

Mental Health in Sport

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Introduction



Welcome and thank you for taking the Coaching Association of Canada's Mental Health in Sport eLearning module!

Mental health impacts the quality of life and performance of both sport participants and coaches. By completing this module, you will learn skills to help you effectively play a role in supporting the well-being of the participants you coach, while also supporting your own mental health. Completing this module does not make you a qualified mental health professional, but it will help you to support participants and refer them to resources they may need.

The concepts discussed in this module may be uncomfortable and could provoke traumatic experiences for some people. As you work through the module, please reach out to friends or

family to discuss your experiences. Additionally, there are mental health tools found in the Resource and Links sections of this module.

i **Tip:** As you complete this module, you will find tip boxes like these that will explain some of the interactive components and help you learn how to navigate the program. You will also find some instructions for keyboard navigation. Please note that these instructions are meant for people who are not using screen readers. If you are using a screen reader, your standard methods of keyboard navigation should work.

At some points throughout the program, CONTINUE buttons (like the one shown below) will not be available until you have completed certain activities or viewed all content. Note that these buttons will not reappear after they have been selected, which means that if you come back to review material again in the future, you will no longer see the CONTINUE buttons.

CONTINUE

The importance of addressing mental health in sport

Throughout the module, there are videos of people who understand and support the importance of addressing the topic of mental health in sport. Select the video below to play a message from Paralympic medalist Chantal Petitclerc.

Mental Health *in Sport*

Promoting coach and
participant well-being



Video transcript

Hello, my name is Chantal Petitclerc, Paralympic medalist and Senator. Thank you for taking the time to complete this module on the importance of mental health for your athlete and for yourself. During my twenty years as a Team Canada member, my connection to my coach Peter has been so crucial. Of course there was his expertise, his technical skills, and the podiums that we won together but the strength of our team has always been our chemistry, respect, and communication. As an athlete, it has not always been easy for me on and off the track but I knew that I could always count on him. As a coach you have this privilege and responsibility to make a difference and to have a major impact, not only in someone's athletic career, but in their life, and for that impact to be the best possible, supporting the mental health of your athletes and taking care of yours is essential. So thank you for taking the time for your athletes and for yourself.

Sport is linked to a range of positive outcomes, including improved mental health and well-being. The evidence demonstrates that engagement in exercise and physical activity can

enhance mental health across someone's lifespan (Eime et al., 2013; Vella et al., 2019). As coaches, you have a great deal of influence over participants' mental health.

About this module



CCMHS
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
MENTAL HEALTH AND SPORT

CCSMS
CENTRE CANADIEN DE LA
SANTÉ MENTALE ET DU SPORT

The Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS) was a partner in the creation of this module. The CCMHS is a registered charity that supports the mental health and performance of Canadian sport participants.

In this module, you will explore the following topics:

- foundations of mental health
- your role as a coach
- the importance of self-care



Section 1

Foundations of mental health

The foundations of mental health are at the core of this module. In this section, we will introduce the key definitions that will help you to use appropriate language when speaking about mental health. At the end of this section, you will be able to describe mental health in the context of sport.

Section 2

Your role as the coach

Once you have a strong grasp of the foundations, you as a coach become the focus. First, you will look at the behaviours and attitudes that you can adopt to encourage mental health in participants. At the end of this section, you will be able to describe your role in supporting mental health in sport by being proactive and creating healthy environments.

Section 3

Importance of self-care

As you complete the module, ask yourself: How do these ideas apply to me as a coach? How do they apply to participants? The last section will help you to focus on self-care, by identifying important steps and strategies that you can take for your own mental health.

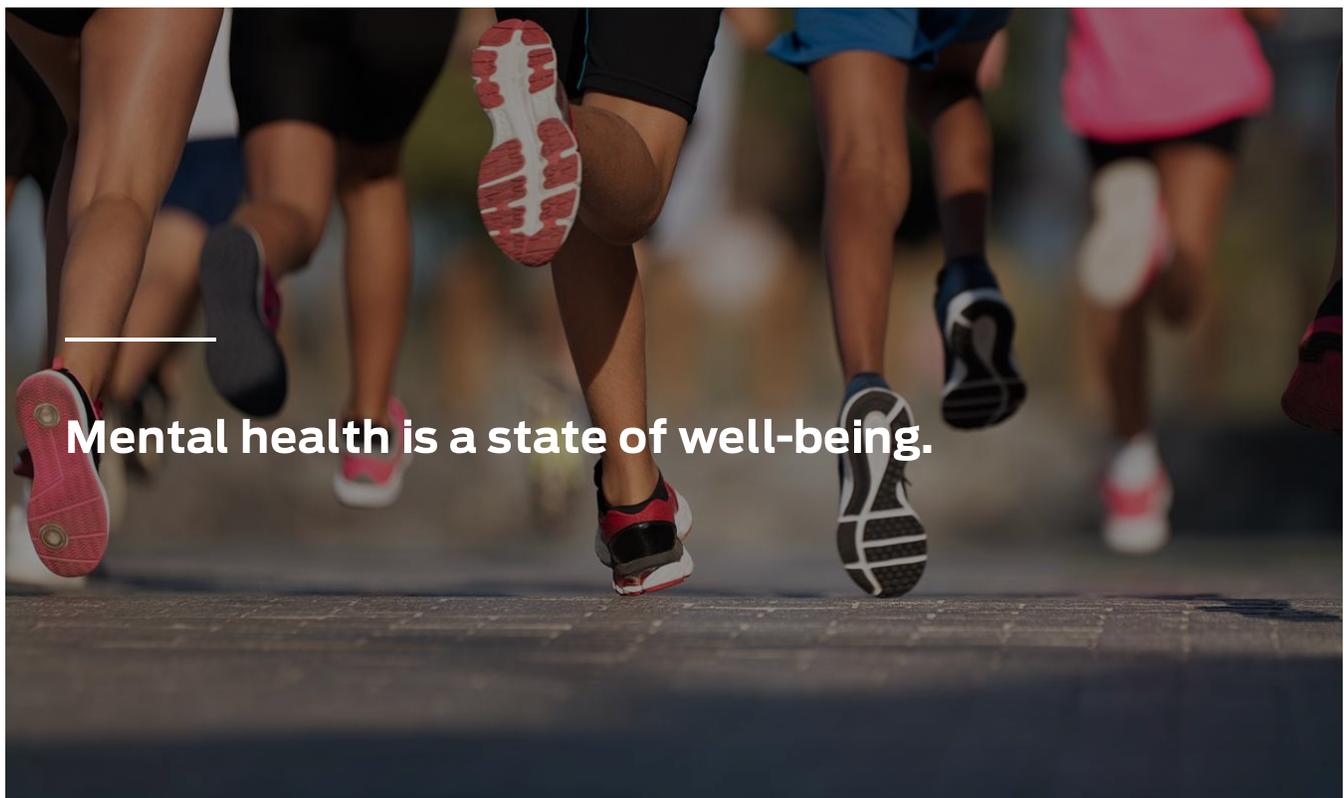
By completing this module, you are taking a confident step toward being an effective coach who values the mental health of participants.

This module will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete. You may complete the module in multiple sittings.

As you complete the module, we will reference specific resources that you can use to support participants and others. Check out the Resources section at the end of the module.

CONTINUE

Foundations of mental health



Mental health

Mental health is a state of psychological, emotional and social well-being in which individuals are able to feel, think and act in ways that allow them to enjoy life, realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their community.

