



VOLLEYBALLBC

NAVIGATION TOOLS & RESOURCES ON MENTAL HEALTH





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



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TIPS FOR COACHES

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN COMPETITION

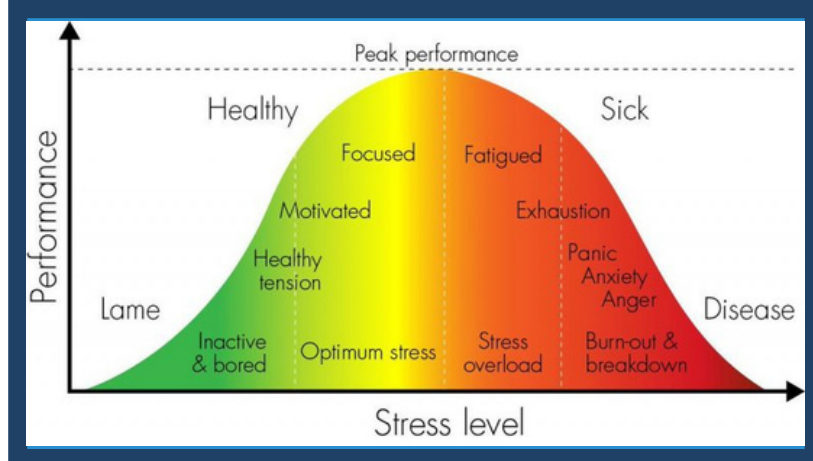
What is Stress & Performance Anxiety?

Stress is the subjective interpretation of an event by a person. In order to perceive something to be stressful the athlete must:

- Perceive an event as threatening (to their physical, mental, or emotional well being) and,
- Perceive that they do not have the resources to cope with the event.

Some stress is useful. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, an optimal level of stress (arousal) is needed in order to reach peak performance. However, too little stress can lead to under-activation of the athlete (boredom, disinterest), whereas an overwhelming amount of stress can lead to performance anxiety and “distress”. Distress or unmanageable levels of stress lead to higher risks of physical and mental injury and illness. Regardless of whether the stressors are real or imaginary, athletes' reactions are similar.

Many athletes who perform well during training or practice may still suffer from performance anxiety on game day. Performance anxiety in sports, sometimes otherwise known as “choking” is described as a decrease in athletic performance due to too much perceived stress. Mental stress on gameday is typically rooted in at least one of several factors (see list on right). Many of these have more to do with everything surrounding the game, before and after, than the actual game itself.



Having an audience (particularly one that is loving and supportive): Athletes can become overly self-aware of every play they make when they're on the athletic stage.

Fear of disappointing others: Even when a parent or coach is supportive, athletes may be anxious about disappointing them.

High expectations: Every athlete wants to do their best, but internal self-talk may create stress when they set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.

Post-game analysis: Whether it is from a coach, parent, teammate, or themselves, the post-game analysis weighs on an athlete's mindset.

Recovering from an injury: After an athlete gets hurt, it can take a long time to restore their confidence.



Performance anxiety is often a result of the way the athletes interpret the situation. It is rarely the external situation that causes stress, but rather the way the athlete's self-talk describes the situation that creates feelings of stress, anxiety and fear.

For athletes who choke during competition it is important to they understand the thoughts they have regarding an event can be modified, adjusted or controlled with the right mental practice.

Tips for Supporting Athletes

- **Focus on the task at hand.** Some athletes allow outside problems/distractions to affect their performance. Crowd noise, opponents and hovering parents often cause tremendous stress for an athlete. During the competition, an athlete's focus needs to be on the responsibilities in the moment, and not outside distractions. Come up with a plan to handle distractions.
- **Consider the language you use before, during, and after games.** Be wary of only praising athletes when things go right – a good rule of thumb is to praise effort instead of the result. As a coach, it can help to avoid instruction that adds extra pressure to a game situation (e.g., “we have to score right now!”).
- Studies have shown that we stay out of our heads more when performing actions we might describe as “muscle memory.” At practice, **having athletes do many repetitions** of the movements they will be expected to do on gameday is a good way to ensure they become second nature.
- **Simulate game-type pressure in practice** by playing music or recorded crowd noise, having parents stay to watch, or adding in other elements that will get athletes used to performing under stress. It's important to make sure athletes are familiar with and confident in the strategies that are going to be used on gameday.
- **Set expectations for competition that are process-oriented.** This gives players tangible things to focus on that they can control in a game. The more in-control your athlete feels, the calmer they will be. To reduce anxiety, focus on processes like positive self-talk, game day tactics or strategies, techniques, imagery and visualization, getting better, and having a learning mentality. When athletes focus on learning those things and perfecting them out of the love of the game, there's always a successful outcome regardless of how an athlete plays.
- **Help your athletes create rituals.** To calm their nerves and focus on the process rather than outcome, encourage your athletes to come up with their own rituals and stick to them on game day. For younger athletes, helping them write a mantra or practice visualization might work best.
- **After the competition, review performance and recall the things athletes did well.** Focus on any actions, thoughts and behaviors that helped them perform. Acknowledge things that hindered performance but look where you want to go, not where you don't. If you focus on the negative aspects, you will continue to do the same things over again. Focus on the times when players get it right.
- **Enjoy volleyball!** Don't place too much emphasis on winning and losing - the primary reason most athletes play is because they enjoy the game. While there is a time and a place for an emphasis on winning and losing, most athletes need to appreciate the experience and friendships made rather than the win-loss record.

