C&A Athletes Strong for Mental Health

MINDURANCE

Athlete's managing pressure of the season

Things to keep in mind

Throughout an athlete's career, there are a few thoughts that might be difficult to keep in perspective: play hard, have fun and don't do more than you can. The balance and boundaries for these three ideas may ebb and flow throughout a game, season and career, but should always be in the back of an athlete's mind.

Setting Perspective

It's very easy for an athlete to place a lot of unnecessary pressure on themselves or their teammates. Athletes can focus on the things they can control, such as their effort level, responsibility and enthusiasm and acknowledge the things they can't control. Every sporting event will have mistakes and errors. Keeping this perspective can help athletes manage their emotions and limit the amount of pressure they may place on themselves and others. Understanding mistakes and viewing them as a learning experience can transform an athlete's attitude and self confidence.





Receiving feedback

When receiving feedback, an athlete may feel increased pressure as their mistakes and choices are being discussed. Before receiving feedback, an athlete can prepare themselves by approaching the situation with an open mindset, and keeping in mind what is within their control, and just because mistakes happen doesn't mean they are poor players. If feedback is viewed as identifying opportunities to learn and grow rather than identifying failures, it becomes easier to feel less defensive. While taking feedback in, an athlete can remind themselves, "I did a good job, and I can always improve."

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Self-Reflection

When athletes are under high pressure, it can affect their overall performance either negatively or positively. Some athletes may place themselves in a high stress mindset as they believe it gets them "in the zone", and although this may be true, there is a very fine line.

Managing strong emotions

If an athlete uses stress as a motivator during game play, it is important that they balance it out by minimizing stress in other parts of their life. Getting enough rest, fueling the body properly and managing anxiety can help prevent injuries during the season in general, but especially if an athlete uses a high-pressure mindset to enhance their athletic performance.

Experiencing pressure on and off the court can be harmful in many ways. High stress can cause lack of focus, decrease motivation and increase risk of injury. If an athlete experiences high stress and anxiety caused by the pressure of their sport, they may want to consider taking a break, whether it be a practice, game, season or stepping away from their sport entirely.





Reacting to feedback

When the buzzer sounds and the event is over, an athlete has already formed thoughts and opinions on their performance. Receiving feedback from coaches, parents or guardians and friends can trigger a lot of negative emotions. An athlete can take ownership of themselves and sort through the feedback by absorbing what they feel is important and letting the rest roll off their backs. The more an athlete grows, the easier this will become.

Information provided by Dr. Steve Graef, PhD. , a sports psychologist and performance coach based in Columbus. He is the owner of Mindurance - services to help athletes, performers and professionals. For more information, visit www.mindurance.org