

THE IMPACT DESELECTION CAN HAVE ON YOUTH ACADEMY FOOTBALLERS' MENTAL HEALTH

A guide to help parents and guardians support
their children

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WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

This resource is aimed to provide you as parents/guardians of youth football players with the knowledge and understanding around deselection and the mental health effects that can arise and what symptoms to look out for.

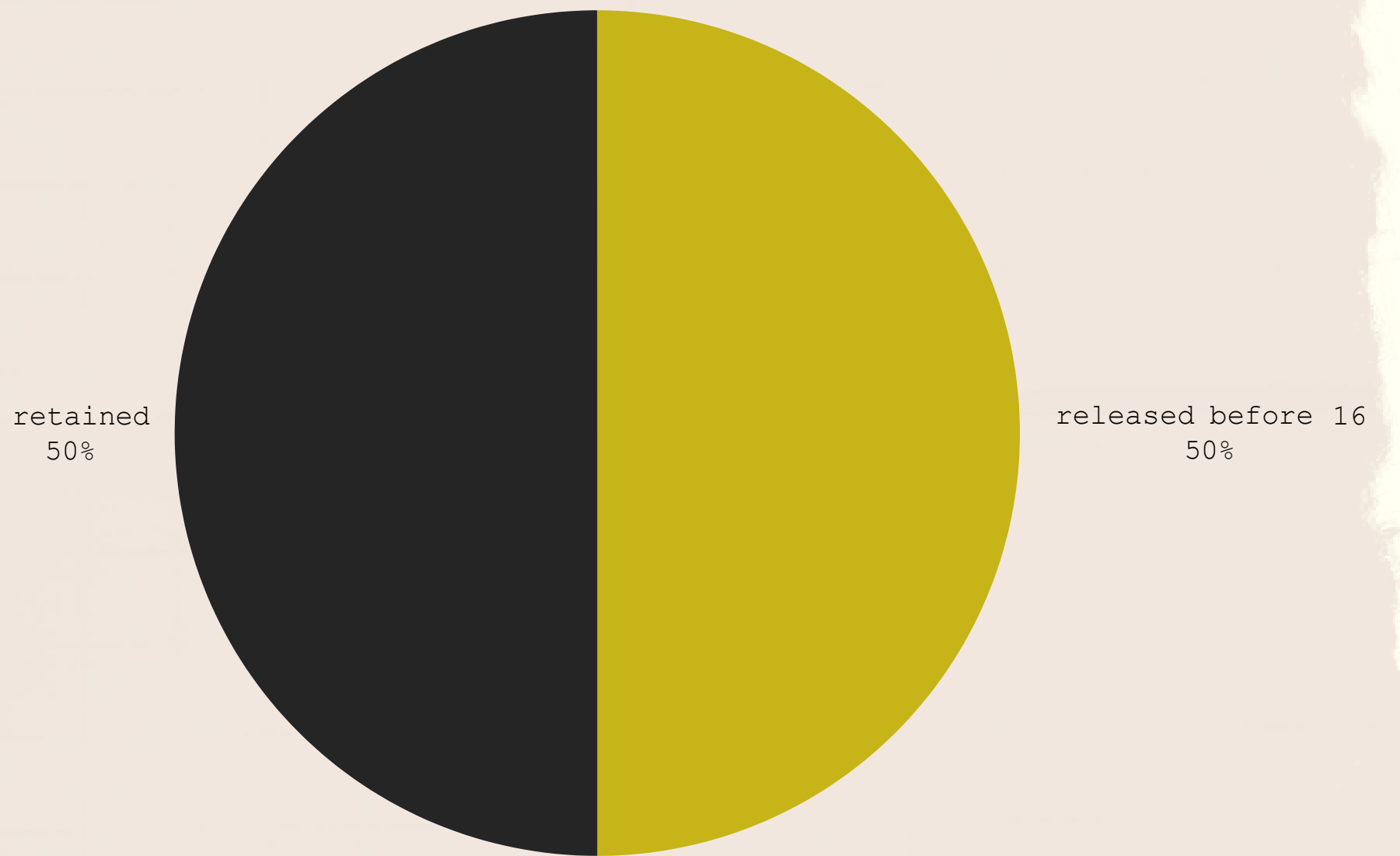
This resource will allow you complete understanding of how your loved ones may be feeling post deselection with strategies to support them in what is a time of need

DESELECTION IN FOOTBALL, WHY IS IT A PROBLEM

Prevalence

Deselection is a major issue in all sports today. This issue needs to be talked about more due to rates of deselection in English academy football being so severe and at an all-time high.

