



AHEAD OF THE GAME

GROWN BY NOVEMBER



MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUR PLAYERS

Mental fitness is about being able to work, study and play to your full potential, cope with day-to-day stress, and feel connected to others.

in partnership with



TALK MORE, PLAY BETTER

Talking about mental health can be difficult, especially if you think a player is showing symptoms of a mental health problem. These simple steps can help you start the conversation...

1 Plan Your Approach

Pick a place and time where you both feel comfortable to talk.

2 Engage

Be sensitive, caring, positive and non-judgmental.

3 What to Say and How

Ask how they are and if they need anything from you. Listen and express concern.

- ✓ "I'm concerned" - "I'm worried about"
"I've noticed that"...
- ✗ "Snap out of it" - "I'm sure it will pass"
"I know how you feel"...

4 Discuss Options

Work together, offer information and assess the different actions you can take.

5 Manage Difficulties

Don't force the issue. Be patient - if a player does not want to talk, ask if there is anyone else they could talk to and suggest some resources.

TIPS

You don't need to diagnose the problem. You just need to start a conversation.

Change in behaviour may be as important as behaviour itself.

You don't need to wait until you are certain something is wrong.

Checking in does no harm.

HOW TO HELP

Be a smart A.L.E.C

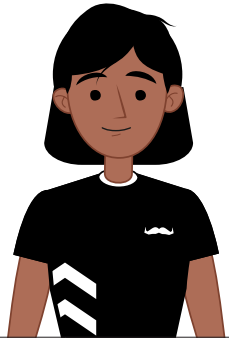
Ask	Ask how they are
Listen	Listen without judgement
Encourage action	Explore the options they might have and provide resources
Check in	Keep in touch with where they're at

Sources of Help for Coaches and Players:

- ROI www.childline.ie
- NI www.childline.org.uk
- www.jigsaw.ie
- www.textaboutit.ie

Changes in an athlete's mental fitness can be gradual. The following guide will help you to spot the signs of a potential mental health issue.

WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE



Turning up late, or very tired

Not showing up at all, with no reason

Absent-mindedness, limited focus, short attention span

Not wanting to play or playing poorly

Aggressive behaviours

Lack of eye contact

Anti-social behaviours

Isolating themselves from others

If you have noticed a number of these warning signs in an athlete for more days than not in the past 6 months, it may be time to seek help.

WARNING SIGNS OF ANXIETY



Fatigue, sleep disturbance, restlessness

Persistent irritability

Difficulty concentrating, mind going blank, can't complete normal, everyday tasks

Changes in appetite, eating too much or too little, significant weight loss or gain

Excessive anxiety which causes significant distress or impairment in life and functioning

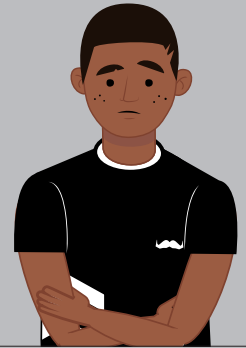
Feeling keyed up or on edge, physical agitation or muscle pain, tightness in chest, nausea

Avoiding anxiety provoking situations, putting things off

Using alcohol or drugs to escape

If you have noticed a number of these warning signs in an athlete for more than two weeks, it may be time to seek help.

WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION



Persistent fatigue or lack of energy

Persistent sad or irritable mood, low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness

Decreased concentration, indecisiveness

Significant changes in appetite, weight loss/gain, eating too much or too little

Having persistent, recurrent negative thoughts

Physical agitation, frequent unexplained aches and pains

Loss of interest in doing things usually enjoyed, withdrawal from friends/family

Reckless behaviour, risk taking, using alcohol or drugs to escape