Some signs of good mental health include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, independence, personal growth, satisfaction with life and integration into our communities.

Later in the module, you will learn how you can recognize signs of good and poor mental health in your participants.

Mental illness

Mental illness is a health condition that makes it difficult to function effectively (Keyes, 2003). It involves experiencing prolonged changes in thoughts, behaviours and feelings that cause distress and can make it difficult for a person to experience positive emotions, function day-to-day, maintain positive relationships with others and contribute meaningfully to their community (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006).

Increases in symptoms of mental illness do not necessarily correlate to decreases in mental health. This is because mental health and mental illness are related, but distinct, concepts.



People with **mental illness** can maintain good **mental health**.
Conversely, those who do not experience symptoms of mental illness can still experience poor mental health.

This means mental health and mental illness can coexist. A person living with mental illness can have good mental health by taking steps to maintain their well-being using their mental health assets.

Mental health assets are skills and supports that help us maintain positive mental health, and they can be cultivated.

Internal mental health assets include skills and practices such as self-regulation, self-talk and mindfulness.

External mental health assets include formal support networks (counsellor, psychologist) and informal support networks (friends, colleagues).

Mental health and mental illness interact with mental performance to influence an individual's overall functioning and performance in sport. For more information on how these interact, you can attend the [NCCP Basic Mental Skills workshop](#).

In mental health, well-being describes the state of positive functioning. Let's continue to explore well-being in a little more depth.

Well-being

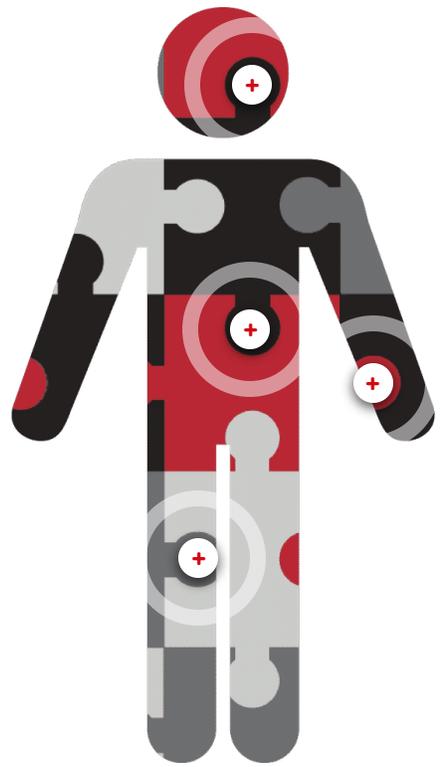
Happiness and health are a simple way of looking at well-being, but to improve well-being, we break it down into 4 domains: physical, psychological, emotional and social/spiritual/cultural.



 **Tip:** Go through the 4 buttons on the labelled graphic below to read more about each individual domain.

Keyboard instructions

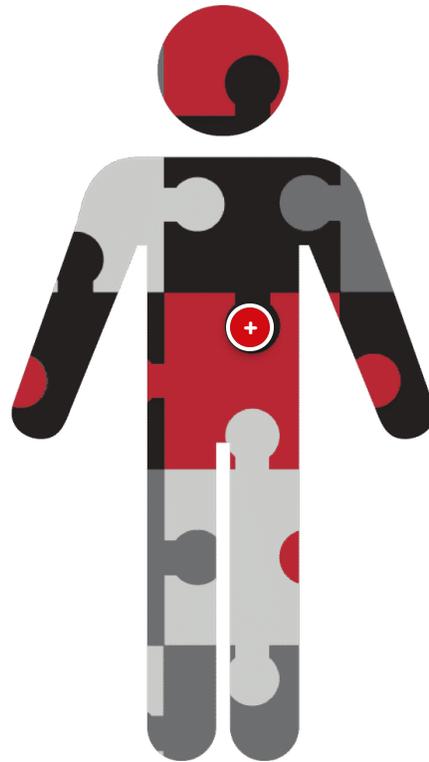
- Use Tab and Shift+Tab to move from one closed marker to another.
- Press Enter or the spacebar to open a marker.
- Use the up and down arrow keys to scroll through the contents of an open marker.
- Use the left and right arrows to move from one open marker to another.
- Press Esc to close a marker.





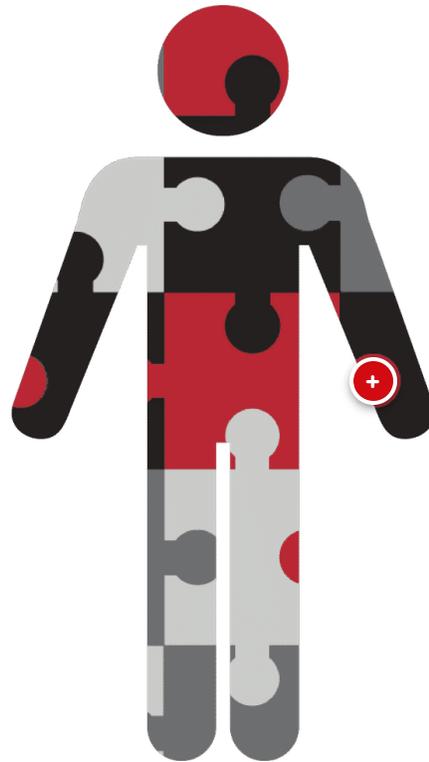
1. Psychological

Psychological well-being is about being able to cope with expected stresses and respond in a balanced way. This domain is strongly connected to being able to effectively take on a role and responsibilities in a community and be relied on by your peers.



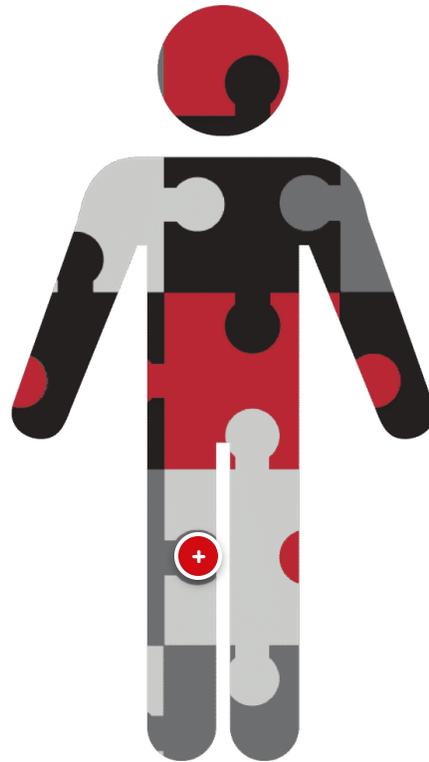
2. Emotional

This domain is about the ability to learn and grow from your experiences. It builds on your capacity to be resilient, self-aware, empathetic and motivated. Emotional well-being is also strongly connected with positive feelings, such as joy, happiness, hope or contentment.



3. Social/spiritual/cultural

Social/spiritual/cultural well-being is much less tangible than some of the other domains, but very important all the same. This type of well-being comes from our ability to find meaning and purpose through the connections that we feel with others, our shared histories, art or even nature. People often find spiritual well-being in connection to their beliefs about the world.



4. Physical

As coaches and participants, physical well-being will likely be the most familiar to you. This is about feeling physically strong, fit, and in good health. This is often reached by making good choices for your body that promote health.

