



VOLLEYBALLBC

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:

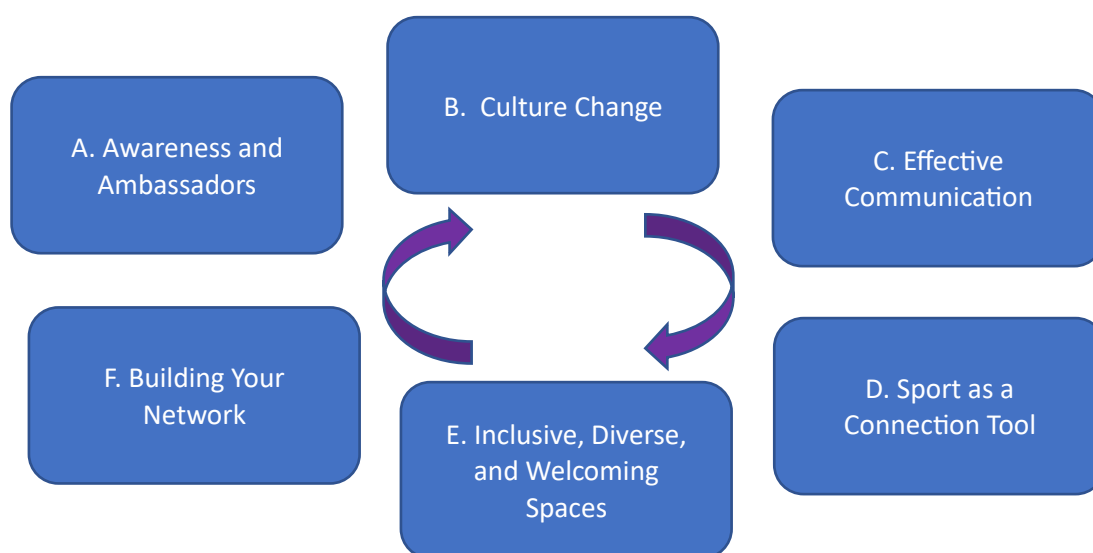
- From 2021 to 2023 **Fear of Failure** and **General Life Stress** were consistently identified as the top negative factors impacting Youth and Adult Players, Coaches and Referees, Males and Females while participating in volleyball.
- **Concerns about Body Appearance** and **Team Culture** were rated 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.

