

INJURY AND MENTAL HEALTH

You Are Not Alone!

It has been reported that 80% of the time, athletes who are being treated for injury also report psychological struggles related to the injury (4).

There are a variety of emotional responses athletes have to injury, including frustration, sadness, lack of motivation, anger, sleep disturbance and appetite changes (1). The type and level of emotional reaction to injury can change over time, but it is important to pay attention to them because this can become problematic for injury recovery and overall mental health (1).

One study shows that athletes who experienced an injury during the previous year reported significantly higher depression symptom scores than those reported by non-injured athletes (4). When injured, athletes may experience a loss in self-esteem, belonging or safety, so it is important to think about this as an athlete and learn ways to cope with it (6).



80%

Up to 80% of athletes being treated for injury also report psychological struggles related to their injury.

How Does Mental Health Affect Injury Recovery and Return to Play?

In one study looking at athletes who tore their ACL, they found that psychological factors play an important role in whether an athlete is able to successfully return to sport. Even though there have been improvements in the surgical and rehabilitation process, the most common barrier to returning to sport was a fear of reinjury (3).

Be patient with the recovery process; oftentimes this can be very difficult, but if you return to your sport too early without having fully recovered, it can lead to re-injury and affect your performance and future ability to participate in your sport at all (6).

How Can You Cope With Injury in a Healthy Way?

Athletes can be less likely to seek help because they feel that seeing a therapist is a sign of weakness, they are used to working through pain, or are afraid to reveal their symptoms (5). There are many strategies that have been shown to help athletes cope with injury including goal setting, positive self-talk, visualization, and cognitive restructuring (1). Studies have shown that athletes who used these strategies during their recovery period healed faster from injury than those who didn't (6). Additionally, social support from people close to the athlete has been shown to help with coping, stress, and motivation for rehabilitation (2).

Sometimes it is recommended to see a mental health provider. They are specially trained to provide strategies to improve mental health, and some even specialize in sport psychology specifically. If you are wondering whether you should see a mental health provider, please speak with your primary care physician.

The resources mentioned below can provide strategies to help you cope with your injury, return to your sport both physically and mentally healthy, and connect to a mental health provider if needed.

- <https://www.joinmyhuddle.com>
- <https://injuredathletesclub.com/>
- <https://www.sidelineusa.org/>
- <https://www.seanconley.net/podcast> - Happy Athlete Podcast



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Citations

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