Studies show that out of 1.5 million boys who play youth football only 180 are signed by a premier league team with 50% of athletes being released before age 16.



KNOCK ON EFFECTS

Deselection is reported to create heterogeneous reactions within youth elite football players, with some players reporting negative mental health effects, including psychological distress e.g. anxiety, depression, humiliation, self-worth issues and suicide.

Research has found when measuring psychological distress post academy deselection that 55% of athletes suffered from psychological trauma 21 days after being released, Supporting these negative associations with Deselection and mental health

●
Anxiety

●
depression

●
humiliation

●
self-worth

WHAT IS HEALTH



Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a state of wellbeing where he/she can cope with normal stresses of everyday life, working productively and able to contribute to community.

A good level of Mental health implies that people can form and maintain affectionate relationships with others. Mental health gives individuals the feeling of worth, control and understanding.

poor mental health



IS OVERALL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH **LINKED**

PARENTS THIS IS ANOTHER
REASON WHY IT IS ESSENTIAL
YOU KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR
CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

YES. It's as
simple as that

Physical health problems have a direct causal link to mental health with individuals being far more likely to develop mental health issues if physical mental health is insufficient.

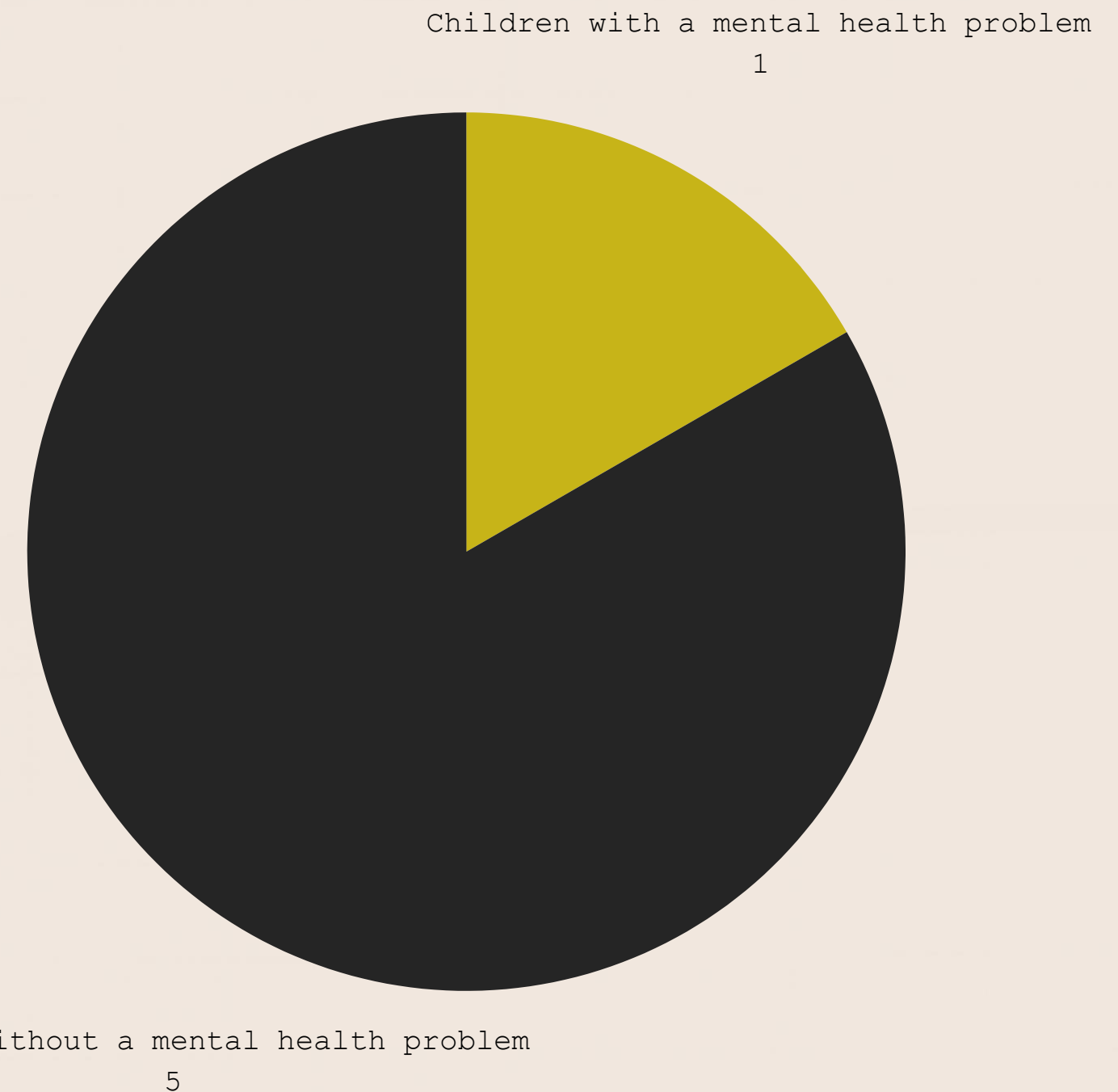
Studies show 1 in 3 people with long term physical health conditions also have mental health issues. Most often the big 2

