



# OVERCOMING ANXIETY

## A GUIDE FOR COACHES



### WHAT IS ANXIETY IN TEENS?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an event or situation with an uncertain outcome; it is a reaction to situations people perceive as stressful or dangerous. Most teens experience some level of anxiety, stress, or worry in response to unfamiliar situations and everyday life.

#### **Your player may be worried or stressed about:**

- School
- Family
- Local or world events and news
- Social media
- Difficult emotional events, such as romantic or friendship break ups or death
- Physical illness
- Or sometimes there is difficulty identifying why they feel a general sense of anxiety

### ANXIETY ON THE FIELD

- Hesitancy to play or seeming sluggish
- Irritability or over emotional during play
- Overreaction to injury or minor physical pain
- Increase of anger and decreased tolerance for typical aspects of the game

Sometimes you might not know why you feel anxious. If your anxiety becomes severe and starts to interfere with your daily life, you should talk to your doctor.

### SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY CAN INCLUDE

Physiological symptoms: increased heart rate, sweating, feeling dizzy

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Feeling restless or irritable

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Getting tired easily

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Hard time concentrating

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Withdrawing from people and activities once enjoyed

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Intrusive thoughts of worry and difficulty trying to control worrying thoughts

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Sleep disruption

## Communication and support strategies

Everyone feels anxious at times, and there are simple strategies you can use to help players who are experiencing anxiety so that it doesn't hold them back or cause them to avoid life experiences.

### Provide a predictable practice or game routine

Maintain this schedule as much as possible, with sufficient notice if there is a change.

### Incorporate coping skills into practices

Since anxiety is anticipatory, grounding techniques like deep breathing and mindfulness can be incredibly helpful for players experiencing anxiety. Help them notice what's happening in their immediate environment and identify: something they can see; something they can feel; and something they can hear.

### The most important thing to remember about anxiety

There is a delicate balance between providing too much reassurance and support versus too much emphasis on "just pushing-through" without validation. Both extremes can serve to foster and increase anxiety in players.

### Develop a plan for helping players manage anxious behaviors

Help players identify specific coping strategies that may be helpful. Not all coping strategies will work for all players; some will find immediate appropriate distraction beneficial, others may find talking about their fears beneficial. This may be individualized and, if an adaptive coping strategy is used, should result in the long term reduction of anxiety.

### Develop reasonable accommodations for any anxious player

This could include activities like starting practice after grounding techniques or ending early to avoid crowds - any activities that help support adaptive coping.

**REMEMBER:** Use the resources in your community: school counselor, social worker, psychologist or local mental health agency.

**Contact the National Teen help line  
call 1-800-852-8336  
or  
text 839863**

## RESOURCES

### [ANXIETY BC YOUTH](#)

Has a list of intervention strategies as well as a tool for students to create a MAP (My Anxiety Plan)

### [JOHNSHOPKINS 5 TIPS FOR OVERCOMING SPORTS ANXIETY](#)

### [SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY TODAY: 3 THINGS COACHES CAN DO TO HELP PLAYERS](#)

### [OVERCOME ANXIETY](#)

This information should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease; anyone seeking personal medical advice should consult with a licensed professional



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