[CONTINUE](#)



Reflection

- 1 Take a moment to examine what in your life improves your happiness and health.
- 2 Identify 1 element of well-being from each of the 4 domains described here.
- 3 For each element, ask yourself:

How do I feel when that element is lacking?

What can I do to grow that element of well-being in my life?

Understanding our own well-being will help us to support participants with their mental health. Keep this exercise in mind as it will help you to complete your self-care plan at the end of the module.

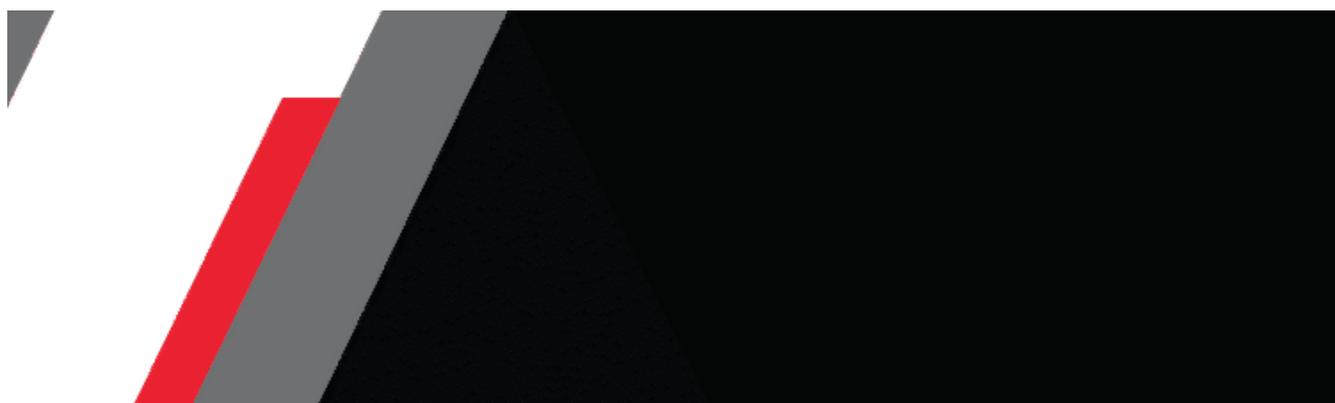


Well-being for all

To truly support mental health, it is important to understand how lived experiences have an impact on well-being.

There are learning opportunities in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) that will help you to examine your own coaching practice and learn how to support the well-being of all participants. Check out the Diversity and Inclusion section of coach.ca.

This growing set of resources includes information on women in coaching, anti-racism in coaching, Indigenous coaching, working with 2SLGBTQI+ athletes and coaches, coaching athletes with a disability, and more.



Positive mental health

With an understanding of mental health, well-being and mental illness, let's consider what a mentally healthy person looks like, sounds like and feels like. There are many indicators of positive mental health (Keyes, 2007). Let's explore these indicators using flashcards.

i **Tip:** The activity below is a set of 7 flashcards. Select each flashcard to view content on the other side.

Keyboard instructions

- Use the Tab key to select the flip icon.
- Press Enter or the spacebar to flip the selected card.
- Use the up and down arrow keys to scroll through text.
- Use the Tab key to select the previous or next arrow.
- Press Enter or the spacebar to view the previous or next card.

**Self-
acceptance**



Holds positive attitudes
toward self,
acknowledges and likes
most parts of self and
personality



Seeks challenge, has insight into own potential,

Finds own life has a direction and meaning



Lives by own internal standards and values



Social contribution



Sees own daily activities as useful to and valued by society and/or others



Social integration



Has a sense of belonging to, and comfort from, a community

CONTINUE



Reflection

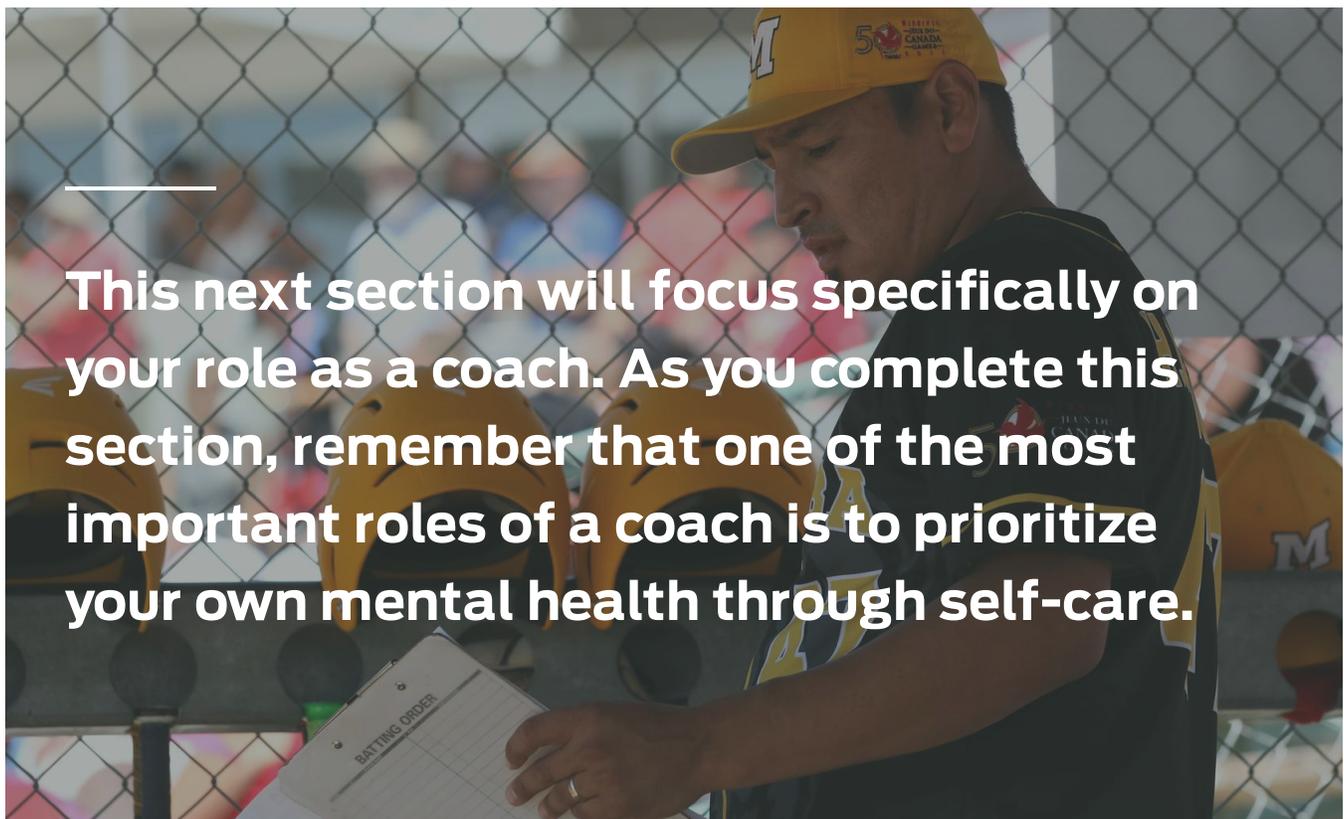
When I am mentally healthy, what do I look like? Sound like? Feel like?

What does a mentally healthy participant look like? Sound like?

