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**Mental Welfare
in Elite Level
Swimmers**

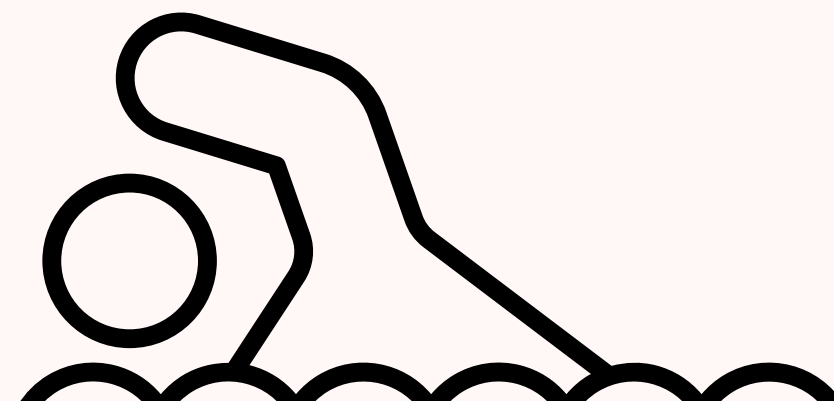


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What is Mental Health?

Health as a general term is essentially the overall physical, social and mental wellness of a person and in the nonexistence of disease or illness. Mental Health can be conceptualised as condition of well-being in which all individuals can identify their own abilities, can cope with the natural challenges of life, can work efficient and effectively while cooperating and contributing to their local area.

Mental Welfare In Sport

The main focus of mental welfare in any sport can relate to the understanding of an athlete's psychological health and their mental health too. This includes attending to the needs of any individual involved with sport and physically addressing and assisting them with appropriate resources and support. It is vital to take care of all athlete's mental welfare so that their overall performance/ wellbeing is encouraged and promoted.





Don't Worry, you are NOT alone!



When you give your all and dedication to a Sport that takes up the majority of your life, sometimes you may think it is easier to just push through and think 'It's OK.' Or 'It is what it is.'

To put into perspective, Sports Aid, one of the only charities in the UK supporting British Elite Level Athletes quotes, "26% of athletes think their involvement in their sport is too difficult at times" and "9 out of 10 Athletes would like more access to mental health resources and tools to help balance their day-to-day lives"



What are some of the Challenges?

In the world of being an elite level swimmer, there are various different pressures and demands that take a toll on athletes. Some examples you may be struggling with are:

1. High performance expectations
2. Intense training schedule
3. The physical demands
4. High-competitive environment
5. Balancing Life outside of Sport

These cases seem to be the top reasons athletes battle with during their sport life and explains the grounds of why it can cause a decline in their mental health.



The vast majority of swimmers in particular struggle with perfectionism, body image and self-doubt



Having a Balanced lifestyle

Prioritising yourself is key, you come first. When it comes to the time where you are not engulfing yourself into Swimming, training, and competing, it's crucial to find the point of where you can truly enjoy time off. This can still be productive however rest is the most important part when the volume of work is at a peak.



Rest is a form of self-care, where you should relax, recover and recharge yourself. This will help avoid injuries and burnout too. This is a break for your body physically and more importantly mentally so that your mind can waver from any stresses or pressures going on.



More Examples

Although resting is very beneficial for athletes, having a social life and actively engaging with other people outside of Swimming life should be taken into consideration.

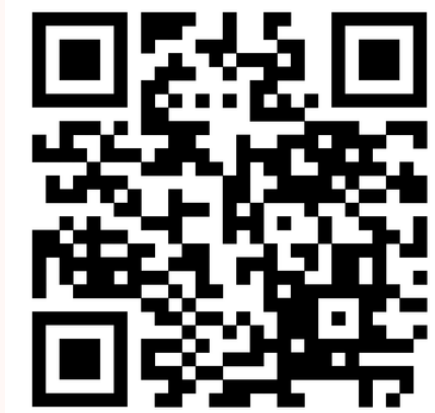
Friends, family and teammates are the social connections you want to include in your spare time. This kind of emotional support can bring a sense of belonging to you and also help reduce any stress or worries you may be having. Keeping in touch with these relationships and building on them on a regular basis has many advantages as to if and when you may be feeling low.

Keeping in mind that in order to balance out a healthy lifestyle on top of training and competitions, nutrition is key to the energy that is presented in your body.

Although food fuels the body, it also fuels the brain. This can improve energy levels, mood stability and functions of the brain. Proper and thorough nutritional diets is an essential aspect that can significantly affect your overall wellbeing. This includes hydration too as it enhances your cognitive function. Rich and nourishing foods stipulate the important antioxidants, minerals and vitamins required in your body to assist with mental health. This is a vital detail to pay more attention to.

