

Review of literature: Coach and Athlete Well-Being

Mental health and mental health disorders have garnered increased attention in the past decade from sport psychology practitioners and researchers alike. This is likely due to mounting evidence that suggests coaches and athletes need to be mentally well in order to optimally perform. The purpose of this report was to review (a) what is known about the nature and antecedents of the mental health (both positive and compromised) of coaches and athletes, (b) better understand how the coach-athlete relationship impacts the mental health of both parties, and (c) outline any programs that exist internationally to assist coaches in adopting behaviours that protect and promote the mental health of their athletes.

While sport participation provides an array of benefits, sport is also a uniquely stressful context that impacts coach and athlete well-being in a number of ways. Some factors (e.g., frequent travel, injury, team selection, pressure to perform) are unique to this context and can threaten the mental health of sport participants. Indeed, evidence suggests that both coaches and athletes are susceptible to mental health challenges and disorders.

The coach-athlete relationship is of particular importance because coaching behaviours can have a markedly positive or negative impact on athletes' mental health and performance. Notably, the mental health of coaches themselves transfers to athletes via the coach-athlete dyad. That is, when coaches experience mental health challenges (e.g., stress, burnout), they are more likely to create unhealthy training and competition environments that can be detrimental to athletes' well-being. Thus, promoting the mental health of coaches, will pay dividends in improved athlete well-being and performance. Sport organizations can assist coaches by meeting their basic psychological needs, including by offering professional development opportunities, decreasing organizational stressors, supporting coaches' autonomy in the workplace and cultivating a psychologically safe culture that is congruent with coaches' values.

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