As you reflected, you probably came to the conclusion that **it depends**. There are many factors that can shift what a mentally healthy person looks and sounds like, and this can shift over time. Because of the diversity in how people appear when they are healthy, you need to have an idea of what you and your participants would define as **their normal** so that you can identify potential changes to their mental health more easily. In the next section, we will look more closely at knowing the participants so that you can set a baseline. This baseline will help you to identify if a participant is struggling or needs additional support to maintain their mental health.

CONTINUE

The role of the coach



This next section will focus specifically on your role as a coach. As you complete this section, remember that one of the most important roles of a coach is to prioritize your own mental health through self-care.

Supporting participants' mental health

Select the video below to find out how Paul LaPolice, a professional football coach, supports the mental health of his athletes.

Mental Health *in Sport*

Promoting coach and
participant well-being



Video transcript

Our first meeting of the day with the quarter backs is we sit and talk for 15 minutes about life, right? Not about football, because your players have to understand you care more about them, all right? And it's important you have a relationship with them, so let's just do more than just your sport, let's make sure we're talking and just seeing what's going on in their life that's really good. You can correct, you can discipline, all right? You can demand, you can do all those things and be a positive coach, right? And what I mean by that is build your players up, don't tear them down. They need to look to you to be the person who recognizes the best things they do, all right? So, you make sure you're a positive role model to them. You make sure you're always preaching the positives that each one of your players do.

A coach's role in supporting the mental health of participants is primarily proactive, including:

- knowing participants well so that it is easier to notice changes in behaviour

- creating a healthy, safe and inclusive training environment
- implementing positive coaching behaviours
- recognizing distress and referring when necessary
- taking care of their own mental health

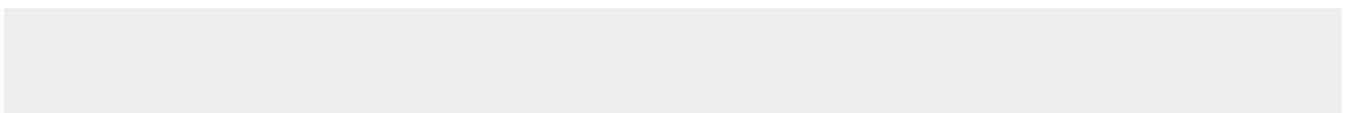


Duty of care

As coaches, you have a duty of care to all participants. **Duty of care** refers to the minimum standard of care a person is owed.

The minimum care a coach owes to participants is to:

- provide a healthy environment
- recognize distress
- refer when necessary



Keep in mind that, as a coach, there are **limits** to your duty of care. You are not a **mental health professional**, and if the participants you coach are under the age of 18, you must **communicate** any concerns to **parents/guardians**.

There are 3 core principles of the NCCP Code of Ethics:



Leadership and professionalism

This principle considers the inherent power and authority that a coach holds.



Health and safety

This principle considers the mental, emotional and physical health and safety of all participants.



Respect and integrity

This principle considers respect and integrity, which are the rights of all participants.

For each of these core principles, there are associated ethical standards of in-person and online behaviour expected of every NCCP coach and NCCP Coach Developer in Canada, whether on or off the field.

The flashcards below show 3 ethical standards of behaviour. Can you match each one to the correct core principle? Flip the card over to check your answer.

Keyboard instructions

- Use Tab and Shift+Tab to select a card.
- Press Enter or the spacebar to flip the selected card.
- Use the up and down arrow keys to scroll through text.

Standard:
Call upon others
with specialized
skills when needed

Principle:
Health and safety

Standard:
Establish a
respectful and
inclusive sport
environment

Principle:
Respect and
integrity

Standard:
Maintain the
participant-centred
approach

Principle:
Leadership and
professionalism

Download the NCCP Code of Ethics below to review all of the ethical standards of behaviours associated with each principle.

 **Tip:** When you select the PDF, it may either download or immediately open in a new browser tab, depending on your browser settings.

If you are on a mobile device, open the resource below. To save it, share via your browser to a device where you are able to save files.



NCCP Code of Ethics.pdf

640.3 KB



CONTINUE

Factors that impact mental health

To carry out the responsibilities of your role, you must develop an understanding of what can impact mental health. In sport, we consider 3 types of factors: **environmental**, **sport-specific** and **participant-specific**.



Environmental factors describe the context in which we live, work and play. They can have an impact on participants' mental health in that they require the participant to adapt. These factors include the physical environment (spaces, weather, noise), social life (interactions with parents/guardians or friends) and culture (expectations and practices).

Sport-specific factors are those that are inherent to your sport. For example, the pressure of competition (winning or losing) or the requirement to meet weight classes could have an impact on mental health.

In addition to environmental factors and sport-specific factors, each participant has their **own individual personal elements** that will impact their mental health. That's why it's so important to know your participants. Let's take a closer look at knowing the participant in this next section.



Knowing the participant

Knowing the participant is about getting to know the whole person, within and outside of sport. Consider the elements identified below.



How could each of these have an impact on a participant's mental health? How do the elements below influence one another?

- Developmental stage
- Disabilities and impairments

- Sexual orientation
- Internal motivation for sport
- Sex assigned at birth
- Cultural background
- Gender identity and expression
- Mental health
- Emotional intelligence
- Abilities
- Socio-economic factors
- Other elements

The elements described here are not exhaustive, but they can help us to think about participants as whole people. Knowing the participants you're coaching helps you more easily recognize changes in a participant's behaviour, appearance or interactions with others.

Keyboard instructions —

- . Use Tab and Shift+Tab to move from one answer choice to another.
- . Press the spacebar to select or de-select your answer.
- . Once a choice is selected, tab to the Submit button and press the spacebar or Enter.

- . To retake the question, tab to the Take Again button and press the spacebar or Enter.

Now that you know about the factors that impact mental health, what sport-specific factors might move a participant along the continuum from optimal mental health to poor mental health? Select all that apply from the 4 options below.

-
- Relationships with teammates and coaches (not feeling part of the team)
 - Pressure to win
 - Injury
 - Transitions in sport (leaving a sport, moving from competitive to recreational sport)

SUBMIT

CONTINUE

Recognizing when someone is struggling



Knowing the indicators of positive mental health is important, but knowing what a participant might look like if they are struggling is also important to supporting the participant.

Often, when someone is struggling with their mental health, you may notice a change in behaviour, appearance or interactions with others. For example:

- a participant who is usually cheerful may seem low energy and quiet

- a participant might tell you that they're having trouble sleeping or are constantly tired
- a participant who is usually friendly may start to be impatient and cranky
- a participant who typically shows commitment to sport may miss practices or arrive late
- a participant may suddenly be seeking more attention than they typically do
- a participant might have a sudden change in weight or start to pay less attention to their personal hygiene

When you observe these types of changes in behaviour for a period of two weeks or more, it may be time to assist the participant in accessing additional support. Use your judgment and don't hesitate to seek support if you are unsure.



Learning activity: Know the participant

For this next activity, you will apply what you have learned about knowing the participant by creating a profile of your environment, your sport and the participants you coach. You may also download the template below to help you with this activity.



Know the participant.pdf

460.5 KB



1

Using the Know the participant template provided, or a blank sheet of paper, think of either a specific participant or team that you coach.

If you are creating a profile for a team, you will consider each factor for the group. For example, “generally this team shares similar advanced abilities.”

2

Divide up your paper as shown in the PDF.

3

Starting in the top left box, describe any factors that are specific to your environment that might have an impact on participants’ mental health.

4

Next, in the top right box, describe any sport-specific factors that might have an impact on participants’ mental health.