Resources

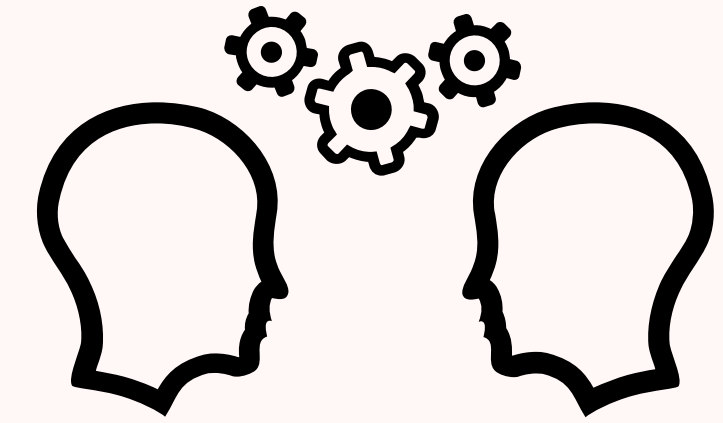
There is mix between athletes' having the knowledge of how to take control and care of their mental welfare and there are some who do not, and that is completely OK. In more recent years the access to resources and tools for mental health support has been slightly uplifted in comparison to before. Sports Aid say that 'a third of athletes' don't know enough about it and '14% of athletes don't feel comfortable asking for help.'



There is a current 'Action Plan' placed by the UK Government back in 2018. Please scan the QR Code for further insight of the outputs of issues raised.



Coach Training in Mental Welfare



Coaches are the number 1 individual's you essentially look up to as role models in the elite level world of swimming. There is a stigma surrounding the topic of mental health where it can be seen as awkward and difficult to communicate effectively.

A lot of an athlete's time is consumed in their coaches' presence, it is time that there are opportunities for development within mental welfare so that the coaches can be a more open point of contact for support and significantly more educated on the subject in general.

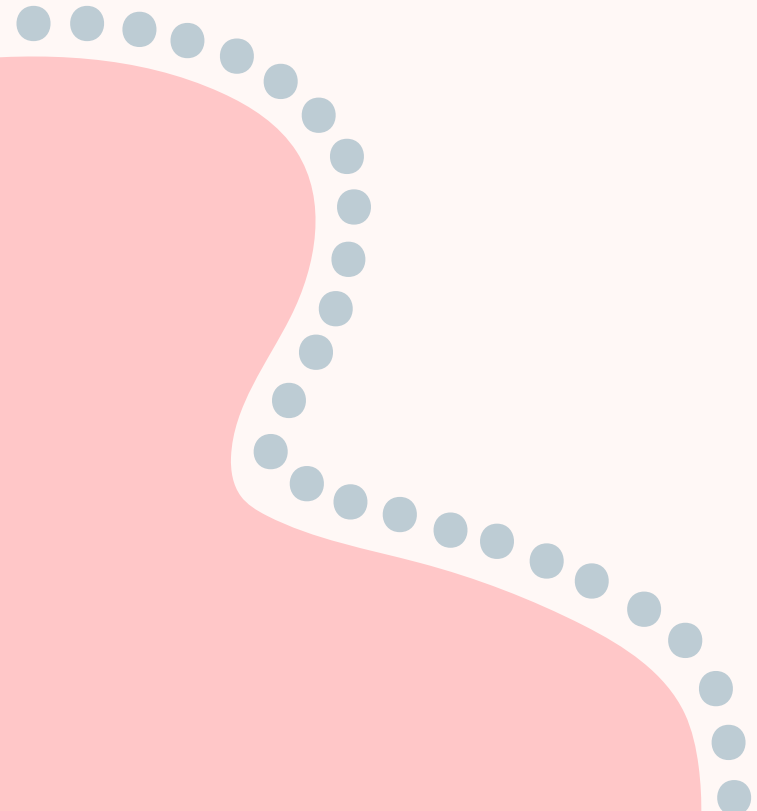
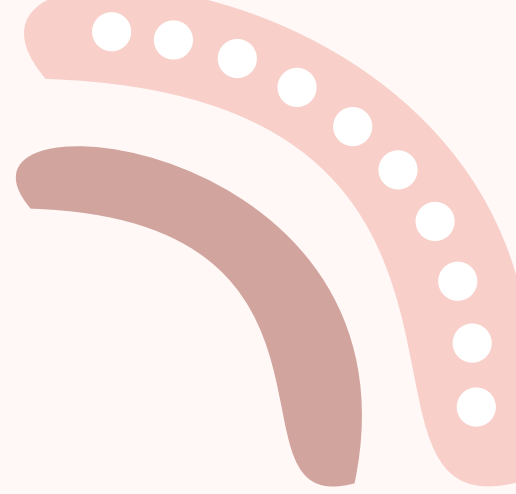
Having coaches seek programmes and training courses on mental health can help with:

1. Raising awareness will help them understand the knock-on effects of their athletes' physical performances.
2. Understanding the topic more, so coaches can recognise signs and symptoms of mental health issues and therefore implement strategies to help their athlete instead of seeking help elsewhere.
3. It can help encourage coaches with creating a non-judgemental environment for athletes to feel welcome and that they can share their thoughts.



WHAT REALLY MATTERS:

- Speak to someone you trust about how you are feeling
 - You are not alone in this situation
- There are no limitations to your peace or happiness
- Hiding thoughts and feelings won't make them go away
- Trust the healing process as everything takes time



Help Lines & Contacts

There are multiple campaigns and services all across the UK that are Anonymous, 24/7 line, if you identify as gay, bisexual, lesbian or transgender. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the following:



Athlete365 = +442089876273



Samaritans= 116-123



Text SHOUT= 85258

The Mix= 0800-068-4141

Nightline= 0300-300-0630

*Thank
You*