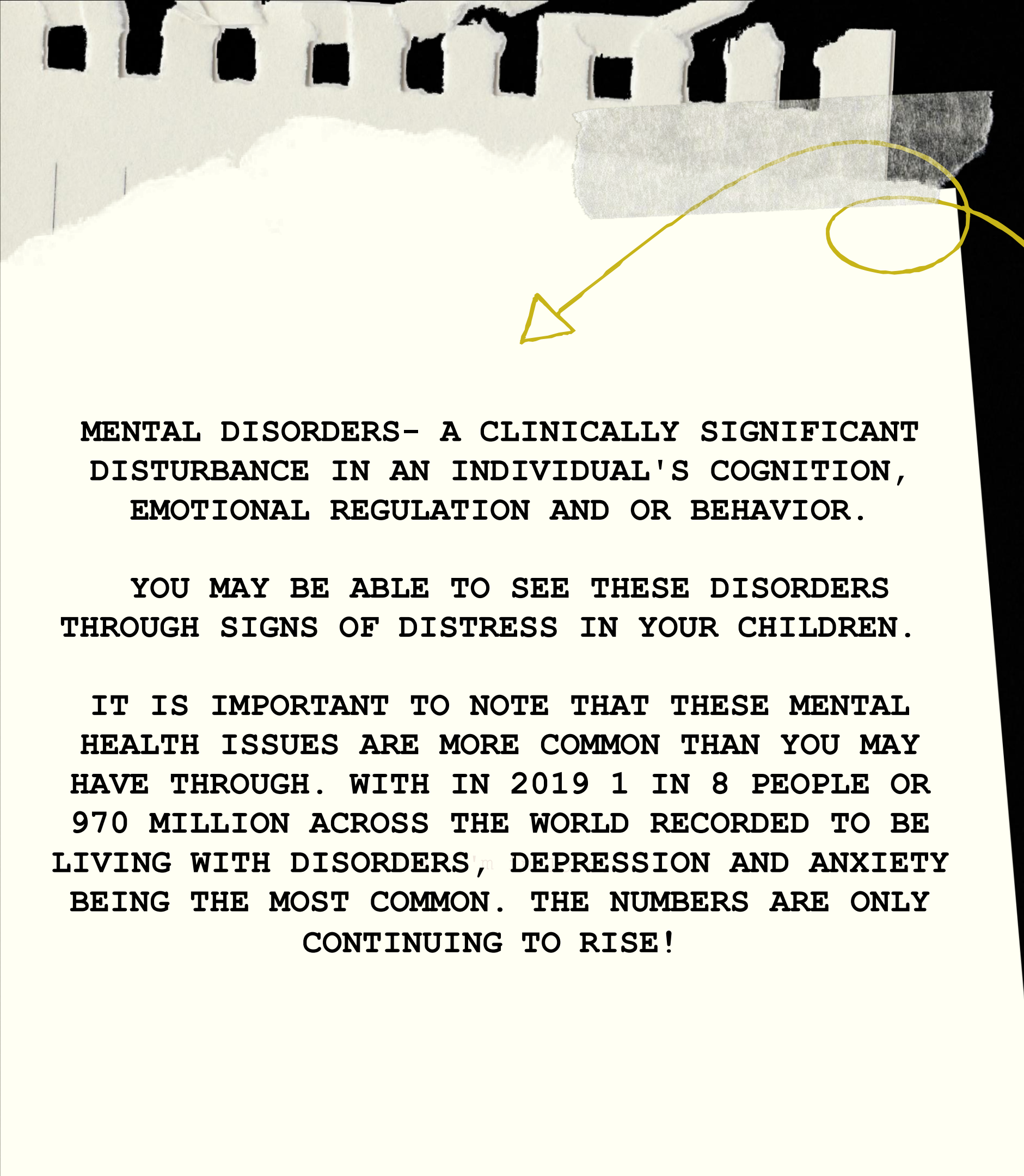
Depression and anxiety

It is so important in the adolescent stage of childhood that children have a good level of mental health as it is such a unique stage of human development because it is the prime for cognitive and psychological growth. Mental health at this stage in development has a massive effect on how children feel, think and make decisions to interact with the world around them.

CURRENT CLIMATE OF MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN THE UK

Over the last few years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of children experiencing mental health problems. NHS surveys show that before the pandemic, in 2017, 1 in 9 children had a probable mental health disorder. That has now jumped to 1 in 5.





MENTAL DISORDERS- A CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT
DISTURBANCE IN AN INDIVIDUAL'S COGNITION,
EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND OR BEHAVIOR.

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO SEE THESE DISORDERS
THROUGH SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN YOUR CHILDREN.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THESE MENTAL
HEALTH ISSUES ARE MORE COMMON THAN YOU MAY
HAVE THROUGH. WITH IN 2019 1 IN 8 PEOPLE OR
970 MILLION ACROSS THE WORLD RECORDED TO BE
LIVING WITH DISORDERS, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY
BEING THE MOST COMMON. THE NUMBERS ARE ONLY
CONTINUING TO RISE!

WHAT IS A MENTAL DISORDER?

WHAT KIND OF MENTAL ISSUES COULD ARISE

Anxiety - excessive fear and worry related to disturbances in behavior (WHO, 2022). Children may experience anxiety through difficulties with concentration, not sleeping, bad dreams, constantly feeling unwell and becoming more irritable than usual.

Depression- Depression is a severe mental illness that impacts an individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Depression isn't the usual mood swings however, during a depressive episode a person feels this sadness and loss of pleasure for most of the day for most days lasting for at; least two weeks. In 2019 23 million children and adolescents live with this problem.

Eating disorders - eating disorders are when individuals suffer from abnormal eating and preoccupation with food as well as prominent body weight and shape worries and concerns. Almost 3 million children and adolescents suffer with these disorders e.g. anorexia and bulimia.

Post - traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can develop following exposure to threatening or horrific events or series of events. PTSD can lead to re-experiencing the traumatic event or events in the present e.g. nightmares



'YOU AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH'

