



# **MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORTS**

**iNSIGHT**  

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**Psychological™**

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# WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT IN SPORTS?

As an athlete, your state of mind can have a huge impact on your sporting performance, but this aspect of your well-being is often not properly addressed.

**MIND ↔ BODY**

With mental health problems, early intervention can lead to better – and often faster – recovery. Athletes who experience mental health symptoms, such as anxiety or low mood, can often downplay or minimise their experiences, insisting: “It’s nothing; it will pass”. But doing so misses the chance to intervene early, before problems become persistent or more severe.

As soon as you notice changes in your mental health, talk to someone you trust or seek help and support, as this will offer the best chances for recovery.

Source: Olympics, Athlete 365, 2021

# ERASING THE STIGMA

Due to stigma, not every athlete talks about their mental health struggles, but more and more are coming forward.

Here are a few athletes with mental illness who are speaking out:



## SIMONE BILES

Biles certainly did open doors when she missed a week of the Tokyo Games while dealing with mental health concerns. Specifically, she was dealing with a case of the "twisties," a mental block that gymnasts deal with that prevents them from knowing where they are while flipping through the air.

Read more:

<https://www.sportingnews.com/us/athletics/news/simone-biles-mental-health-athletes/2wda6lk16m84zzjgam0iz7ye>



## DEMAR DEROZAN

"It's one of them things that no matter how indestructible we look like we are, we're all human at the end of the day," the 28-year-old Raptors all-star said. "We all got feelings . . . all of that. Sometimes . . . it gets the best of you, where times everything in the whole world's on top of you."

Read more:

<https://www.thestar.com/sports/raptors/2018/02/25/raptors-derozan-hopes-honest-talk-on-depression-helps-others.html>

# ERASING THE STIGMA



## NAOMI OSAKA

Tennis superstar Naomi Osaka opened up about her mental health struggles and her decision to drop out of the French Open in an essay published Thursday in Time magazine, saying "it's O.K. to not be O.K."

Osaka skipped Wimbledon and withdrew from the French Open after she was fined \$15,000 and threatened with suspension for her refusal to appear at a tournament press conference. She elaborated on her decision to protect her mental health in her essay for TIME, which featured her on an Olympic-themed cover.

Read more:<https://time.com/6077128/naomi-osaka-essay-tokyo-olympics/>



## MICHAEL PHELPS

"I remember sitting in my room for four or five days not wanting to be alive, not talking to anybody. That was a struggle for me ... I reached that point where I finally realized I couldn't do it alone"

Read more:<https://people.com/sports/michael-phelps-opens-up-about-depression-and-not-wanting-to-be-alive/>

**YOU  
ARE  
NOT  
ALONE**

# MENTAL HEALTH IN SPORTS

Signs to look out for and tips to take care of athletes' mental health

## SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

## TIPS TO SUPPORT

Social withdrawal or avoidance

Schedule time away from training

Problems concentrating

Talk to a therapist

Change in sleeping or eating habits

Identify your stressors

Poor athletic performance

Develop a support network

Fatigue, injury or failure to recover

Engage in positive self-talk & gratitude

Lack of interest & enjoyment in activities

Prioritize sleep

Irrational thoughts, feelings & behaviour

Prepare for the end of your sports career

Change in personality

Develop a mindfulness practice

Struggle to control emotions

Be compassionate towards yourself

## HABITS FOR GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

### HAVE FUN

make time to do things that make you happy

### CONNECT

with family, friends & peers

### REACH OUT

for professional help if you need it

### SLOW DOWN

relax and unwind

### SLEEP

establish a regular nighttime routine, avoid caffeine and limit phone use before bed

# RESOURCES

If you're looking for additional mental health resources, here are outlets that you may find beneficial.

They offer educational information and are purposed to help athletes lead healthier lives.

## **ATHLETE 365**

ATHLETE 365 IS A MEMBERSHIP PLATFORM FOR OLYMPIC ATHLETES THAT BILLS ITSELF AS "THE WORLD'S LARGEST ATHLETE COMMUNITY." ONE OF THE PLATFORM'S PRIMARY FOCUSES IS MENTAL HEALTH; THE WEBSITE HAS AN ENTIRE SECTION DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING ATHLETES' MENTAL FITNESS, AND REGULARLY PUBLISHES CONTENT TOWARD THAT END.