5

In the bottom left box, describe any factors that are specific to the participant or team that might have an impact on participants’ mental health.

6

In the final box, identify shifts that you can make to optimize or minimize these factors depending on whether they are likely to positively or negatively impact participants' mental health.

Focus on factors over which you have some influence. For example, you cannot change the participant’s cultural background, but you may be able to influence other factors such as emotional intelligence or motivation for sport.



This tool can be used at any time with a participant or team to help you think through how to support participants by minimizing factors that may negatively impact their mental health. Knowing the whole person goes a long way to helping recognize when changes are happening that could reflect a change in mental health.



If you wish to extend the activity, you can complete it again for yourself. What are the most important factors about yourself that you bring to coaching?

CONTINUE

Creating a healthy training environment

A healthy training environment is one that prioritizes psychological safety and the mental health of all involved in sport. When participants feel safe, they're more likely to develop a sense of belonging, connection and inclusion (Gilbert, 2017).



Creating a healthy environment is a collective effort between you and the participants, but it starts with you. Examples of tools you can use to establish and maintain a safe environment include team rules, core values, expectations and routines. In the resources section, there is a PDF that outlines how each of these tools contributes to a safe and inclusive environment. It also explains how to develop and communicate each one, as well as the key elements of each tool. You can also download this PDF here.



Tools for a healthy training environment.pdf

388.2 KB





Positive coaching behaviours

As a coach, you set the tone for a healthy training environment through positive coaching behaviours. Your behaviours are how you communicate to participants what you expect of their behaviour in sport. Select the video below for some tips from Olympian Elizabeth Manley.

Mental Health
in Sport

Promoting coach and participant well-being

coach,ca | Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

The graphic features a white brain outline on a black background, with a white megaphone icon at the bottom right. The text 'Mental Health in Sport' is prominently displayed in the center-left. Below it, a dark grey bar contains the subtitle 'Promoting coach and participant well-being'. The bottom right corner features the 'coach,ca' logo and the full name of the Coaching Association of Canada in both English and French. The background is composed of various geometric shapes and stripes in shades of grey, red, and black.

Video transcript —

Hi everyone. Olympic silver medalist Elizabeth Manley here, As many people might remember, my – you know, my time at the Calgary Olympics, it really all came down to my mental health and my mental well-being. And as a coach, how can you support that? There are so many avenues now that are out there with all our organizations, and it's a must, it's a must, that you take advantage of them. Take the time to listen to your athlete and to be there for them. And if you feel that you're not in that place, of knowledge on what direction to do, then reach out to the resources that, you know, our sporting organizations have in place. I would never have won an Olympic medal if I didn't reach out for the help. I was scared to. I was scared to, but it was my coach and it was my family that really kind of gave me that kick in the butt, you know, to talk to somebody. Get that dialogue going, okay? Get the dialogue going and let your athletes know it's okay and they can get through this. So I'm wishing everyone the best, and let's not be afraid, let's not be afraid to reach out for help.

Select each item below to explore specific positive coaching behaviours that will help you set the tone and proactively support the mental health of your participants.

Using appropriate language —

Establish a common language around well-being. Use appropriate language and eliminate certain terminology from your vocabulary. For example, call line sprints “line sprints,” not “suicides.” Reflect on the language you use and consider how you can take care not to contribute to stigma.

Modelling self-care —

Lead by example by talking about your own mental health. Talk about your own self-care and practices that you have adopted, such as practising breathing or relaxation techniques (see the resources section), or debriefing after training.

Having check-ins —

Perform mental health check-ins by asking participants how they are doing or how their day was. Normalizing talking about mental health is an important element of building a healthy training environment and reducing stigma.

Making referrals —

Refer participants to appropriate resources when necessary, including for information purposes, so that sharing mental health resources becomes normalized.

Supporting autonomy —

Supporting autonomy includes explaining decisions (going beyond “because I said so”), including participants in goal-setting exercises, allowing participants to choose between exercises/drills and including participants in decision-making where appropriate.

Displaying helpful visuals —

Set up the training environment with visuals that show you support mental health. For example, hang posters with the Kids Help Phone number on them (see the resources section for downloadable tools).

Whenever you
need to talk,
we're open.

KidsHelpPhone.ca

Kids Help Phone 



Standing against negative behaviours

One of the most helpful and positive coaching behaviours is to stand against negative behaviours. This means actively addressing bullying, stigmatization and microaggressions.

Bullying is hurting, scaring and/or ignoring another person to intimidate, humiliate and/or isolate them. Some bullying behaviours are criminal offences (for example, threatening someone or pretending to be someone else).

Stigmatization is treating someone poorly due to fear or misunderstanding.

Microaggressions are seemingly innocent comments, questions and behaviours that reinforce discrimination based on stereotypes and that cause harm, regardless of intention.

The Coaching Association of Canada provides other opportunities to learn more about positive coaching behaviours and healthy relationship modelling. Visit Support Through Sport on the coach.ca website for more information. Note that this link will open in a new tab.

CONTINUE

Half-time

You have completed much of this module at this point. Let's take a short break to try a visual or audio breathing exercise.

Visual breathing exercise

1

In the image below, start by looking at the whistle. Follow the red line with your eyes while taking a deep breath. This should take about 4 seconds.

2

As the line darkens to black, hold your breath while continuing to trace the dark part of the line for another 4 seconds.



Breathe out while tracing the rest of the orange line for 4 seconds.

4

Repeat 3 to 5 times.

Breathing exercises (or **controlled breathing**) have been linked to reducing stress and helping us to centre ourselves through relaxation. Taking a moment to relax and reflect can help to increase our well-being (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual/cultural).



You can download this visual breathing exercise below.



Breathing exercise.pdf

427.1 KB



Audio breathing exercise

i **Tip:** When you're ready, play the audio that follows the list of instructions below. It will begin with a whistle, indicating that you should begin. If you are navigating this module with a keyboard, you can play and pause the audio using the spacebar or Enter key.

- 1 Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds.
- 2 Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- 3 Exhale slowly for 4 seconds.
- 4 Repeat as many times as you like.

▶ ● ————— 00:12

CONTINUE



Learning activity: Scenario

Let's take a few minutes to work through some examples of positive coaching behaviours and how listening and referring can be put into action.

