 2012).

LGBTQ students experience discrimination

3x

more frequently than their heterosexual peers (Canadian Institute of Health Research, 2012).

40%

of youth have been cyberbullied (Schneider et al., 2012).



FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [SUICIDEINFO.CA](http://SUICIDEINFO.CA)



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Mental health for all



centre for  
suicide prevention

Financial contribution from



Health Canada  
Santé Canada

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### ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Anyone** can learn to identify someone at risk of suicide and get them help.

#### Call us.

We are the Centre for Suicide Prevention. For 35+ years we've been equipping Canadians with knowledge and skills to respond to people at risk of suicide. We can equip you too. We educate for life.

### ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is a catalyst for improving the mental health system and changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around mental health issues.

### ABOUT THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) was incorporated in 1985 by a group of professionals who saw the need to provide information and resources to communities to reduce the suicide rate and minimize the harmful consequences of suicidal behaviour.

**If you are in crisis, call your local crisis line.**

[suicideprevention.ca/need-help](http://suicideprevention.ca/need-help)



FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [SUICIDEINFO.CA](http://SUICIDEINFO.CA)



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Mental health for all



centre for  
suicide prevention

Financial contribution from



Health Canada  
Santé Canada

### 13. Mental Health Literacy Tools - APPENDIX A

## CONTINUUM OF MENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS AND RESOURCES

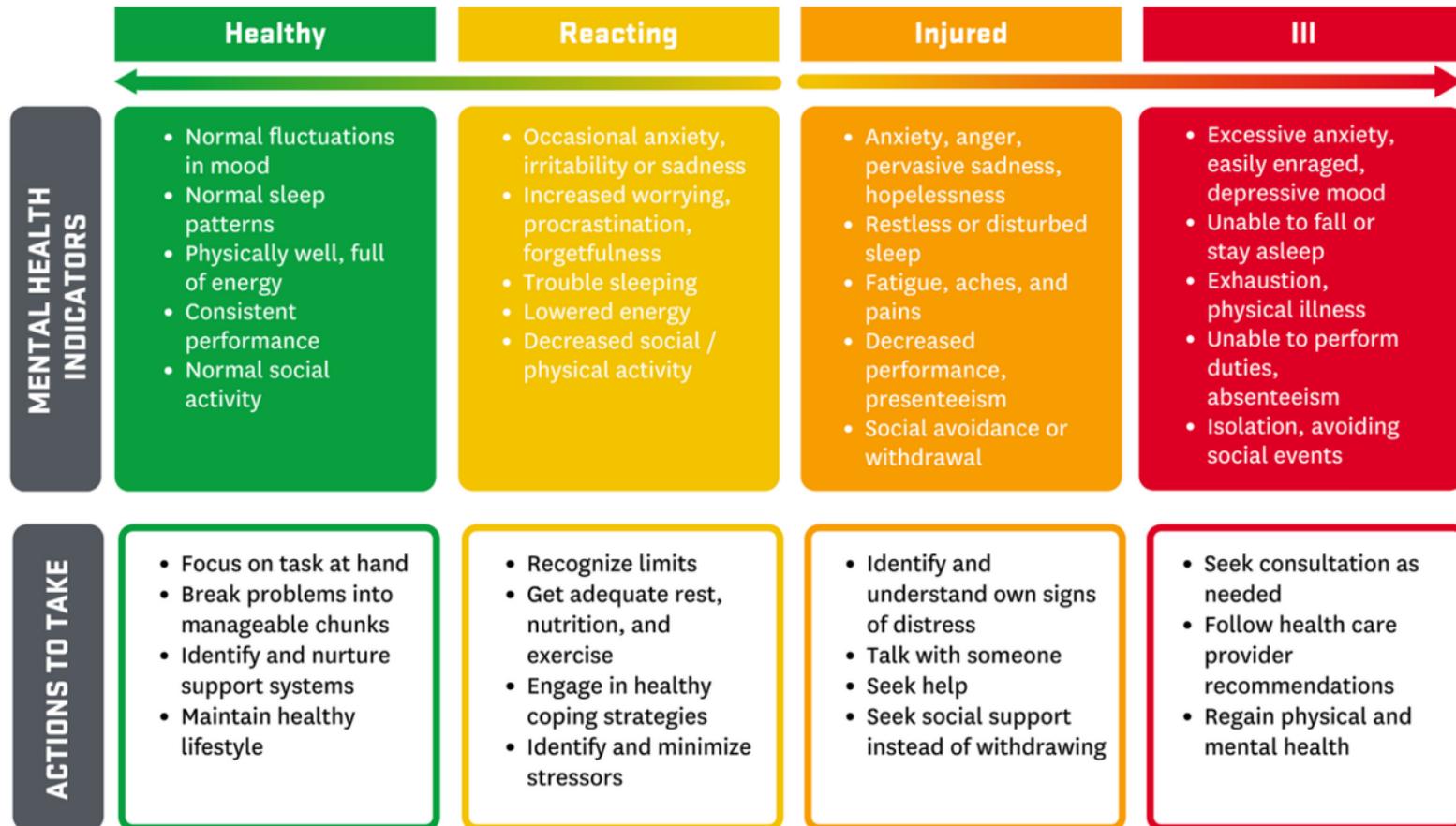


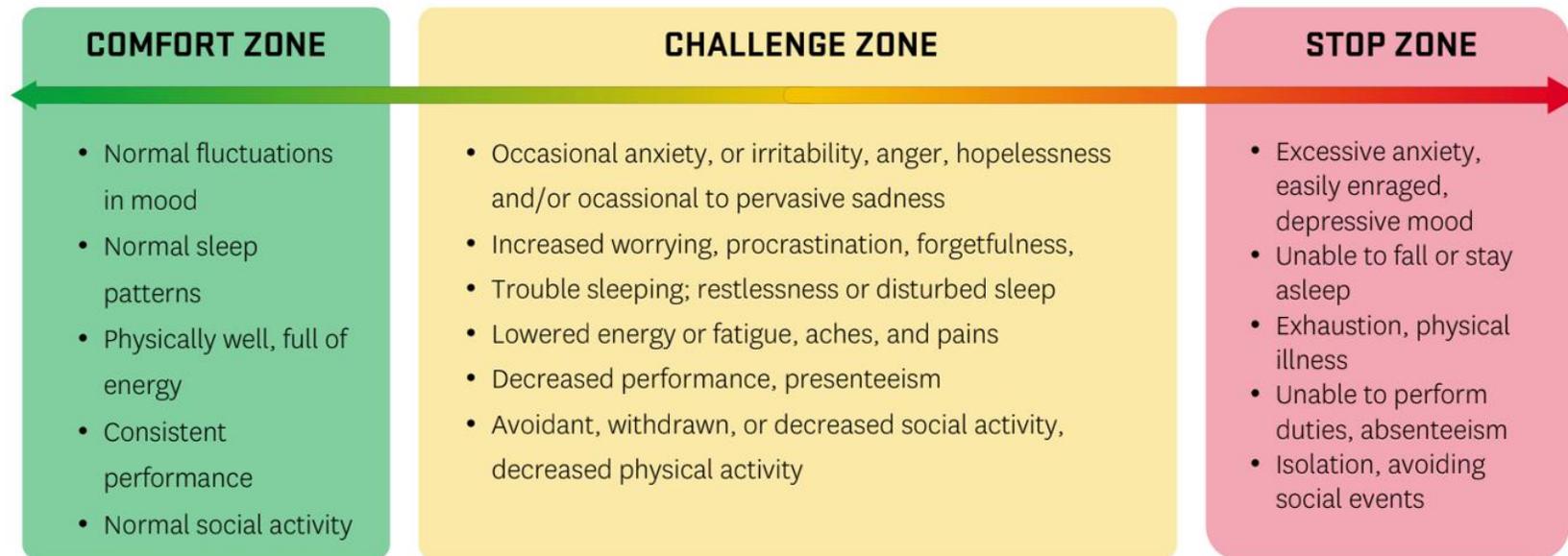
Figure 1. Continuum of mental health indicators and actions. (Adapted from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2017)



GAME PLAN  
PLAN DE MATCH



## CHECKING IN: THE TRAFFIC LIGHT METHOD



Adapted from the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)



