



NAMI

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mercer

Serving the New Jersey Capital Area

WINNING AT WELLNESS FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

**A toolkit to help student athletes to
take care of their mental health**



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What Is Good Mental Health?

Mental health, defined by the World Health Organization is: "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"





What is a Mental Health Toolkit?

This mental health toolkit is intended to help high school and college athletes navigate through any obstacles:

- Providing support and resources
- Providing tips for coping with anxiety, depression, and stress related issues.
- Offering support for students who cannot find it elsewhere.
- Tips and ideas to improve mental health.
- Resources to share with other athletes going through similar issues.



Importance of Discussing Mental Health for Athletes



Mental health challenges greatly impact athletic performance. Stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, trauma, substance use, and loss of relationships impact athletic performance.



Elite athletes are vulnerable to mental health disorders as a result of the various specific stressors they experience in their sporting environment.



Key factors are the impact of injury, overtraining, social media scrutiny and ongoing competitive pressure to perform.



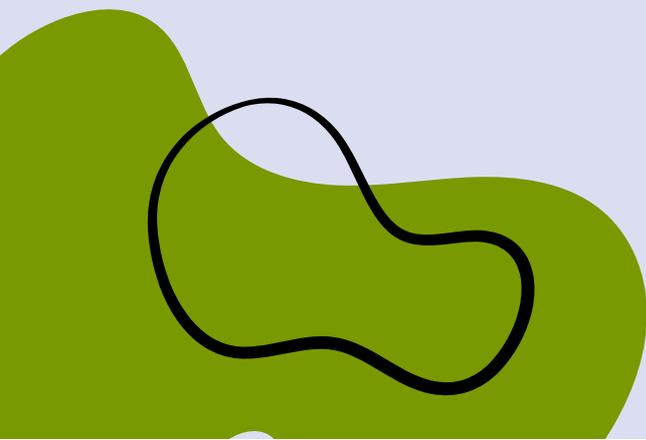
Signs of a Mental Health Crisis

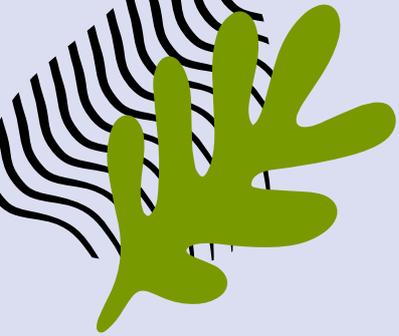


- Irritable mood
- Sleep problems
- Change in interests
- Low motivation
- Excessive guilt
- Unrealistically low self-esteem



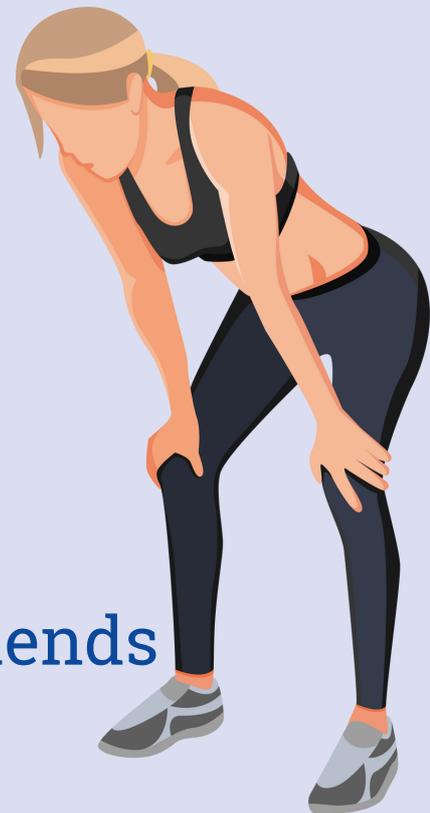
- Significantly low energy
- Change in self-care
- Significantly worse concentration
- Changes in appetite
- Agitation or severe anxiety/panic attacks
- Suicidal thoughts, plans of self-harm





