

**The mind directly impacts
the body and performance.**

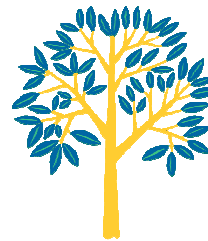


Those who pursue optimal mental health will be able to perform better by being able to manage stress and concentrate more on their performance.

The culture of athletics often stresses the importance of resiliency and self-reliance. Student athletes are taught to forge ahead and overcome all challenges. Student athletes learn to conceal their weaknesses from the opponent and this is valuable in competition.

However, the unique expectations of an athlete's life on top of everyday student responsibilities can create unforeseen difficulties. Researchers have suggested that 10-15% of American college student athletes are dealing with issues significant enough to warrant the need for professional counseling services, but student athletes are hesitant to seek support from a counselor.

Athletes' mental health is equally as important as their physical health. It is important for athletes to know what challenges can be triggered or exacerbated by their involvement in athletics, and to know what to do about them.



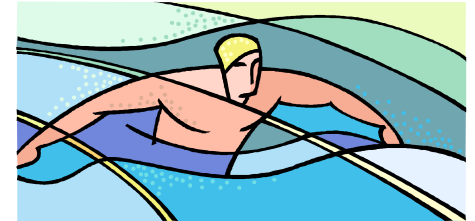
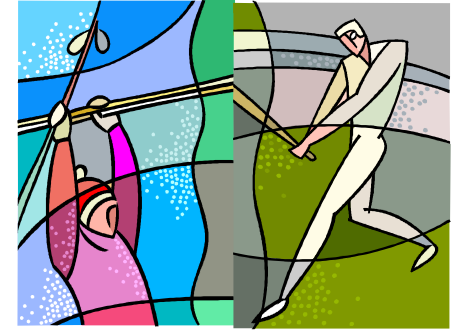
Counseling Services:

A Resource for Students

**Lake Superior State University
623 W. Easterday Ave.
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**Phone: 906-635-2752
www.lssu.edu/counseling**

**Student Athletes
Emotional Health & Wellness**



**LSSU Counseling Services:
A Resource for Students**

Student Athletes: Emotional Health and Wellness

Potential Barriers to Performance

Identity Changes

- The transition from high school to college athletics can create identity questions as students are cut, lose playing time, or encounter a higher quality of talent.
- Overall visibility of an athlete may make you unfairly seen as a representative of your team and all athletes.
- LGBT athletes may encounter labeling and stereotypes.

Effects on Performance: Decrease in confidence; overwhelmed and distracted; team chemistry impact.

Anxiety

- Time crunch of balancing work, practice, competition and classes can make for a chaotic and rigorous schedule.
- Many student athletes admit the pressure to succeed on the collegiate level seriously impacts their focus.
- Scholarships can be determined by your performance in athletic competition and in the classroom. When competing demands emerge, the anxiety may follow.

Effects on Performance: Concentration/focus diminished; less able to manage natural anxiety in competition; lose energy needed to adequately prepare.

Depression

- The injured athlete potentially faces: not feeling a part of the team; losing credibility; falling behind teammates in skills and experience; or the prospect that their season or career may be over.

- Ending the season or career can have an emotional impact. When less than 1% of college athletes become professionals in their sport, the adjustment to ending something that you've invested so much time and energy into can come as a shock.

Effects on Performance: Decrease in motivation, concentration, and/or energy; loss of interest in competition and/or teammates; burn out, dissatisfaction and/or irritability or anger; increased risk of injury.

Relationships

- Conflicts with teammates can create tension on and off the field. The student athlete is surrounded by teammates more days than not through the year. When tension rises within the team, take time away and see if you can gain a fresh perspective.
- Relationships with coaches can also present challenges. Student athletes may have concerns about playing time, the need to adjust to a new style of coaching, or personality conflicts.

Effects on Performance: Team chemistry impacted; lack of focus in preparation and competition; decreased motivation.

Body Image/Disordered Eating

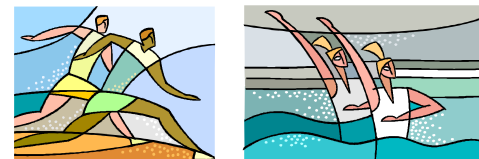
- Many student athletes are subjected to both internal and external appearance demands and a performance drive for thinness, leanness, and gender norms.
- Rigid discipline in terms of food and exercise can lead athletes to the edge of an unhealthy life style.

Multiple Physical Health Consequences

How to Help a Teammate

Teammates often turn to their own peers for support. If a teammate has come to you, consider it a sign of trust and strength. Here is a list of helpful pointers when considering how best to respond to help a teammate:

- Simply listen
- Ask clarification questions without judging
- Indicate you are glad she/he came to you
- Make the necessary referral
- Know your limits; you cannot always change the person or the situation
- Take care of yourself



Coaches Corner

Coaches are often the front lines to athletes' mental health. From the early stages of the recruiting process—to the hours of practice, competition, and all the time in between—coaches have a unique and personal understanding of their athletes. Therefore, it is helpful when coaches understand the resources that are available to allow their athlete to reach their maximum potential. How can coaches help?

- Maintain the extraordinary relationship you have with your athlete.
- Help reduce the stigma of mental health by talking about it and normalizing the need to take care of our minds.
- Refer your athlete to LSSU Counseling Services when appropriate