Sources

www.truesport.org

www.expandthereach.ca



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Handling Performance Anxiety

Do you perform well during training or practice but feel anxious on game day?

Performance anxiety, sometimes otherwise known as “choking”, is described as a decrease in athletic performance due to too much perceived stress. Mental stress on gameday may be rooted in:

- **Having an audience** - You may become overly self-aware of every decision and play you make when you're on the athletic stage.
- **Fear of disappointing others:** Even when a parent or coach is supportive, you may be anxious about disappointing them.
- **High expectations:** Everyone wants to do their best, but internal self-talk can create stress when you set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.
- **Post-game analysis:** Whether it is from a coach, parent, teammate, or yourself, the post-game analysis weighs on your mindset.
- **Recovering from an injury:** If you get hurt, it can take a long time to restore your confidence.

Remember: Performance anxiety is normal!

It is rarely the actual game but rather the way our self-talk describes it that creates feelings of stress, anxiety and fear. If you choke during competition, understand that you can adjust or control the thoughts you have with the right mental practice.

Turn over for some useful tips!

Helpful Tips

Accept and validate rather than fight or minimize the nervous energy you feel. Know that the adrenaline rush you feel is normal and part of your body's natural preparation. Notice it, but don't focus on it.

Prepare both mentally and physically before an event. Arrive with plenty of time so you aren't rushed. Get a thorough warm-up, do some stretching, and know what is expected.

Practice visualization. Mentally see yourself doing everything right. Positive self-talk is very powerful and can change your attitude and have a positive outcome on your performance.

Focus on the task at hand rather than the outcome. Be present in the moment and avoid thinking too far into the competition or the results.

If you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, **stop and focus only on your breathing.** Focusing on your breathing rhythm will automatically pull you back into the present.

Force a smile. Something as simple as making yourself smile when you are thinking negatively can change your attitude in a split second.

Perform as if you don't care about the outcome. This may help you to enjoy your sport for what it is, another day in your life... not the most important thing in your life.

(www.truesport.org www.expandthereach.ca)



**Leading in safe sport
practices & fostering
a safe environment**

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TIPS FOR REFEREES

HANDLING STRESS



What is Stress?

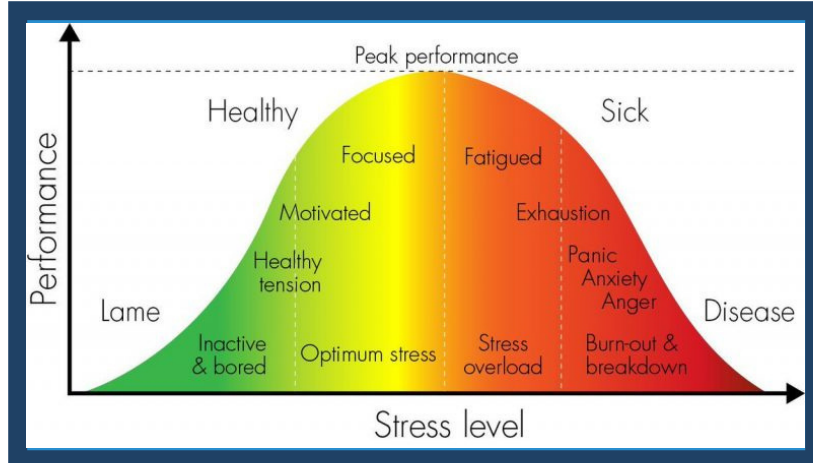
Stress is the subjective interpretation of an event by a person. In order to perceive something to be stressful you must:

- Perceive an event as threatening (to your physical, mental, or emotional well being) and,
- Perceive that you do not have the resources to cope with the event.