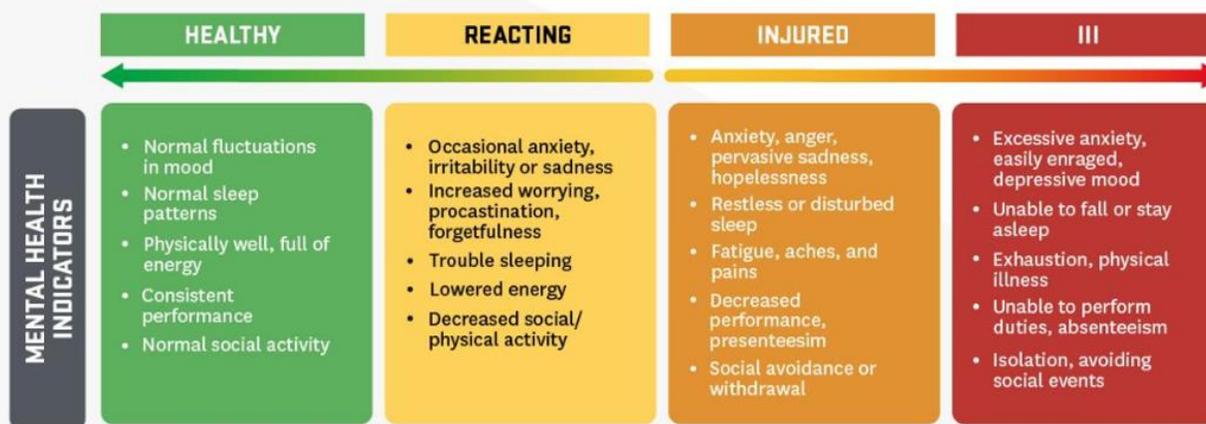
# Mental Health Continuum



“How’s your mental health today?”

## SELF CHECK-IN

### CONTINUUM OF MENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS



What colour am I identifying with today? Have there been any changes to my:

- Sleep hygiene?
- Appetite?
- Mood?
- Substance use?
- Thoughts?
- Emotions?
- Behaviours?
- Other?

Adapted from Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2017

# APPENDIX:

- Selfcare worksheet

## ATHLETE SELF-CARE



GAME PLAN  
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**INTRODUCTION:** This worksheet was developed by Game Plan and the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport. Being honest with yourself is the first step in creating a reliable self-care plan.

**IMPORTANT:** This is not a replacement for mental health support. If you think you may need to speak to a mental health professional, don't wait.

### SECTION A

## HOW I CURRENTLY COPE

Examining your own habits is an important first step in developing a self-care plan. How do you typically deal with life's demands? Can you identify when you need to take a break?

When faced with challenges, we can use either positive coping strategies or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each. *Which strategies do you use?*

**Self-care** is the practice of taking an active role in preserving or improving one's health and well-being through lifestyle design and daily choices. Self-care extends beyond your basic physical needs. You need to consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial, and academic well-being, all topics that fit within Game Plan's five pillars.

POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES	NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deep breathing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yelling / acting aggressively</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stretching</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training more</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meditation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overeating / skipping meals</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listening to music</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drinking alcohol</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Going for a walk</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procrastinating</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scrolling through social media</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking a bath</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoiding the situation / person</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Socializing with friends</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biting fingernails</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engaging in a hobby</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using drugs or smoking</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being in nature</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withdrawing from friends / family</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other: _____</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other: _____</li></ul>

\* Adapted from Homewood Health (2016) Self-Care Starter Kit and materials developed by the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work, Reiser & Butler (N.D.).

# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



**GAME PLAN**  
**PLAN DE MATCH**  
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*Need help thinking of self-care activities? Here's a short list. Which ones that resonate most for you?  
Are there other things you like to do that aren't on this list?*

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a gratitude list | <input type="checkbox"/> Dance, sing, play an instrument | <input type="checkbox"/> Cook, bake                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Make art                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Read/watch something funny  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice yoga         | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Do a random act of kindness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap            | <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk or hike           | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hangout with friends  | <input type="checkbox"/> Play with your pet              | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with family      |

# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



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**SECTION B**

## MY SELF-CARE NEEDS

We are all faced with unique challenges and no two people have the same self-care needs.

Take a moment to consider what you value (*what are you moving towards in sport and life?*) and need in your everyday life (daily self-care needs) versus what you value and need in the event of a crisis (emergency self-care needs). Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs: consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial, and academic well-being.

