



Supporting Mental Health in Athletes Starts with You

Coaches are often the first to notice when something is off with an athlete. You don't need to be a mental health expert to make a difference. You just need to be someone who cares enough to **Notice, Talk, and Act.**

NOTICE - Pay attention to behavioral shifts

- ✓ Withdrawal from teammates or activities
- ✓ Repeatedly showing up late and/or disinterested compared to normal
- ✓ Increased irritability or emotional reactivity
- ✓ Decline in performance or motivation
- ✓ Changes in sleep, appetite, or appearance
- ✓ Difficulty focusing or making decisions

TALK - Create space for open, supportive conversation

- ✓ Build trust over time through repeated, small interactions before expecting vulnerability.
- ✓ Many athletes may need multiple conversations before they're ready to talk, so check in consistently.
- ✓ Find a quiet moment to check in privately, and lead with your own experiences to demonstrate that you are a safe space.
- ✓ Validate their feelings
- ✓ Express concern with empathy:
 - "I've noticed you don't seem like yourself lately. How are you doing?"
 - "You seem off compared to your usual self. Have you noticed that too?"
- ✓ Listen without judgment and avoid trying to "fix" it

ACT - Help connect athletes to support

- ✓ Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult or mental health professional. Support should feel approachable, so think about how to make the first offers of connection feel human and non-threatening.
- ✓ Follow your organization's protocols for referring to appropriate care
- ✓ Create a mental health emergency action plan in your organization to be prepared
- ✓ Keep the door open for ongoing support and follow-up



Your role matters. Noticing early and showing you care can be life-changing.

You have the ability to build a team culture that prioritizes both performance and well-being.