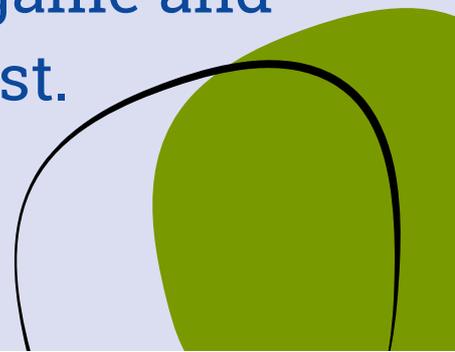
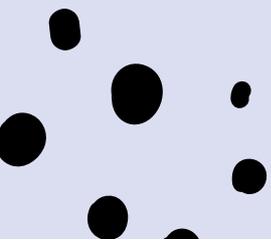
Challenges of Being an Athlete

- Difficult teammates or coaches
- Loss of Motivation or Burnout
- Performance Anxiety
- Time Management Issues
- Unrealistic Expectations
- Lost Training Time
- Pressure from parents/family/friends
- Perfectionism



 Mental training gives athletes the tools they need to break through these mental barriers that limit their performance.

 With mental training, you can learn to “tune out” worries about what others think of you and focus on playing the game and performing your best.



Types of Mental Training

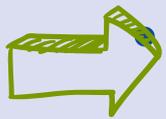


Mental Imagery

This involves creating a scene in your mind and going over it in detail. Within sports, this involves seeing yourself perform your skills:

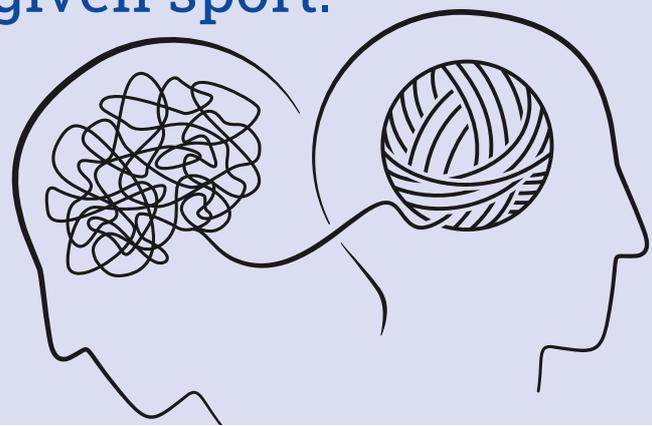
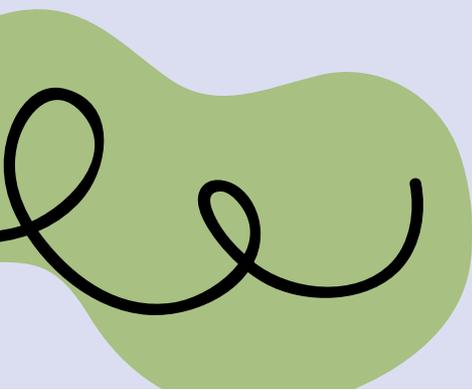


An example is a basketball player imagining free throws.



This form of mental imagery works to increase confidence, cope with pressure, and decrease anxiety.

Another type of mental imagery involves imagining a calm and relaxing scene. This helps to relax yourself before competition and train your ability to calm your mind. technique that athletes can use to supplement physical practice and improve their performance in their given sport.



Types of Mental Training



Process Goals

Setting process goals for yourself will help turn your attention onto the process instead of the outcome:



Outcome-oriented thinking is a bad frames of thought and will only distract you from what you need to do.

In order to turn your attention onto the process, you need something to focus on. That's where process goals come into play:



Whether it's before a training session, a game, or simply for a day, you set process goals for yourself and let them guide you.

Creating Goals for Yourself:

- Something you can control (i.e., it doesn't depend on others)
- Manageable (i.e., not overwhelming)
- Realistic for you (not for someone else)
- Measurable (i.e., you know whether or not it is done or getting done)





Types of Mental Training

Self-Talk



Your inner voice, which speaks to you continually, can either be your best friend or worst enemy. Self-talk is employed in mental training to change the way you communicate to yourself and make the voice in your brain a resource.



Self-talk is based on the idea that thoughts influence feelings. Meaning that your emotional state is influenced by your thoughts. You need to talk to yourself differently if you want to feel more confident, less anxious, or more motivated.



The technique of self-talk involves recognizing your present negative thoughts and substituting them with constructive ones. Afterward, keep telling yourself those constructive options again.



Types of Mental Training



Mindfulness

There are two basic ways that mindfulness aids in mind training. Focus is sharpened, and emotional regulation is improved, by

mindfulness:

- 
- Focusing is not always simple, but you may practice focusing and centering your attention to block out the numerous distractions that pull at your mind.