**DAILY SELF-CARE**

	WHAT I CURRENTLY DO:	PRACTICES TO TRY:
<p><b>Mind</b> (e.g., disconnect from electronic devices, journaling, make a budget, make a to-do list, seeking support from a counsellor, working on my mental game, make my bed every morning)</p>		
<p><b>Body</b> (e.g., eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep hygiene, go to the doctor/physiotherapist regularly, stretch after practice/competition, cross train, stay hydrated)</p>		
<p><b>Emotions</b> (e.g., celebrate my “wins”, use positive affirmations, be mindful of social media use, acknowledge my emotions through journaling, engage in activities that bring me joy)</p>		

# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



GAME PLAN  
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	WHAT I CURRENTLY DO:	PRACTICES TO TRY:
<b>Social/Spirit</b> (e.g., spend time with family, ask for support from friends/family, cultivate relationships outside of sport, regular check-ins with a teammate or coach)		
<b>School</b> (e.g., make a study schedule, use a calendar, do school work in a quiet space, take mental breaks, study in a group, engage in school community, seek extra help from my teachers)		
<b>Sport</b> (e.g., pre-game meal, visualize success, listen to pump-up music, take a nap, spend time alone, spend time with teammates, review plays/gameplan)		

# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



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PLAN DE MATCH**  
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## EMERGENCY SELF-CARE

When you are faced with a crisis, you likely won't have time to create a coping strategy. Take time to develop a plan in advance so it's there when you need it. Try completing the following table to help identify your unique self-care needs during times of distress.

<p><b>SIGNS IT'S COMING:</b> What sort of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours might indicate that you are in distress?</p>	
---	--

SELF-CARE TOOL	HELPFUL (WHAT TO DO)	HARMFUL (WHAT TO AVOID)
<p><b>Relaxation/Staying Calm</b> Which activities help you relax? Which activities make you more irritated or frustrated?</p>		
<p><b>Self-Talk</b> Helpful self-talk may include "I am capable" / "I can do this". Harmful self-talk may include "I can't handle this" / I deserve this".</p>		
<p><b>Social Support</b> Who can you reach out to for support? Are there people you should avoid during times of distress?</p>		
<p><b>Mood / Emotions</b> Which activities uplift your mood (e.g., watching a comedian)? What should you avoid when you're feeling down (e.g., staying in bed, going to parties)</p>		



# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



GAME PLAN  
PLAN DE MATCH  
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## MY SELF-CARE PLAN

Once you've created your self-care plan, look at it regularly. It takes time to form good habits – add self-care time to your calendar in the same way you prioritize practices, competition, and weight training. Make a commitment to yourself to practice your self-care routine as often as possible – you're worth it.

MY DAILY SELF-CARE PLAN					
LIST YOUR "GO-TO" PRACTICES FOR EACH CATEGORY					
MIND	BODY	EMOTIONS	SOCIAL/SPIRIT	SCHOOL	SPORT
MY TOP THREE POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES					
1.		2.		3.	
IN A CRISIS					
HELPFUL (TO DO)			HARMFUL (TO AVOID)		
MY "GO-TO" PERSON:					

# ATHLETE SELF-CARE



**GAME PLAN**  
**PLAN DE MATCH**  
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## NOTES



VOLLEYBALLBC

# 15. RECOVERY ACTIVITY

STRESS PERCEPTION WORKSHEET

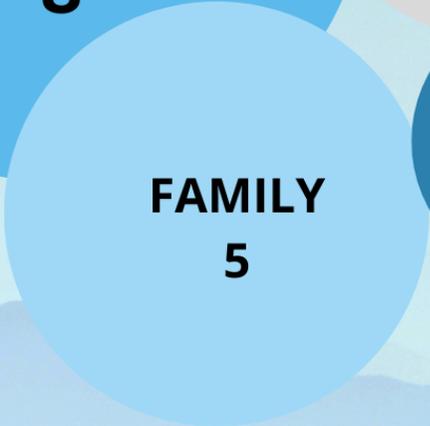
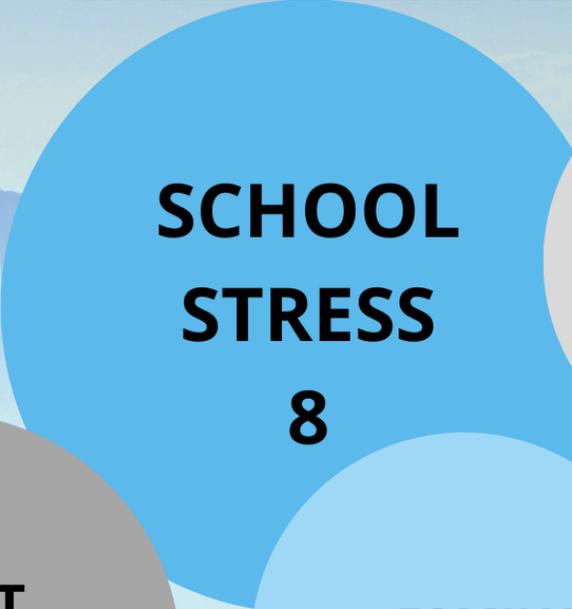
*SAMPLE WORKSHEET*