Some stress is useful. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law (shown on right), an optimal level of stress (arousal) is needed in order to reach peak performance. The right amount of pressure can help you perform which, in turn, can support your well-being.

Too little stress can lead to under-activation (boredom, disinterest). However, too much stress which might mean you become tired, irritated and experience heightened anxiety and an overwhelming amount of stress can lead to “distress”. Distress or unmanageable levels of stress lead to higher risks of physical and mental injury and illness. Regardless of whether the stressors are real or imaginary, your body's reaction is similar.

Stress isn't a medical diagnosis but severe stress over a long period of time may lead to depression or anxiety. Therefore, recognising that you are stressed and acting early is important to your wellbeing.



Causes of Stress

Having an audience: You can become self-aware of every call you make when you're on the court.

High expectations: Every referee wants to do their best, but internal self-talk may create stress when you set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.

The impact of others: The external environment can be stressful. Poor behaviour or criticism from coaches, parents, or even other referees, can add to the pressure that you are feeling.

Daily Life: Outside refereeing, you might be feeling stressed as a result of day-to-day life (e.g. exams, relationships or work) or having to balance your refereeing with everything else you do.



WHO DO I CONTACT FOR SUPPORT?

Pre-match - your personal mentor or the referee mentor on your set of courts.

During the match - your referee partner or the referee mentor on your set of courts.

Post-match - the referee mentor on your set of courts, the Head Referee, or the Assignor for the Tournament.

VBC Contact: referee@volleyballbc.org

Tips for Handling Stress

- **Be organised:** e.g. plan your journey, leave on time, pack all the right referee gear – don't leave anything until the last minute.
- **Have a planned pre-match routine:** Visualise particular situations e.g. meeting the coaches pre-match, dealing with players wearing incorrect uniforms, jewellery and potential illegal equipment.
- **Have a 'what if' plan to help deal with potential stressors:** e.g. plan what you're going to say and do if you are verbally abused by a parent, or how you might deal with dissent from a coach.
- **Look after yourself:** e.g. eat the right food, get enough sleep, exercise regularly, breathing exercises.
- **Do something different:** Rather than focusing all your energies on refereeing, do something different and distracting, e.g. spend time with friends/family, engage in different activities.
- **'Control the controllables':** Accept that there are some things you can't change/influence and try not to worry about them.
- **Postpone your worries:** Rather than thinking constantly about things that are worrying you, write them down (in a 'Worry Diary') and deal with them at one point only for a fixed time period (e.g. for 15 minutes each evening).
- **Put things in perspective:** For most referees, it's a hobby. Also, don't be afraid to say 'no' if there are times that you want to take a break.
- **Self-talk:** Have a set phrase or set of words to help you through potentially stressful situations in a match and to help you remain positive – this could be something as simple as counting to 10.
- **Use association:** If you feel down or anxious pre-match, listen to some music that you associate with happiness to boost your mood.
- **During your break, focus on the positive and learning experiences.**
- **Turn off social media:** What are you really going to gain from knowing what people think post-game?

Sources

www.thefa.com

www.thethirdteam.co.uk



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INFO SHEET

BODY IMAGE & DISORDERED EATING

EATING, EXERCISE, BODY IMAGE ISSUES

Disordered eating & body image issues often begin as a preoccupation with losing weight, gaining weight (or muscle mass) or as an intense fear of becoming fat. It is considered disordered eating when this fear or concern leads to abnormal eating and exercise patterns. These patterns can include bingeing (eating large amounts of food), purging (ridding the body of food), fasting, significantly restricting the amount and/or the types of foods eaten, and/or the use of products or overexercise to lose or gain weight (Petrie & Greenleaf, 2012).

WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Eating disorders: such as anorexia nervosa (starvation), bulimia nervosa (bingeing / purging), and binge eating disorder (compulsive eating) are at the extreme end of disordered eating. Someone who experiences disordered eating is worried, or constantly thinking about their body weight, shape, physical appearance, and food intake. They think about these things to a point where it gets in the way of happiness and daily life. Typically, treatment is required for healing.

WHAT IS THE FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD?

The Female Athlete Triad is a condition that affects girls and women (and athletes who menstruate of all genders) in a wide range of sports. The Triad is among the most serious health concerns facing these athletes in sport. It includes disordered eating, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis.

