



**Athletes strong for Mental Health**



## Coaches managing pressure athletes feel

### Minimize pressure

It goes without saying that coaches have a lot on their plates. Amongst all the other things happening in their athletic season, their athletes mental health may not always be at the forefront of their minds. However, prioritizing athletes' mental health and minimizing the pressure they feel to perform can benefit the team and individual.

### Normalize the conversation

Coaches understand the impact they can have on their athletes' lives. One easy thing coaches can do to minimize pressure in their athlete's life is normalize the conversation around it. As athletes are exposed to more conversations about the causes and consequences of pressure, they will build a vocabulary and familiarity with expressing and managing stress and pressure levels.

A coach can help their athletes manage pressure by keeping grounded expectations. While a coach and the team want to see a successful season, there will be losses, mistakes, fumbles and surprises. Reminding athletes that this is part of the sport can help them keep a healthy perspective on their performance.

A coach can work these reminders into the conversation in a variety of ways, anything from a mention it during a pep talk, having a chat after a practice to allow athletes to share, or distributing worksheets or online resources that can make an impact.



### Check-ins

Performing mental health check-ins are another in-depth way to get to know a team and what pressures individuals or the team may be feeling. By checking in with an athlete who is expressing negative emotions in the forms of yelling, crying, or self-isolation, for example, a coach might uncover the internal or external pressure that underlies that behavior. If a coach makes time for even just one mental health check-in per week, month, or season, they will have a better understanding of what their athletes need from them. As these needs change team to team, a coach will grow and be able to support their teams in a more holistic way.

Athletes Strong for Mental Health is presented by

**STIFEL**



## Coaches managing pressure athlete's feel

### Giving advice

Coaches toe a fine line between teaching mental fitness and mental toughness. To be mentally "fit" means to have a mindset or actively choose a mindset that minimizes pressure and maintains realistic positive emotion while acknowledging the negative in situations. Mentally "tough" means ignoring the red flags in your mind and powering through despite pain or emotions, which can cause trauma or injury.

### Outside forces

One of the most difficult things coaches and educators encounter is the outside forces that influence their athletes. This can come in the form of parents, partners, friends, work or media. A coach can only control how they respond, react and interact with their athletes.

Having preseason conversations with parents, guardians and fans is something a coach could consider to help athletes and their parents stay on the same page and open a door for family conversations regarding pressure. If a coach encounters an angry parent, they can remind the parent that a coach's job is to train and guide a student-athlete to the best of their ability, and mistakes will happen.



### Influence

Coaches should be aware of the huge influence on their team, parents and guardians, fans and even their opposing teams. This influence should be kept in mind. If a coach is a hot head, the crowd may become more agitated, the opposing team may feel more motivated, and the team could feel more pressure causing a myriad of responses that can influence their gameplay. In contrast, a coach who shows good sportsmanship and self-control may inspire similar behavior from others.