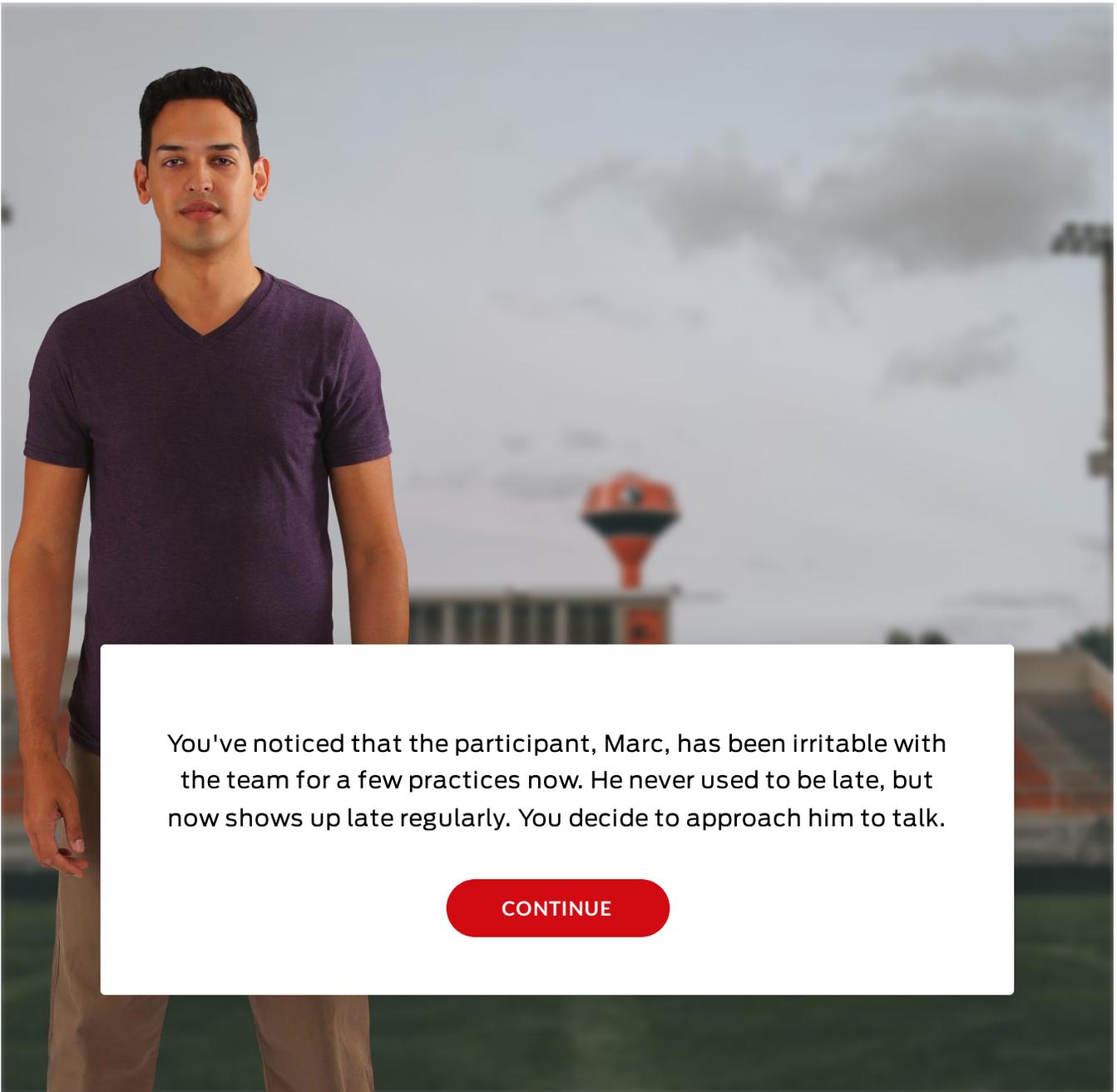
i Tip: Below is a scenario in which you are a coach catching up with a participant on a break from training. As you work through the scenario, you will receive feedback on the choices you make while interacting with the participant, Marc, whose pronouns are he/him.

To begin, select the Continue button. You will see Marc's speech and choose the most appropriate response by selecting the speech bubbles below.

Keyboard instructions

- On text content, use the Tab key to select the Continue or Start Over button, then press the spacebar or Enter.
- On dialogue content, use the Tab key to select responses and the Continue or Try Again button, then press the spacebar or Enter.





You've noticed that the participant, Marc, has been irritable with the team for a few practices now. He never used to be late, but now shows up late regularly. You decide to approach him to talk.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 1

Continue → Next Slide



What's up, Coach?

1

Hey Marc, can I have a few minutes of your time at the lunch table with everyone else?

2

Hey Marc, let's take a walk around the field so we can talk for a few minutes.

3

Hey Marc, do you mind stepping into the office with me so that we can talk for a few minutes?

Scene 1 Slide 2

0 → Scene 1 Slide 3

1 → Scene 1 Slide 5

2 → Scene 1 Slide 4

Try Again

It would be better to find a place that has some privacy (but still respects the Rule of Two) and is comfortable.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 3

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 2

Try Again

Although this option is private, it does not adhere to the Rule of Two and is therefore inappropriate.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 4

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 2

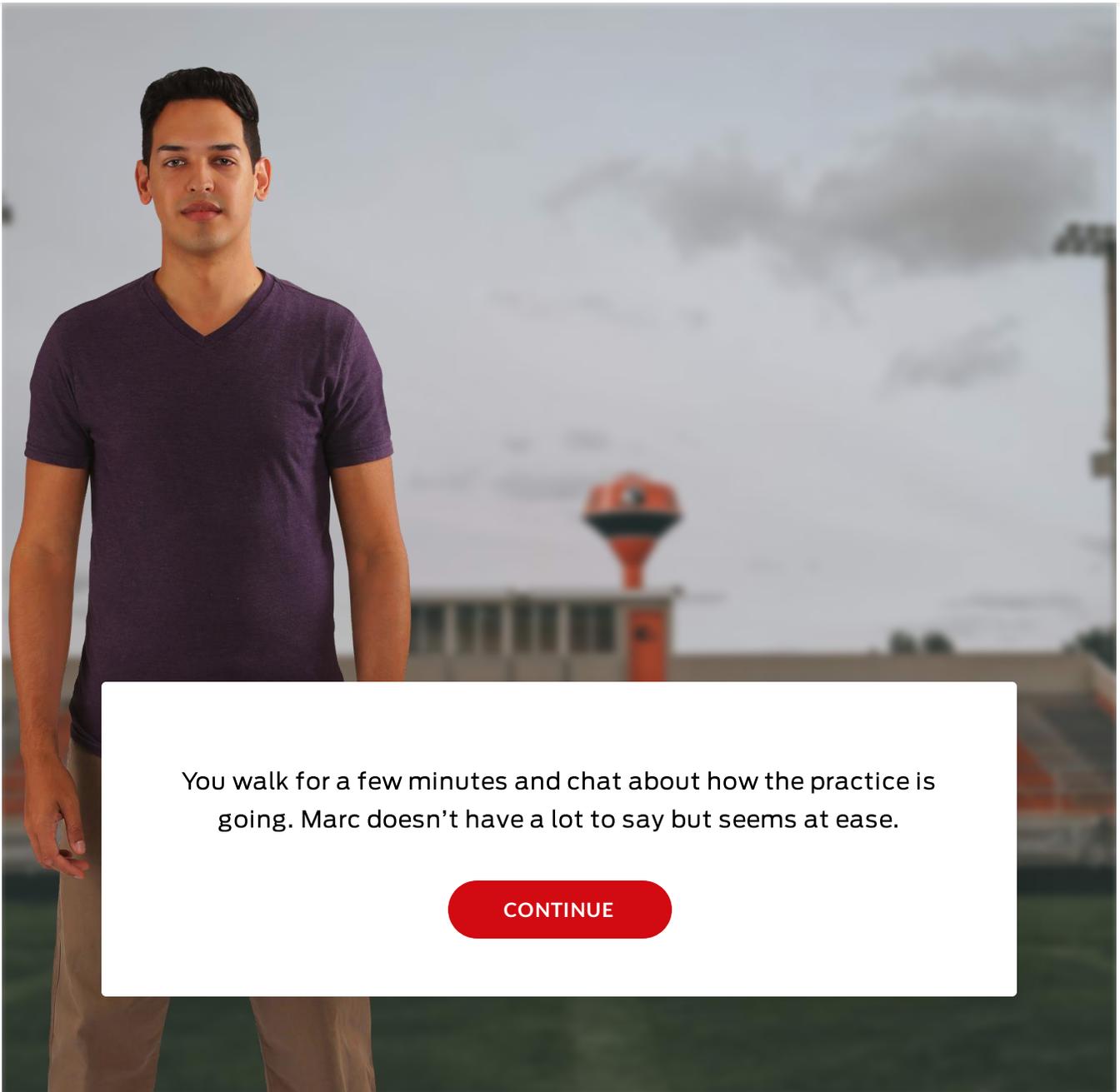
Nice Work

This is a good option. You will have some privacy but still respect the Rule of Two, as you and Marc will remain visible to everyone around.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 5

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 6



You walk for a few minutes and chat about how the practice is going. Marc doesn't have a lot to say but seems at ease.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 6

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 7



What did you want to talk about? I'd like to get back to lunch.

