C&A Athletes Strong for Mental Health

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How does injury effect mental health?

What is injury?

As easy as it would be to pull the definition of injury out of the dictionary, it takes on a different definition in sports psychology. An injury is any physical or mental disruption that gets in the way of doing something you were once able to do. Sometimes a mental block can disrupt your ability to perform, just like a physical injury would. There are both physical and mental injuries.

Subjective and objective injuries

Not all injuries are created equal. Your injury may be different from a teammate who's had the same injury.

One reason for this is the differing aspects of injury.

- **Objective aspects** of an injury include what you see on the body or in an MRI/ x-ray, or the diagnosis given by a medical professional.
- **Subjective aspects** of an injury include the pain or discomfort the athlete feels, as well as their perception of how "serious" the injury is. .

Objectively you may have a shoulder injury but subjectively you may feel fine, and vice versa.





The 5 Stages of injury

1. **Pre-injury:** Conditions before the injury occurs, i.e. poor hydration, high stress, lack of sleep.
2. **Immediate**: Seconds to hours after the injury.
3. **Post Immediate:** After injury, before recovery. Athlete may experience grief, anger, sadness or depression.
4. **Recovery:** Taking care of yourself. Treat recovery with the same level of care and attention as performance. Be sure to communicate with your parents and the coach regarding your expectations and needs during this stage.
5. **Returning to Play:** Objectively ready may differ from subjectively ready. Check in with your emotions on returning to play frequently and don't hesitate to reach out to a trusted adult if feeling conflicted.

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Attitudes towards injuries



Another factor that can impact your injury and recovery is the attitudes of the people around you have towards your injury. How you may view your injury, how your parents may view your injury, and how your coach and teammates view your injury may vary. Attitudes about an injury can depend on the context that you're in– whether you're in a game, outside of a game, if it's during preseason or postseason, or even who is cheering you on in the stands. These attitudes have a big influence on how your injury is taken care of, supported and managed.

Advocating for yourself

One of the most important things to do after an injury is to listen to your body. You may receive pressure from coaches, friends and teammates to heal quickly. If you are still feeling hesitant to return to play even after your injury has been cleared by a medical professional, trust your instincts and continue to rest.

Ask yourself– "is what I'm experiencing disrupting my ability to perform?" If the answer is yes, or if participating is jeopardizing your health and safety, take more time to recovery.

Take deep breaths and do your best to communicate your needs and performance boundaries with coaches and parents as they may have a tendency to over ask how you're doing, how you're feeling, and if you're ready to get back.



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