Bringing your awareness into the present moment is the practice of mindfulness. You strive to focus your attention, and by doing so, you take charge of it.

Having emotional control is one more way that mindfulness gives you a mental workout. The secret to success is being able to control your feelings and reactions:

- 
- As best you can, during activities try not to be in your head with self-judgment, if you can notice it bring yourself gently back to the present.
- 

Other Ways to Improve your Mental Health

1. Talk about your feelings with someone else:

- a. Family
- b. Parents
- c. Coaches
- d. Teammates
- e. Friends



2. Stay connected.

3. Find a support system.

4. Take care of your physical health

5. Engage in and out your sport.

6. Eat and hydrate well

7. Pick up daily challenges.

- a. Try something new like learn a new skill or cook a new dish.

1. Take a break

2. Try yoga or meditation

If you are concerned about discussing your mental health with friends or family, your school offers support.



Finding Mental Health Resources in High School

Mental Health support and resources will vary based on the school, private and public, but many high schools offer:



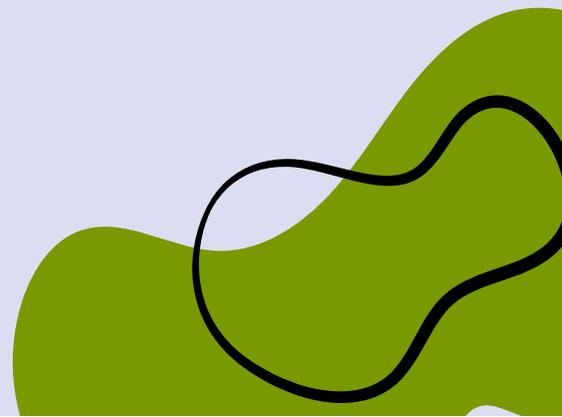
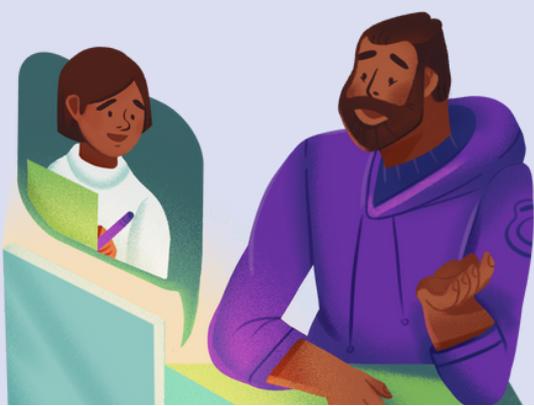
School counselors, school psychologist, school social worker, and school nurses: these are all trained mental health professionals employed by the school.



Coaches, teachers, administrators, athletic trainers and club advisors: these are sympathetic and trusted adults who are available when students need someone to talk to.



After- school organizations: many high schools have clubs/groups that are centered around open discussion with peers, self-care and relaxation.



Finding Mental Health Resources in College

Many colleges and universities offer a variation of free services available to undergraduate and graduate students that is included in your tuition:



Campus Health and Wellbeing Center: a place where you can find resources and talk with on-campus counselors and therapists.



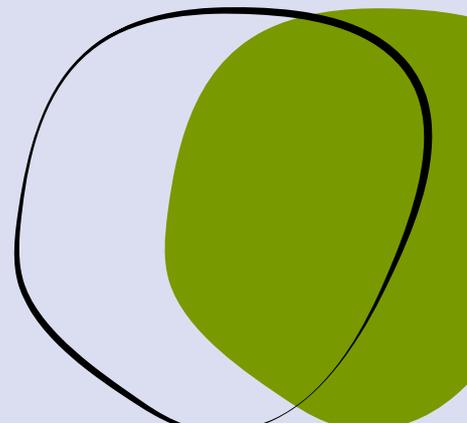
Disability Services/Resource Center: learn and apply for accommodations to support your learning and college experience.



Peer support groups and student organizations: many universities have clubs/groups that are centered around open discussion with peers, self-care and relaxation.



Coaches, professors, administrators, athletic trainers and college deans: these are trusted adults who are available when students need someone to talk to.



