



OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

A GUIDE FOR COACHES



WHAT IS DEPRESSION IN TEENS?

A mental health concern that often includes an intense or constant feeling of sadness or loss of interest in activities. It affects teens' emotional, functional and physical skills while impacting the way they think, feel and behave. One in 5 teens will experience depression before adulthood. Teen depression can be caused by a series of stressors, negative life changes and traumatic events.

Teen stressors may include:

- School Stress
- Peer Pressure
- Relationship Problems
- Parental Separation
- Financial Problems
- Physical/Emotional Neglect
- Trauma

DEPRESSION ON THE FIELD

- Lack of interest in participating
- Becoming overly sensitive or fixated on failures
- Having conflict with others
- Displaying extreme frustration or irritability
- Not socializing after/before practices or games

Depression can often be confused with "teenage angst." Depression is serious but it is also treatable! If you recognize these symptoms in your players, it's important to offer support, validate their feelings and encourage them to seek treatment if necessary.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION CAN INCLUDE

Feelings of sadness and hopelessness

Displaying an irritable or annoyed mood

Loss of interest in activities

Conflict with others

Low self-esteem

Fixations or extreme sensitivity to past failures

Trouble thinking or concentrating

Frequent thoughts of death or dying

Insomnia or excess sleep

Poor hygiene

Angry outbursts or risky behavior

Having a suicide plan or attempt

A change in appetite

Communication and support strategies

Destigmatize depression; About 10-15% of teens will experience depressive symptoms. These symptoms can vary in severity, but it is important to recognize them and offer support before your athletes develop a depressive disorder.

Encourage social relationships/interactions among your team so they will have supportive friends and teammates to help them cope. Positive peer groups also encourage players to make healthy choices.

Implement team building activities that differ from those related to the sport. Encourage other fun activities during practice, as it can take the pressure off of athletes to perform well and is a great way to encourage social relationships among your team while reducing stress.

Find a reasonable balance with corrective feedback vs positive support – poorly delivered corrective feedback and discipline practices can make depressive symptoms more severe as it can lower their self-esteem, increase sensitivity to failures and encourage a loss of interest in activities. On the other hand, appropriate reinforcement and positive strategies can encourage better performance and help athletes achieve their goals.

Create awareness and coping strategies through offering support to your players such as resources and open-communication. Coping strategies can include deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness of the nature of negative emotions. Additionally, open communication can be a deciding factor in whether or not athletes seek help and treatment. If athletes are not comfortable seeking support, implementing coping strategies can be supportive.

REMEMBER: If you are concerned, have the conversation and reach out with help and support.

If you have concerns regarding your own safety, call 911 or 988

**Spanish language hotline:
1-888-628-9454**

RESOURCES

[MAYO CLINIC \(www.mayoclinic.org\)](http://www.mayoclinic.org)

[PSYCHOLOGY TODAY \(www.psychologytoday.com\)](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

[MHA NATIONAL \(www.mhanational.com\)](http://www.mhanational.com)

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