

5 STEPS TO SUPPORT DISTRESSED ATHLETES

#COACHTOOLKIT

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ATHLETES ARE NOT IMMUNE

to experiencing psychological distress and may turn to coaches for help when managing distressing situations.

As a coach, follow these five steps to provide effective immediate support if an athlete discloses distress.

5 STEPS OF SUPPORT

1

LISTEN

to the athlete explain the situation. This can include paraphrasing what the athlete has said to demonstrate that you are being attentive.

2

REASSURE

the athlete that psychological distress affects everybody and help normalize the experience for them.

3

ASK QUESTIONS

to ensure you understand the situation in its entirety.

4

TRIAGE

the severity of the situation to determine if the issue can be managed in-house or requires professional support. Professional support should be sought in any instance when the coach does not feel adequately equipped to manage the situation, and when the athlete is an immediate risk to themselves and/or others (e.g., suicidal ideation, severe mental illness, substance dependency, etc.).

5

CONNECT

the athlete to the appropriate support resources (e.g., student-athletes may be connected with licensed mental health professionals who are affiliated with the institution or the Athletics Department).

REMEMBER: Be patient and sensitive to the athlete's situation. Distress takes time, similar to physical injuries!

VISIT [SIRC.CA/DISTRESSED-ATHLETES](https://sirc.ca/distressed-athletes) FOR RECOMMENDED RESOURCES AND TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE



Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

REFERENCE

Bissett, J. E., & Tamminen, K. A. (2020). Student-athlete disclosures of psychological distress: Exploring the experiences of university coaches and athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2020.1753263>