Receiving Academic Modifications

Many schools offer specific accommodations to students with different disabilities, including mental health conditions. Receiving an academic modification from disability services and resource center may be a step toward academic success.

Classroom Accommodation

- Preferential seating
- Classmates as volunteer assistants
- Beverages in class
- Medical excused absents.
- Increased availability of academic advisors

Examination Accommodation

- Extended time
- Segment testing
- Individually proctored exam environments

Assignment Accommodation

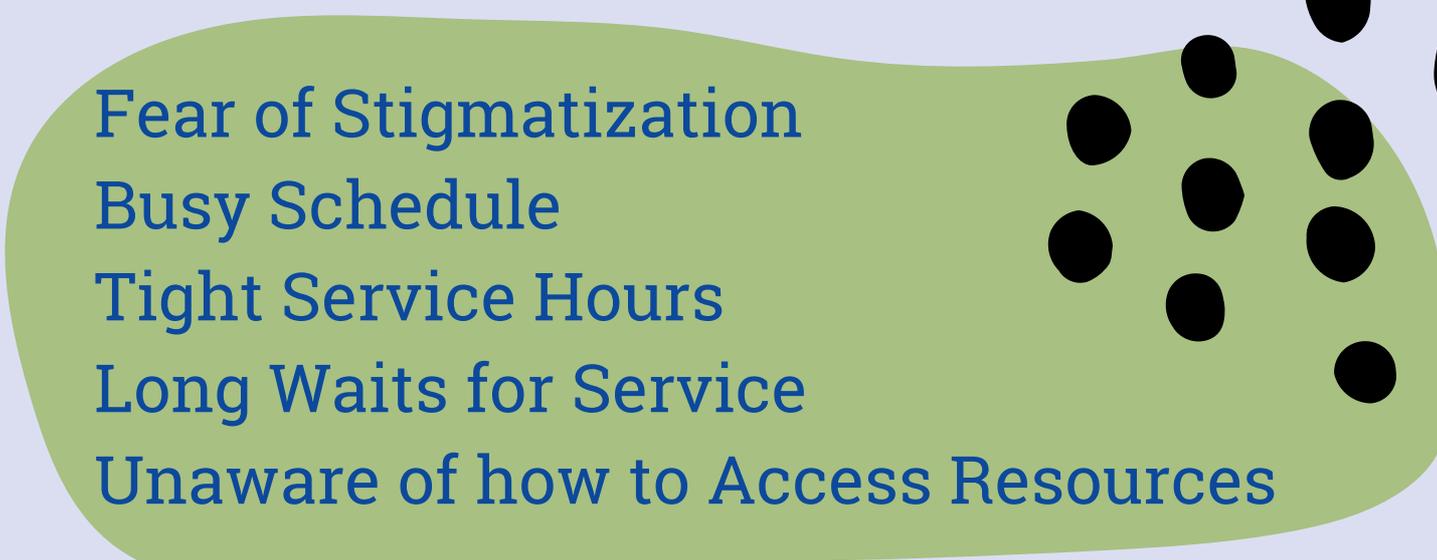
- Advanced notice of assignments
- Substitute assignments
- Assignment assistance





Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Services

Many high school and college students experience mental health issues during their time in school but do not seek treatment. Several barriers often prevent students from seeking care.



Fear of Stigmatization

Busy Schedule

Tight Service Hours

Long Waits for Service

Unaware of how to Access Resources



Other issues that prevent individuals from acquiring support include insurance coverage, transportation, cost of treatment, and lack of local mental health services.



Students from minority communities may be less likely to receive treatment and support when it is available.



Concussion Awareness

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects your brain function caused by a bump, violent jolt or blow to your head.

Symptoms of a Concussion:

- Headache
- Confusion
- Memory loss
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Delayed response
- Fatigue



In addition, neurological symptoms, include:

- Confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Depression and sadness
- Irritability, nervousness, and anxiousness

Approximately 3.8 million concussions occur each year in the U.S. from sports-related injuries.