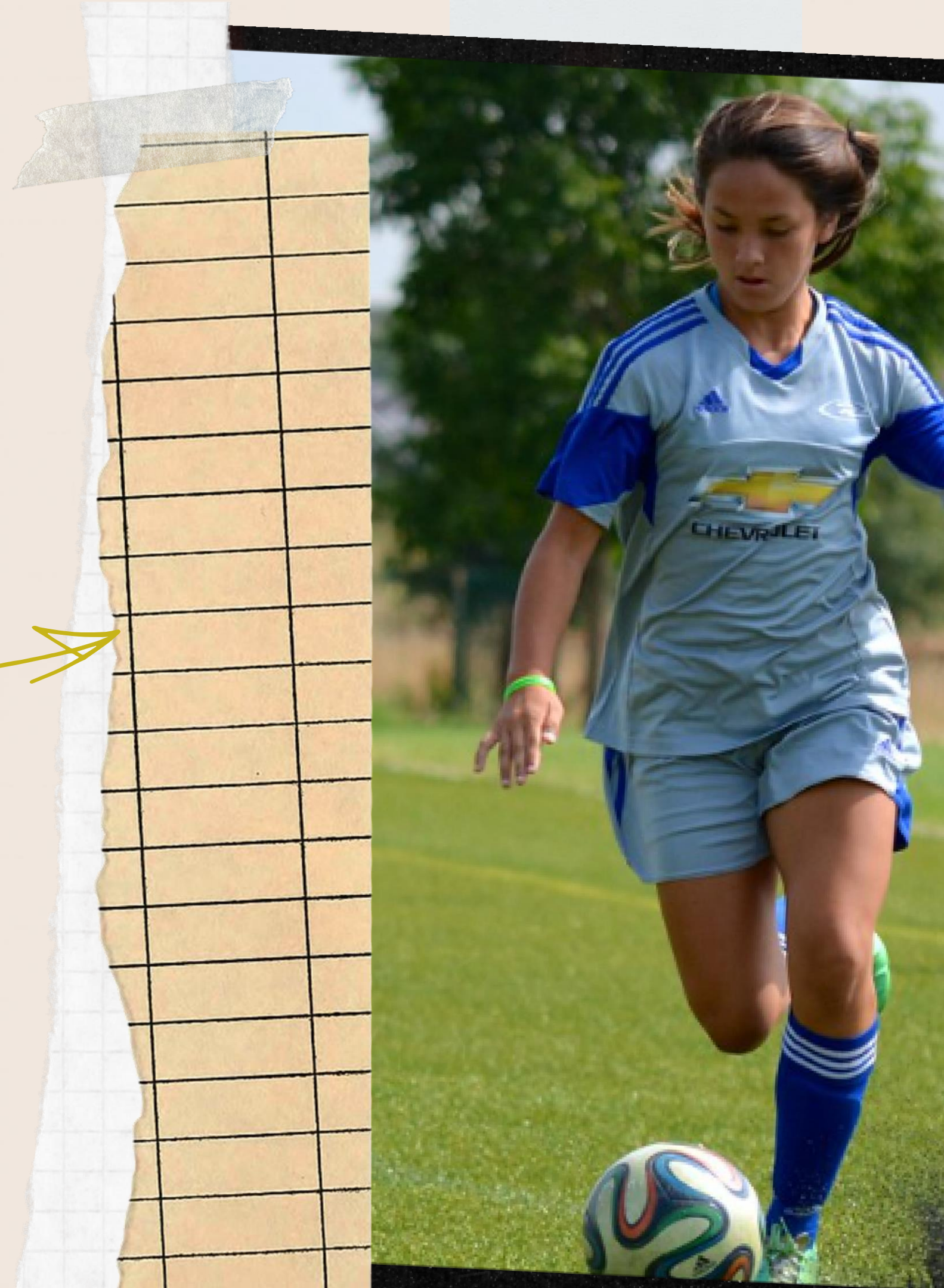
WHAT ACTUALLY IS DESELECTION

Deselection is defined as a process that results in an athlete being removed or cut from a team or program due to decisions made by a coach or a team of coaches.

EXAMPLES OF ISSUES THAT DESELECTION CAN CAUSE

betrayal failure loss
loss of identity rejection
social anxiety anxiety
worry guilt ptsd
withdrawal stress envy
confusion

**UNDERSTANDING
WHY
DESELECTION
FROM YOUTH
FOOTBALL
ACADEMIES IS SO
COMMON**



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

COMPETITIVE NATURE OF FOOTBALL ACADEMIES

FOOTBALL ACADEMIES ARE ESSENTIALLY A TRAINING SCHEME WHERE PRO FOOTBALL CLUBS SCOUT AND RECRUIT TOP TALENTED YOUTH AND DEVELOP THEM INTO THE FOOTBALLERS YOU WATCH ON TV.

WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW IS THAT BECOMING A PART OF THESE ACADEMIES DOES NOT GUARANTEE YOUR CAREER PATH AS A FOOTBALLER. AS MENTIONED EARLIER, THE LIKELY HOOD CHILDREN IN ACADEMIES WILL MAKE IT TO THE TOP IS VERY LOW. IT DOES SUGGEST HOWEVER SCOUTS HAVE SEEN SOMETHING SPECIAL IN YOUR CHILD, A SPARK, SOMETHING THAT SETS THEM APART WHICH LEADS CLUBS TO BELIEVE YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE A SLIGHT CHANCE.