1

Honestly? You've been showing up late and that's pretty disrespectful to all of us. What gives?

2

It seems like you're having a tough time. I'm worried about you. Has something changed?

Scene 1 Slide 7

0 → Scene 1 Slide 8

1 → Scene 1 Slide 9

Try Again

This was aggressive, full of judgment, and didn't show any empathy for what Marc is experiencing.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 8

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 7

Nice Work

Good job in expressing concern for Marc without judgment. This shows him that you care for his well-being.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 9

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 10



I get that you care, Coach, I just feel like I have to carry all of this on my own.

1

That's really tough. I've noticed you're a little on edge with us lately and not always with us when we start. What feels harder about things?

2

Well, you've been screwing over the team. You know they have to work harder when you show up late? Let me tell you why this sucks...

Scene 1 Slide 10

0 → Scene 1 Slide 12

1 → Scene 1 Slide 11

Try Again

This blaming doesn't help Marc to open up. This should be more about listening than lecturing.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 11

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 10

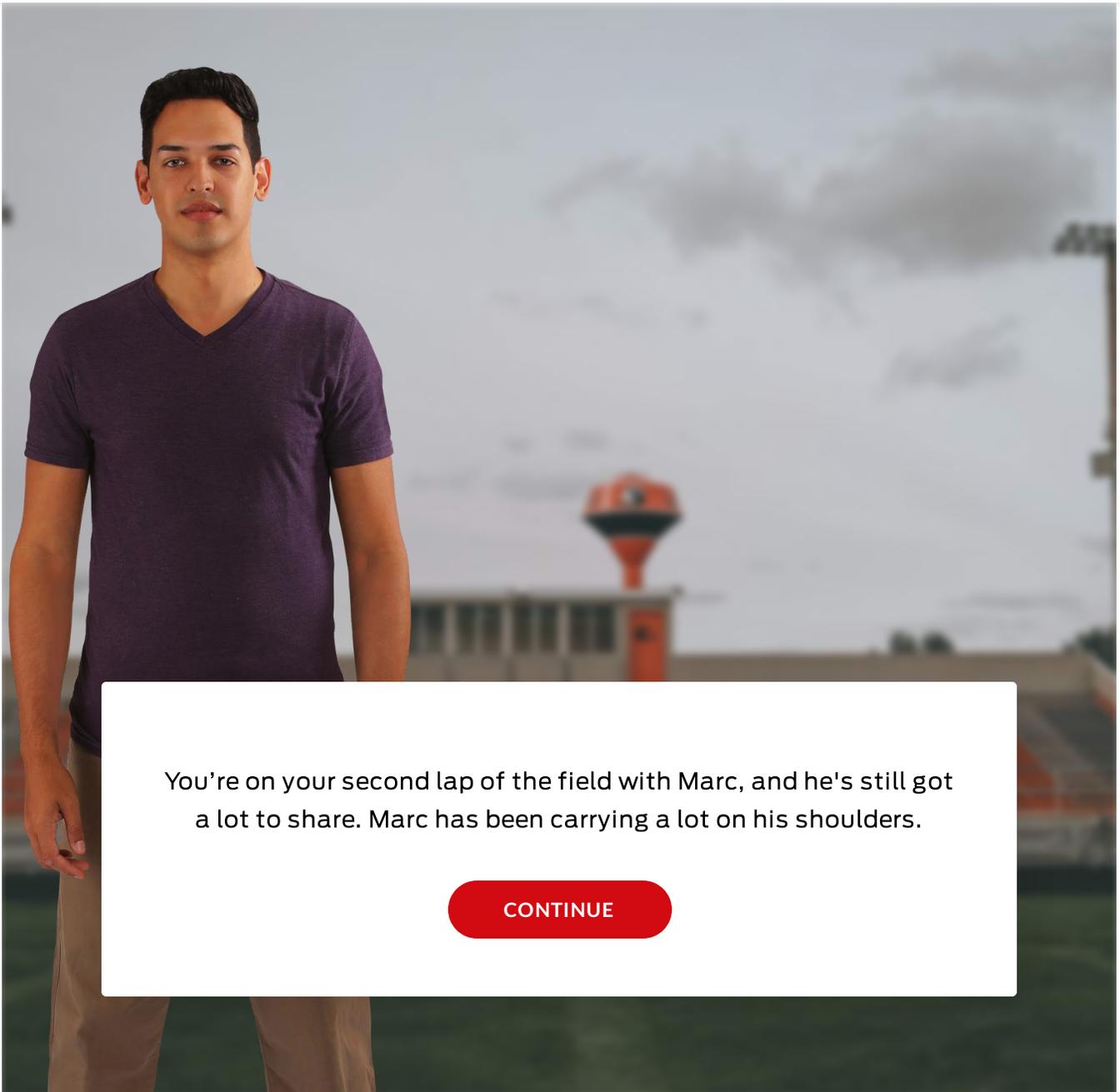
Nice Work

It's good to share what you've noticed. Now it's time to listen.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 12

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 13



You're on your second lap of the field with Marc, and he's still got a lot to share. Marc has been carrying a lot on his shoulders.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 13

Continue → Next Slide



I don't know, Coach, I feel like I've unloaded a lot on you here.

1

You have. I'm not sure why you are trying to make your problems my problems. There's nothing I can do here.

2

It must be hard to open up like this. Thank you for trusting me.

Scene 1 Slide 14

0 → Scene 1 Slide 16

1 → Scene 1 Slide 15

Nice Work

Thanking Marc for trusting you is a positive step toward building a relationship.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 15

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 17

Try Again

Blaming won't help Marc, and you don't have a responsibility to take on his problems.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 16

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 14



So, what do I do? I feel like I can't do this anymore on my own.

1

Grow up. If you're going away to school, you're going to have to figure this stuff out on your own from now on.

2

Grades and work are your responsibility, and I can't take those on. What I can do for you is get you some help...

Scene 1 Slide 17

0 → Scene 1 Slide 18

1 → Scene 1 Slide 19

Try Again

Isolating and condescending won't help Marc in this situation.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 18

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 17

Nice Work

It's important to be clear about your limitations, but still find supports that can help Marc.

CONTINUE

Scene 1 Slide 19

Continue → Scene 1 Slide 20



It feels like a weight off my chest. Thanks for taking your lunch to check in.

1

No worries. I'm glad we could talk. Let's check in in a couple of weeks and see how it's going.

Scene 1 Slide 20

0 → Next Slide

Well Done

This helps Marc know that you're around and invested in his well-being.