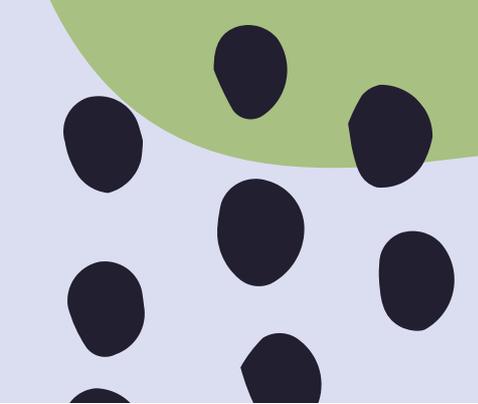
Many of these injuries go unreported and undiagnosed, which can lead to prolonged symptoms and long-term consequences.



You are Not Alone!

You are not alone; high school and college can be stressful. Other students are experiencing issues with their mental health even if they are not open about it.

"Studies find that as many as 23.7% of college athletes experience depressive symptoms that reach clinically relevant levels, and 6.3% have moderate to severe depression. Even serious high school athletes have been found to struggle with their mental health."





You are Not Alone!

Your mental health issues do not determine who you are and what others think about you. Your mental health, wellbeing, and success are more important than other's opinions.

“Among professional athletes, data shows that up to 35% of elite athletes experience mental health challenges which may manifest as stress, eating disorders, burnout, or depression and anxiety.”



Helplines and Hotlines

24/7 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call 988

Available in English and Spanish

24/7 Crisis Counselors

Text "NAMI" to 741741

Connection to a Crisis counselor in minutes

National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline

Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Mon-Fri live from 10am-10pm E.T.

NAMI Mercer (New Jersey) Helpline

Call 1-609-799-8994 Ext. 17

Mon-Fri live from 9:30am-4:30pm E.T.

Helplines and Hotlines

24/7 National Teen Dating
Abuse Helpline
Call 1-866-331-9474.

Teen Line: Trained Teenage Listeners
Text "TEEN" to 839863
Call 1-800-852-8336 from 9pm-1am E.T.

The Trevor Project 24/7 Counselors (LGBTQ+)
Text "START" to 878678
Call 1-866-488-7386

24/7 SAMHSA Substance Use National
Helpline

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Available in English and Spanish

Conclusion

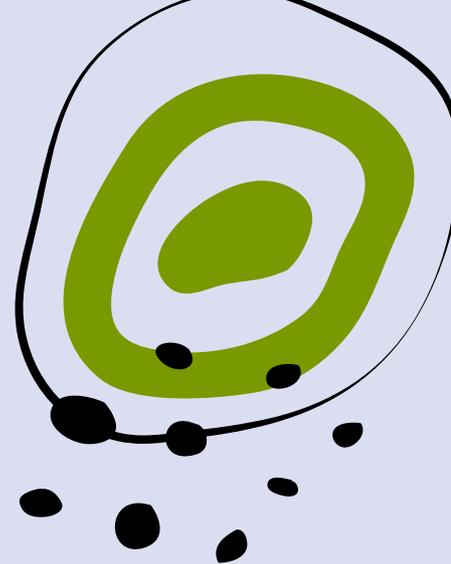
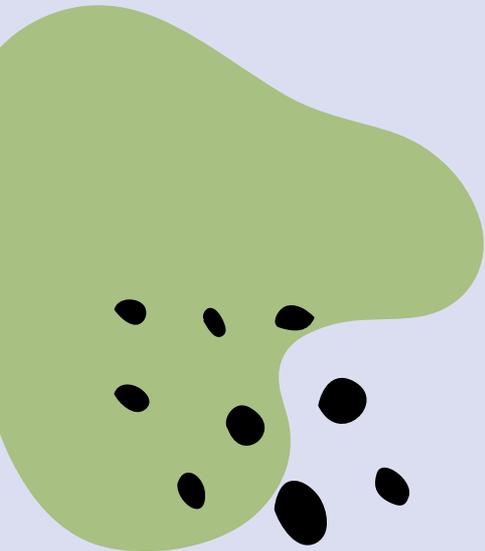


If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis you are encouraged to visit a health/wellbeing center at your school or speak with the school counselor, social worker or psychologist.

I hope this toolkit gives you the courage and resources you need to better your mental health, end the stigma,, break the silence and encourage others to seek help as well. There are more resources out there then this toolkit so do your research and figure out what works best works for you. You are capable of great things and your health and success are more important than the stigmatization. You are not alone. There is always someone to talk to and help you through a mental health crisis. Be kind to yourself, fight to improve your mental health and well-being.

Jordan Hansen
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THANK YOU



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Visit namimercer.org for more

Mental Health Resources

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