WHY **DESELECTION** OCCURS

Ability:

Athletes who consistently underperform or lack required technical skills

Academy Finances:

Financial constraints can force academies to prioritize players with higher potential

Coping:

Players might struggle with the demanding environment. E.g. pressure or homesick

Competition:

Academies have very little space. New more talented players may emerge

Physical Development:

Sometimes, players don't physically develop as expected. E.g. lack of strength and size

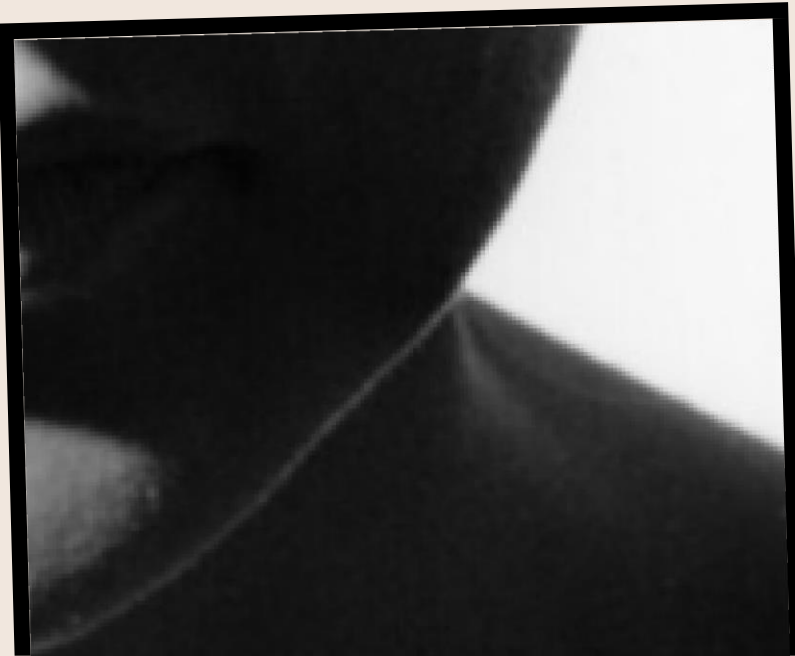
Injuries:

Repetitive injuries can hinder progress and limit player's potential, leading to release.

Attitude:


A negative attitude, lack of work ethic, or disruptive behaviour can be detrimental to team spirit and hinder development.





EXAMPLES FROM REAL DESELECTED ATHLETES

This is not to scare you as parents. It is purely to help you understand first hand the psychological damage deselection can do to young athletes reported in published studies.



' I did get down after I left. Like, properly.. like I'm not gonna sit here and try and tell anyone it doesn't affect you, it affected me more, like.. a year after.. or like, 6/7 months after'.

'suddenly it's not so great, you feel like a complete failure, and it sends you into a dark place. I didn't know what else I wanted to do.'

'I was angry and felt like I was owed something - which I obviously wasn't.'

bbc

'I felt as though I didn't know who I was anymore because football was my life and I didn't have that anymore'

'I got very depressed and didn't know where my life was going. I really didn't know how to handle it'

This will help you understand what your child might go through



SUPPORT

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT?



3 PHASES OF COPING WITH DESELECTION

CONSOLE FIRST THEN TALK LATER.

IN THE FIRST 24 - 48 HRS. YOU AS PARENTS
SHOULD PUT ALL EFFORTS INTO INITIAL
CONSOLIDATION

TALKING TO EACH OTHER ABOUT THE CUT
YOU SHOULD WORK WITH YOUR CHILD USING
RATIONALISATION. THIS IS EXPLAINING THE
SITUATION IN A WAY TO MAKE IT SEEM LOGICAL OR
REASONABLE.

yup, i'm in love.

TAKING ACTION.

YOU SHOULD ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO GET
THROUGH THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT BY AN INCREASED
EFFORT. THE DREAM DOESN'T STOP AT THE FIRST
HURDLE!.

LISTEN TO THEM



You have to realize as parents, your children have just been told what they think is the worst news they could be told at this stage of their Career. Your child will feel vulnerable. From Research in the area players have describes this experience as 'horrible and traumatic'

Let them talk, let them tell you how they are feeling even if you might disagree. As parents or guardians you should be very careful not to down play the severity of the situation, don't squash your child's feeling. The usual, 'its only a game' or 'there is always next time' is trivial and will only make the situation worse.

