



VOLLEYBALLBC

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

Source: NCAA, APA



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

Visit 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.