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S) SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

This often unrecognized or misdiagnosed disorder can occur in any athlete (all genders) and may include:

- low energy availability (inadequate caloric intake);
- with or without disordered eating;
- amenorrhea (lack of menstrual periods);
- low bone mineral density;
- frequent illnesses or injuries;
- poor recovery.

*When it comes to RED-S, disordered eating includes:

- intentional (on purpose) under-consumption of calories.
- non-intentional (not on purpose) under-consumption of calories.

This can happen both as a function of inadequate fuelling and also as a function of too intense exercise.

This disorder is complex, affects all genders and abilities, and requires a full medical and psychological examination in order to be properly diagnosed and addressed.

Source: NCAA, NEDIC, NEDA, IOC



CASE ILLUSTRATION

The athletic trainer of a volleyball team learned that a new recruit (Sarah) would not eat before a competition, saying she would feel "too heavy" to perform. Sarah also declined to eat (or ate only small amounts) while they were on the road, providing a different reason for not doing so each time. When Sarah did consume food, she rushed to the washroom by herself almost immediately after. Her teammates also noticed that Sarah was often cold and complained of muscle cramps in the change room. She was struggling with her performance and confided in teammates that she thought she could improve by losing weight and becoming leaner. Her family and coach seemed to praise her weight loss at first, so she just kept going. The athletic trainer did a medical screen, which concluded an irregular menstrual cycle, and a significant weight loss of 14 lbs over the season. Sarah often had trouble focussing, and often struggled with a very low mood.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EATING, EXERCISE OR BODY IMAGE ISSUES

Volleyball is a "body conscious" sport, which means athletes may be at a higher risk for body image issues or disordered eating due to a potential preoccupation with body shape and size, and wearing body conscious uniforms.

Physical signs & symptoms

- Amenorrhea (missed menstrual periods)
- Dehydration
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hypothermia (feeling cold often)
- Stress fractures
- Weight loss or body composition changes
- Muscle cramps, weakness, or fatigue
- Dental and gum problems
- Frequent illnesses (colds, flus)
- Delayed growth and development (youth/teens)

PROTECTION AND PREVENTION FACTORS

- Set a good example: focus on personal qualities and true performance indicators (work ethic, good technique, good communication skills, leadership)
- Use neutral words to describe foods (crunchy or sweet/salty vs. good/bad) and eating practices; no "dieting" language or behaviours
- Avoid critical remarks about body shape and size (in others but also in yourself)
- Encourage self-expression and communication
- Teach positive coping skills for stress and pressure
- Provide flexibility in uniform types and sizes to suit the comfort of the participant

Psychological/behavioural signs & symptoms

- Avoidance of social eating situations
- Reports "feeling fat" despite being thin
- Excessive use of restroom
- Preoccupation with weight and eating
- Use of weight loss products
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increase in mood changes

The key is getting a support system and addressing the behaviours and underlying mental health issues in an athlete struggling in this area. A doctor who understands these concerns in athletes, a mental health professional, sport dietician, the coach, and the athlete (and their families) may work together to return the athlete to optimal health.

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



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SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS



While drugs such as alcohol and cannabis are legal in Canada, managing their misuse is critical in sport

ALCOHOL

Signs and Symptoms:

- Irresponsible regarding commitments or responsibilities to school, sport, and relationships
- Using alcohol in situations where it is dangerous (e.g., drinking and driving, mixing medications and alcohol)
- Problems with increased aggression, rule or law-breaking behaviour

Effects on Sport Performance:

- As a central system depressant, alcohol can decrease/impair concentration, coordination, reaction time, strength, power, and endurance
- Alcohol can also impact the body's ability to absorb nutrients

CANNABIS

Signs and Symptoms:

- Red eyes
- Lethargy
- Apathy
- Increased appetite

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Slowed reaction time
- Decreased hand-eye coordination
- Impaired time perception

STIMULANT SUBSTANCES

This broad group of drugs include many forms of “party drugs”, such as cocaine, ecstasy, or amphetamines. Athletes may take them for an energetic and mood boost, or thinking this will lead to better performance, helping to cope with stress, low mood, or trauma.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Shakiness
- Rapid speech and/or movements
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Irritability

Effects on Sport Performance:

- Athletes sometimes believe these drugs can positively affect their performance
- Increased nervousness can negatively impact performance
- Increase heart rate and blood pressure
- Significant rise in body temperature and heat production
- Can result in overexertion, injuries, or death.