- Let them talk
- Keep them busy
- Encourage them

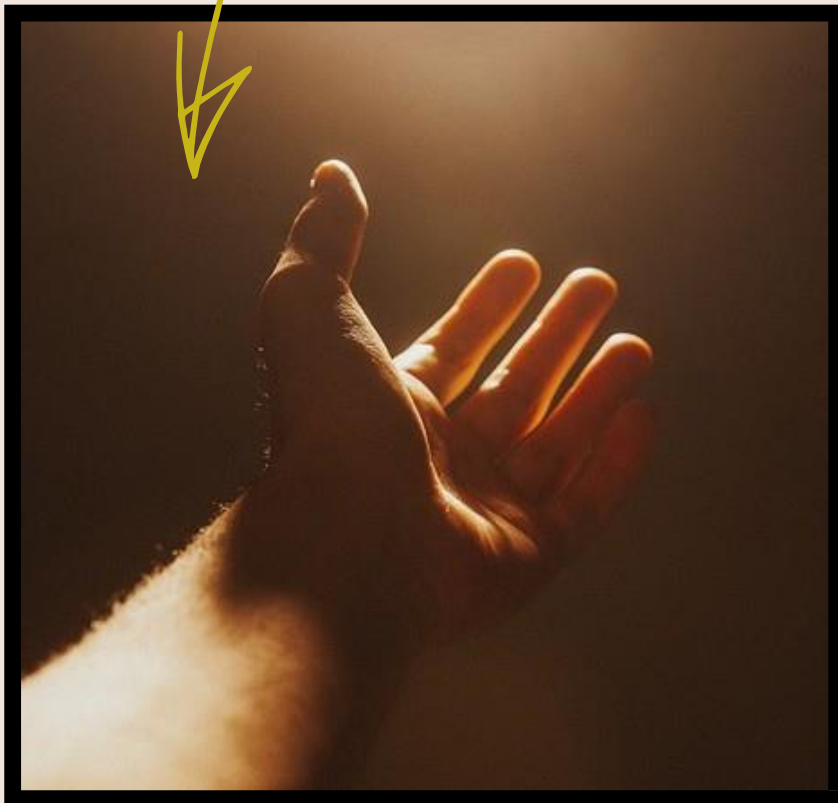
BE THERE FOR THEM

EMOTION FOCUSED COPING

Parents should be there for the athlete allowing them to vent emotions in the first few days, and then slowly and delicately talk about the deselection when the athlete is ready.

Your children may feel that they don't want to talk and burden you with their emotional suffering, therefore it is essential you are there for them to help them get through their initial feelings of rejection. This may be achieved through reminding them that you are on the same team.

As parents you should take action to try to open your child's eyes to the big picture. Just because they didn't succeed at their previous academy, someone else might be waiting to sign them.

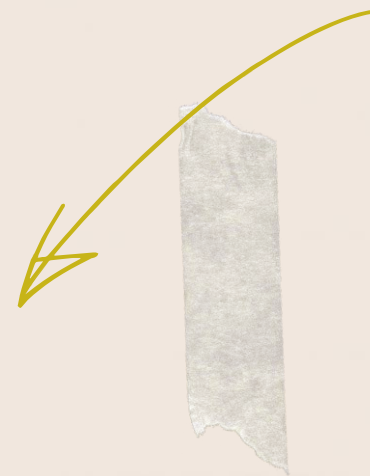
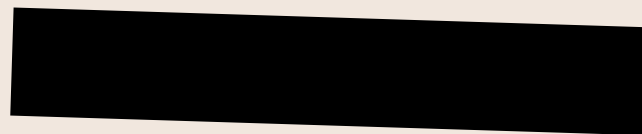