IF YOU'RE AN OLYMPIAN, THIS IS A SOLID RESOURCE. EVEN IF YOU AREN'T, YOU MAY FIND ATHLETE 365'S CONTENT – INCLUDING ARTICLES LIKE "12 WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE UNEXPECTED" AND IN-DEPTH, HONEST PLAYER PROFILES – HELPFUL AND INSPIRING.

[HTTPS://OLYMPICS.COM/ATHLETE365/](https://olympics.com/athlete365/)

## **BELL LET'S TALK**

WANT TO JOIN IN TO HELP CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE, BUT DON'T KNOW HOW? TO HELP YOU SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, WE'VE CREATED A TOOLKIT THAT INCLUDES A CONVERSATION GUIDE AND HELPFUL TEMPLATES FOR USE IN SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES, AND WORKPLACES.

[HTTPS://LETSTALK.BELL.CA/EN/TOOLKIT](https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/toolkit)

## **MANAGING ANXIETY THAT TURNS INTO PANIC**

ATHLETES FACE STRESS NOT ONLY PHYSICALLY BUT ALSO MENTALLY. HIGH PRESSURE SITUATIONS CAN CAUSE ATHLETES TO GET ANXIOUS THEREFORE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ATHLETES CAN MANAGE THEIR ANXIETY SO IT DOES NOT TURN INTO PANIC.

[HTTPS://WWW.MEDICALNEWSTODAY.COM/ARTICLES/321510#REDUCING-ANXIETY](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321510#reducing-anxiety)

## **WELLNESS TOGETHER CANADA MENTAL HEALTH PORTAL**

Wellness Together Canada was created in response to an unprecedented rise in mental health and substance use concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with funding from the Government of Canada.

[HTTPS://WELLNESSTOGETHER.CA/EN-CA](https://wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca)

# RESOURCES

## **TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHOKE**

ONE OF THE WORST FEELINGS IS MENTALLY CHOKING DURING COMPETITION. HOWEVER ATHLETES CAN USE THE SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND MANAGE THE CHOKE.

[HTTPS://WWW.VOX.COM/2014/11/14/7209383/RIO-OLYMPICS-2016-CHOKE-PRESSURE-PSYCHOLOGY-SPORTS](https://www.vox.com/2014/11/14/7209383/rio-olympics-2016-choke-pressure-psychology-sports)

## **PERFORMANCE CONSISTENCY**

CONSISTANCY IS KEY WHEN IT COMES TO ATHLETICS AND REEACHING THE NEXT LEVEL IN YOUR SPORT. HERE ARE WAYS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE CONSISTANCY SO YOU CAN PLAY YOUR BEST AT ALL TIMES.

[HTTPS://WWW.PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM/CA/BLOG/THE-POWER-PRIME/201611/4-KEYS-CONSISTENTLY-GREAT-ATHLETIC-PERFORMANCES](https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-power-prime/201611/4-keys-consistently-great-athletic-performances)

## **ROUTINES TO MAXIMIZE PERFORMANCE**

CREATING DAILY HABITS WILL HELP AN ATHLETE ACHIEVE MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE CONSISTANTLY.

[HTTPS://WWW.TRAININGPEAKS.COM/BLOG/DAILY-HABITS-FOR-HIGH-PERFORMANCE/](https://www.trainingpeaks.com/blog/daily-habits-for-high-performance/)

## **BREATHING FOR PERFORMANCE**

PROPER BREATHING TECHNIQUES CAN BOOST SPORTS PERFORMANCE BY HELPING ATHLETES REMAIN CALM, ALERT, AND REDUCE ANXIETY. HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES.

[HTTPS://WWW.VERYWELLFIT.COM/BREATHING-EXERCISES-FOR-ATHLETES-3120044](https://www.verywellfit.com/breathing-exercises-for-athletes-3120044)