

**1 IN 4 PEOPLE WILL BE
AFFECTED BY SOME
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE AT
ONE POINT OR ANOTHER IN
THEIR LIVES**

**THOUGH PARTICIPATION IN
SPORTS HELPS TO FOSTER
WELLNESS, IT MAY ALSO
INCREASE THE RISK OF
DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH
CONCERNS**

DON'T STRUGGLE IN SILENCE

Facts:

- 70% OF YOUTH DROP OUT OF ORGANIZED SPORTS BY AGE 13 LARGELY DUE TO ANXIETY, EXCESSIVE PRESSURE AND CRITICISM, BURNOUT
- ACCORDING TO NCAA, 10- 15% OF STUDENT ATHLETES WILL EXPERIENCE PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES SEVERE ENOUGH TO WARRANT COUNSELING
- ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ARE THE MOST COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS AMONG ATHLETES
- ATHLETES ARE LESS LIKELY THAN THEIR PEERS TO SEEK MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT, DUE IN LARGE PART TO STIGMA

Signs & Symptoms:

- DECREASED INTEREST IN DAILY ACTIVITIES
- WITHDRAWING FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS
- LOSS OF ENERGY
- SLEEPING AND/OR EATING TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE
- FREQUENT HEADACHES, NAUSEA, STOMACH COMPLAINTS, UNEXPLAINED PAIN OR INJURIES
- DRASTIC PERSONALITY CHANGES- INCREASED IRRITABILITY, AGGRESSION, OR ANXIETY, AND/OR FEELING "ON EDGE"
- INCREASED USE OF ALCOHOL, DRUGS, OR SPORTS ENHANCEMENTS
- TALKING ABOUT DEATH, KILLING THEMSELVES, OR "GOING AWAY"

What Helps?

Focus

Focus on one key
priority at a time

Time

Manage time so as not
to get overwhelmed by
all of your
commitments

Identity

Construct an identity
beyond sports

Support

Create early and
strong relationships
with coaches and
teammates

How to Talk About Mental Health

The words we use when talking about mental health matter. Words have a direct impact and can be a powerful force to reduce – or perpetuate – stigma. From casual conversations and flippant phrases to serious discussions with someone experiencing a mental health issue, your words are important.

We know that navigating what to say – and how to say it – can be difficult. Often we are at a loss, and sometimes we worry about making a difficult situation worse. We hope the following suggestions will be helpful.

- Person-centered, person-first language. People are so much more than their diagnosis. Refer to an individual as someone who has “been diagnosed with schizophrenia” or “is living with schizophrenia” rather than “a schizophrenic.”
- Individuals who live with mental health issues are coping with significant challenges that may impact every aspect of their life. Your understanding and respect is clear if you refrain from invoking diagnoses in “humorous” or deprecating ways in casual conversation. For example, joking about being “OCD” about cleaning trivializes the experience of someone actually living with the disorder.

- Being compassionate when talking about suicide helps remove stigma. Language such as “died by suicide” is preferred to “committed suicide,” which is understood to evoke negative connotations such as in “committed a crime” or “committed a sin.”
- Model appropriate language to express strong feelings.
- When someone is struggling, often the most valuable assistance you can provide is by listening. Listen empathically, without judgement, advice-giving, or minimizing their experience of the problem. This is especially important if you are talking with someone who is thinking of suicide.
- Check in with friends, family, coworkers and neighbors. Asking “how are you doing?” or “how can I help” – and meaning it – provides an opportunity for open conversation. It also fosters a sense of community and camaraderie can have a powerful and positive impact on everyone involved. In an age where technology can often isolate us, make the effort for a face-to-face conversation. Pick up the phone, meet for coffee, make a real connection.

By making slight changes to how you talk about mental health, you can take an active role in breaking down stigma. Your voice matters. Thank you for using it to make a difference in someone else’s life!

Resources for Help

THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
OF WESTCHESTER:
WWW.MHAWESTCHESTER.ORG

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE
PREVENTION:
WWW.AFSP.ORG

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL
HEALTH:
WWW.NAMI.ORG

POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE:
WWW.POSITIVECOACH.ORG

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE:
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
WWW.SUICIDEPREVENTIONLIFELINE.ORG

CRISIS TEXT LINE:
TEXT "HOME" TO 741741

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA:
WWW.MENTALHEALTHAMERICA.NET

NYC WELL:
TEXT "WELL" TO 65173
CALL 1-888-NYC-WELL

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH
WWW.MENTALHEALTH.WESTCHESTERGOV.COM