ATHLETE

SPORT/S

DATE



IN THE SPACE ABOVE, DRAW 'BUBBLES' TO LIST YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT STRESSORS. PUT A NUMBER FROM 0 TO 10 FOR STRESS LEVEL.

ADD UP THE BUBBLES FOR OVERALL STRESS TOTAL

TRACK TOTALS FOR 1 WEEK. WATCH AS TOTALS GO UP AND DOWN. WHAT STRATEGIES OR SITUATIONS HELPED REDUCE STRESS? WHERE WAS MORE STRESS CREATED IN OTHERS?



VOLLEYBALLBC

# RECOVERY ACTIVITY

STRESS PERCEPTION WORKSHEET



ATHLETE

SPORT/S

DATE

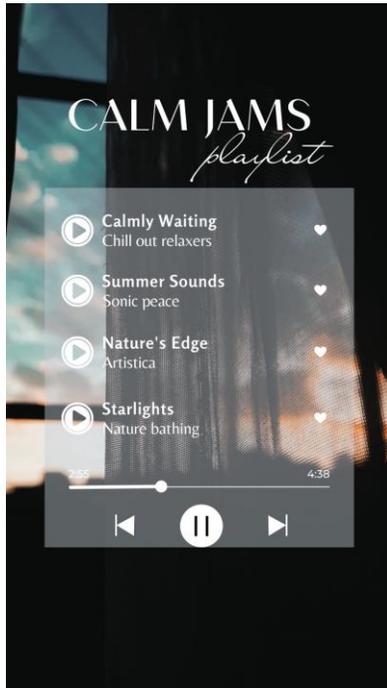
IN THE SPACE ABOVE, DRAW 'BUBBLES' TO LIST YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT STRESSORS. PUT A NUMBER UP TO A LEVEL 10 FOR A MAXIMUM STRESS LEVEL.

ADD UP ALL THE BUBBLES FOR OVERALL STRESS TRACKING TOTAL

TRACK THE TOTALS FOR 1 WEEK. WATCH THE FLUCTUATIONS. WHAT STRATEGIES OR SITUATIONS HELPED REDUCE STRESS? WHERE WAS MORE STRESS CREATED IN OTHERS?



## 16. MOOD MUSIC PLAYLIST ACTIVITY CARD



Music is a powerful mood regulator. On the energizing side, high beats per minute music can activate athletes and enhance important stress hormones and brain activity that adds to focus, blood flow, and performance readiness. Music can also relax us and provide relief from anxiety – this effect is enhanced further when combined with time to breathe deeply, or to meditate or practice mindfulness (being present in the moment).

**Coaches, parents, sport leaders and athletes can encourage the use of music to assist in creating a calmer state.**

Education on what types of music are best for altering “states” can be integrated into the daily performance or competition environments or they can be used specifically to help enhance relaxation in a stressful environment in and out of sport.

Creating a music playlist can be done by program participants, leaders, or sport families. It can also be a fun exercise that a team of Mental Health Ambassadors can do and disseminate digitally or in-person at events.

### Teaching Points

- ✓ Music helps regulate stress by reducing cortisol levels
- ✓ Music is an ideal stimuli as it reaches parts of the brain that are difficult to reach
- ✓ Music enhances the brain’s secretion of dopamine and natural opioids. These are naturally occurring chemicals that help block the perception of fatigue and physical/emotional pain.
- ✓ Music can enhance mood and increase confidence

### MY MUSIC PLAYLIST

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

- 7.
- 8.
- 9.