Sources: NCAA, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse



CASE ILLUSTRATION

Markus enjoyed spending time with his team training, competing, and in social settings. He became involved in more recreational alcohol and marijuana use (both with and without his team around him). Some of his teammates and friends outside of sport started to notice how often he was using. He knew his sport organization tested for pot, so he focused on alcohol as it "helped him relieve stress." He is now showing up for practice hungover, or skipping altogether. His friends have noticed that he is becoming defensive, choosing to drink in secret, and hiding how much he is drinking.

His teammates are concerned about him, but are not sure who to talk to about it: alcohol seems very normalized in post-game celebrations, and not just among players, but also families, coaches and fans.

A GROWING CONCERN: OPIOID USE

British Columbia is facing a huge societal challenge with a growing opioid crisis. Opioids may be procured legally (by being prescribed by a doctor for pain management) or a street version, purchased by the illicit drug trade. Opioids don't just relieve pain, they release endorphins, leading to "feel good" moods or a "high" sensation, making users susceptible to substance use disorders. To further the dark reality of opioid addiction, the illicit drug supply in British Columbia is increasingly toxic.

Athletes were among many populations who were exposed initially to opioids as part of a pain management strategy. Unfortunately, they can be highly addictive, and they can be difficult to wean off of, regardless of the reason they were initially taken. Part of the issue with those taking opioids is that there is shame surrounding dependency. Like all issues with addiction, see the section below on ways to address opioids in someone you know and care about.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

- Express concern in behavioural and non-judgemental terms ("I've noticed you have seemed (tired/restless/irritated, etc.) lately - is everything ok?")
- Listen, in a sensitive and non-threatening manner. Encourage expression; remain supportive/calm
- 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

FOR MORE HELP AND SPECIALIZED CARE

- Go to the nearest Emergency Room for an emergency or call 911
- BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service: Call 604-660-9382 in the Lower Mainland or 1-800-663-1441 toll-free anywhere in B.C. Available 24 hours a day.
- HealthLink BC: Call 8-1-1 (toll-free) if you need non-emergency health information or advice. Available 24 hours a day.
- BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information: For help and support via email at bcpartners@heretohelp.bc.ca

Sources

Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse; BC Government



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MENTAL HEALTH LINKS TO ATHLETE BURNOUT

GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCERN

- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- Feeling disconnected and withdrawn from others
- Changes in appetite (loss of appetite or overeating)
- Increased irritability and frustration
- Changes in energy level and sleep patterns and quality (for example, up at night and sleepy during the day)
- Feeling sad, worthless, empty or without hope
- Light, sound, touch and smell sensitivity

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

- Suicidal thoughts or planning
- Unexplained changes in speech, writing or thinking
- Feeling of paranoia or deep fear
- Significant drop in school, sport or work performance
- Light, sound, touch and smell sensitivity
- Sudden and/or strange personality changes

WHAT IS ATHLETE BURNOUT?

Athlete burnout is a cognitive-affective syndrome characterized by: (1) perceptions of emotional and physical exhaustion, (2) reduced sense of accomplishment, and (3) devaluation of sport.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ATHLETE BURNOUT

- Physical signs such as higher resting heart rate & blood pressure
- Plateaued or reduced performance or conditioning; loss of strength and stamina
- Chronic feelings of fatigue or "feeling exhausted"
- Mental challenges such as difficulties paying attention, performing in school tasks, or remembering things
- Frequent illnesses (weakened immune system response)
- Volatile emotions (irritability, mood swings, feeling "flat")
- Negative sense of self; increased depression and anxiety over not meeting sport demands



PREVENT AND TREAT BURNOUT

Athletes often juggle busy lives and outside pressures, including school and other pursuits. In addition, many programs may be unknowingly over-training athletes - particularly if they are unaware of the volume of training an athlete is doing in or outside volleyball.

Research shows that the best immediate treatment for athlete burnout is:

- **ADEQUATE REST AND RECOVERY TIME**
- **SOME TIME AWAY FROM SPORT**

WHERE TO SEEK HELP IF YOU SUSPECT ATHLETE BURNOUT

- Family doctors can help athletes manage burnout, particularly if they have experience in sport.
- Mental health service providers with a background in sport (counsellors, psychologists, mental performance consultants) can support athletes and help create a treatment plan.
- Supportive coaches, team leaders, athletic trainers (physios, athletic therapists) can also refer athletes for help.

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