PROBLEM FOCUSED COPING

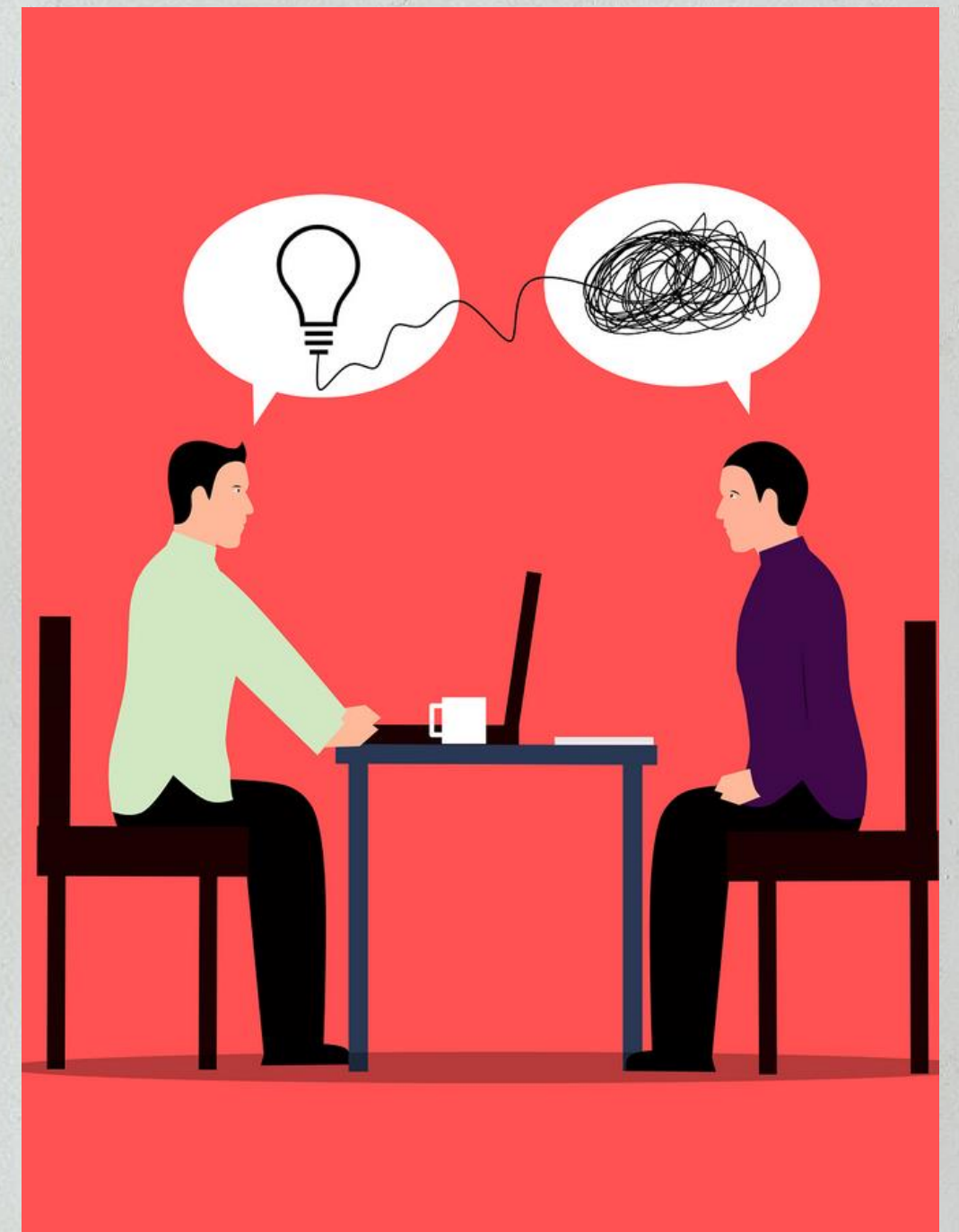
YOU AS PARENTS SHOULD TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO OPEN TRIALS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO MAINTAIN HIGH EFFORTS TO KEEP THE DREAM ALIVE. THIS IS A METHOD OF ACTIVE COPING.

USE THE SETBACK AS POSITIVE REAPPRAISAL, CREATING MEANING AND PERSONAL GRWOTH. THERE ARE EXAMPLES TO SHOW THEM OF ACADEMY DESELECTED PLAYERS SUCH AS ARSENAL'S DECLAN RICE OR CRYSTAL PALACE'S EDDIE NKETIAH WHO WERE LET GO FROM ARSENAL'S ACADEMYS AND WENT ON AND PERSEVERED TO BOTH END UP WITH CAPS FOR ENGLAND.



COUNSELLING FROM A PROFESSIONAL - YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS ALONE

Counselling can be pivotal in supporting your children address their own emotional, developmental and social challenges. You need to allow your children to self control there emotions. As parents this may be a useful strategy for you to help due evidence from past deselected athletes claiming they enjoy the unconditional positive regard that a counselor can provide. Due to reported effects of 'lack of worth' post deselection counselors can offer the support needed to show the athletes an understanding of their personal world.



I HOPE THIS RESOURCE HAS GIVEN YOU AS PARENTS A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE AROUND THE TOPIC OF DESELCTION

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