Signs & Symptoms of Mental Health Issues for Athletes

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Statistics

1 in 5 US adults experience a mental illness each year

1 in 6 US youth aged 6-17 experience a mental disorder each year

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34

Only 50% of US youth aged 6-17 with a mental disorder received treatment in 2016
Stressors for the athlete

★ Time Demands
★ Athletic Performance & Anxiety
★ Injury and return from injury
★ Pressures leading up to the game
★ Pressure to perform during a game
Stressors for the athlete

★ The Opposition

★ Playing time

★ Interpersonal issues with team/coaches

★ Personal stressors (outside commitments, financial situation, lifestyle changes (alcohol/drugs)

★ Intensive parenting
Mood Disorders

Are also known as “affective disorders” or “depression”.

10% of the population will suffer from a mood disorder at some point in their life.
**Signs & Symptoms**

Low or sad moods, often with crying episodes.

Irritability or anger.

Feeling worthless, helpless and hopeless.

Eating and sleeping disturbance.

A decrease in energy and activity levels with feelings of fatigue or tiredness.

Decreases in concentration, interest and motivation.

Social withdrawal or avoidance.

Negative thinking.

Thoughts of death or suicide.
Causes

A specific event (death in family or a bad break-up)

Without any trigger because it is biological or they have a genetic predisposition

Negative thought patterns

Athlete’s sport performance (injury, overtraining syndrome)
Risks with Mood Disorders

Suicide thoughts or attempts

3 suicides occur daily among college students

7-10% of college students either attempt or contemplate suicide each year
If a student athlete...

Expresses a suicidal thought
Indicates and intent or plan
Makes a suicidal attempt

MAKE AN IMMEDIATE REFERRAL
Recommendations

Do not assume the athlete is trying to get attention.

Take what they are saying seriously.

Make an immediate referral to a mental health professional.

Have names and numbers of referral sources handy.
Anxiety Disorders

Most common mental illness in the US
Signs & Symptoms

- Excessive worry or fear
- Sleep disturbances, especially falling asleep
- Changing in eating habits such as increased hunger when anxious or lack of appetite when anxious
- Feelings ranging from general uneasiness to complete immobilization
- Fear that one is dying or going crazy
- Pounding heart, sweating, shaking
- Impaired concentration
- Feeling of out of control
Types of Anxiety Disorders

- GAD (General Anxiety Disorder)
- Panic Attacks
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Phobias
GAD

Can occur without a particular incident

They find it difficult to sit still and relax

They have constant worries that affect their daily life
Panic Attacks

Can occur without warning

Sense of impending doom

Heart races

Excessive sweating

Shortness of breath
Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Obsessions are recurring, redundant, ruminative or irrational thoughts.

Compulsions are behaviors that individuals feel they need to perform.
Exaggerated fear of a situation or specific object
Effects on Performance

Can negatively affect concentration

They are more distracted by physical and psychological symptoms

Difficulty focusing

They will be drawn to the negative rather than the positive

They will express negative emotion more before, during and after competition
Sport Participation

Should be decided by mental health professionals

Sometimes the sport can reduce stress and other times it is an added stress

Most times people who suffer with anxiety are tired and exhausted by their symptoms and are looking for relief
Eating Disorders

They are a result from a combination of factors:

★ Genetics
★ Personality
★ socio-cultural pressures regarding thinness
★ social learning and family issues.

Most begin as an attempt to lose weight

They worsen during transition periods
Types

Anorexia
Bulimia
EDNOS (Eating Disorder Otherwise not Specified)
Binge Eating
Disordered Eating
Anorexia

Self-starvation Syndrome

Excessive exercise

Fear of Body Change
Bulimia

Binge/purge syndrome

Vomiting

Laxatives

Excessive exercise
EDNOS

Eating problems with a little of both anorexia and bulimia
Binge Eating

Eating large amounts of food without purging
Disordered Eating

Unhealthy eating from simple dieting to clinical eating disorders.
Effects on Performance

Low energy
Weakness
Dehydration
Increased risk of injury
Decreased running speed
Female Athlete Triad

Coping Strategy to deal with body image and sport

Consists of disordered eating, amenorrhea, osteoporosis

- Low Energy Availability
  - Disordered eating
  - Restricted eating
  - Not eating enough

78% of female high school athletes meet criteria for Female Athlete Triad

- Menstrual Disturbance
  - Irregular periods
  - Amenorrhea

- Low Bone Mineral Density
  - Osteopenia
  - Osteoporosis

65% of female high school non-athletes meet criteria for Female Athlete Triad
Substance Related Disorders

Includes a variety of drugs or chemicals, including those that are legal, illegal, prescribed, over-the-counter (OTC) and performance-enhancing.
Signs & Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse

It is a central nervous system depressant

It slows coordination, reaction time, concentration, strength, power and endurance
Signs and Symptoms of Abusing Stimulants

Nervous or jittery could affect motor coordination and concentration

Increases heart rate and blood pressure

Increases body heat production and temperature

Can lead to over exertion and injury

Shakiness, rapid speech or movements

Difficulty sitting still or concentrating
Signs and Symptoms of Marijuana Use

- It can slow reaction time
- Impair both motor and eye-hand coordination
- Affect time perception
- Red eyes
- Lethargy
- Increased appetite
What coaches could do to help...

- Encourage positive self-talk
- Create a supportive team environment
- Model a positive attitude
- Praise performance and effort
- Establish pre-game routines
- Communication with all mental health professionals involved with student
- Make referrals when necessary
- Your job is to recognize and refer - not solve!
Individual Health Plan
Family Physician
School Physician
Nurse
Counselor
School Ad
1. What is your plan if there is a mental health emergency?

   Mental Health First Aid

   Call 911

   Resources

   Document your concerns with school counselors
Resources

http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mental-health-educational-resources

https://www.atyourownrisk.org/athlete-mental-health/