

Five Ways Young Athletes Can Improve Their Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a sudden change in everyone's lives, including students and student-athletes. Athletes suddenly found themselves at home without access to their classrooms, gyms, and teams. They were knocked off their routine; some lost out on postseason opportunities; and in the case of spring athletes, they lost their entire season. The abrupt adjustment has resulted in a focus on the athletes' physical and mental health.

Here are some tips to help athletes focus on mental health during the pandemic:



Acknowledge your feelings.

Some common feelings are isolation, fear, loss, disappointment, anxiety, frustration, sadness, lack of control, anger. It is important to acknowledge these feelings, identify the emotions, and work on trying to understand and accept them. For people with preexisting mental health issues, these feelings may trigger or worsen existing conditions.



Take care of your physical health.

Stay home. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Eat well and get plenty of sleep. And of course, call your doctor if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.



Stay connected.

The internet and social media can provide information and support, but they can also cause anxiety. Pick one credible website to consult for accurate information, and avoid websites that sensationalize the pandemic. Social media can be a source of positivity: Use it for inspiration, for humor, and to connect with friends. Stay connected to those you trust, including your coach and teammates, via text, video, and social media.



Engage in sports.

Consider how you want to continue engaging in your sport during this time. While maintaining social distance, you may be able to continue training to a degree. If you decide to continue your training, it may be easier to continue improving flexibility, strength, and mentality at this time. You can also use your newfound time to rest and recover, explore other interests, or maintain your fitness level, either alone or virtually with teammates and friends. It is important to do what is best for you right now and over time as the situation changes.



Focus on what you can control.

Get into a routine, get adequate sleep, and eat well. Try to incorporate other acts of self-care in your life, such as journaling and exploring other hobbies. This will help reestablish feelings of control and comfort while supporting your health and well-being.

Now, more than ever, it is important to pay attention to mental health and work to create some semblance of normalcy in day-to-day life. If you, or someone you know, is struggling, please reach out to your pediatrician or a sports medicine physician.

For appointments and more information, call **(844) 41-ORTHO (844-416-7846)**.

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