START OVER



Scene 1 Slide 21

Continue → End of Scenario

CONTINUE

Marc's scenario highlighted a number of tips to help you in conversations about mental health. They are:

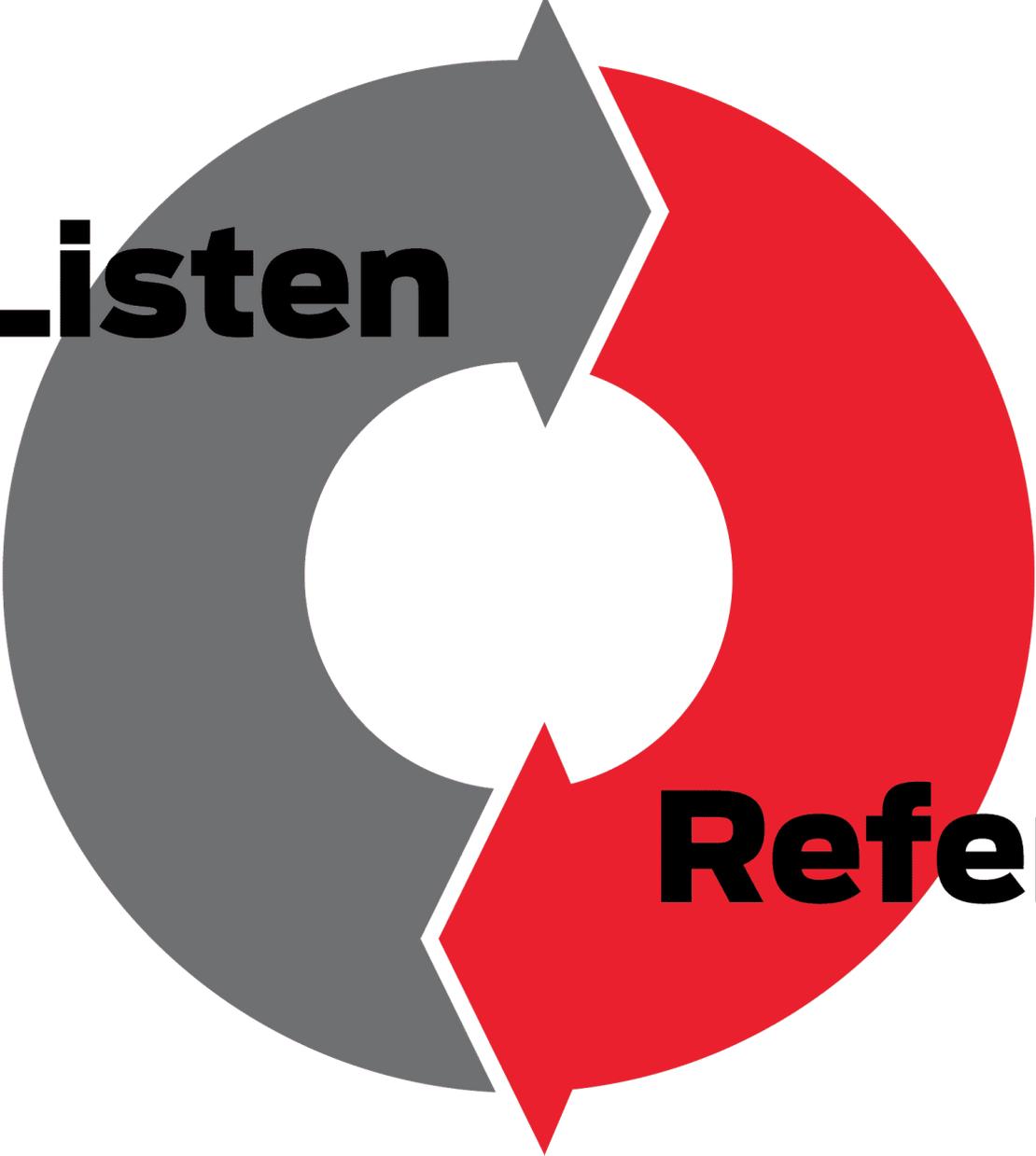
- choose a place that has some privacy and is comfortable, while adhering to the Rule of Two
- emphasize concern for the participant's well-being
- communicate changes you observed without judgment, then try to do more listening than talking
- thank the participant for speaking with you
- be transparent about your own limits and the next steps you will take
- refer to appropriate resources
- continue to check in with the participant on a regular basis

The [NCCP Managing Conflict](#) and [NCCP Coaching and Leading Effectively](#) modules include excellent resources on speaking and listening effectively.



Suicide or self-harm

In some cases, you may recognize and become concerned that a person may harm themselves or others. In this case, follow the same steps: **listen** and **refer**.



Listen

Refer

Listen

Step 1

Have a conversation.

Step 2

Be non-judgmental and direct. For example, you could say, "I'm concerned because [name the behaviour/sign you've noticed]. Do you feel like hurting yourself today?"

Step 3

Validate their feelings (for example, "It's okay that you feel this way.")

Step 4

If you're comfortable, find out if the participant has a plan to harm themselves and intends to act on it.

This would trigger emergency action such as a phone call to 9-1-1 or a trip to the emergency room.

Step 5

If the participant is under 18, let them know that you're worried about their safety and need to let their parents or guardians know what's going on.

If they push back, explain that you would never hide a torn muscle from the participant's parents, and that the feelings they are having are another kind of injury.

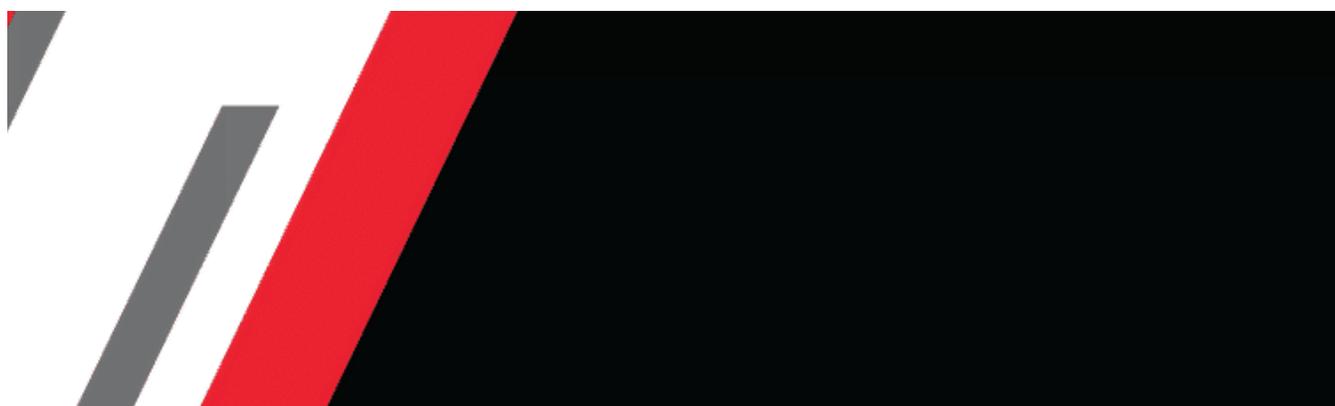
Refer

In some cases, such as those where there is a plan for harm, the refer step is very concrete: **call 9-1-1.**

In other cases, you may refer to the Canadian Sport Psychology Association, the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport or Kids Help Phone.

In all cases when the participant is under 18, **parents or guardians** should be informed.

If you want to increase your comfort in having these difficult conversations, consider taking extra training in mental health first aid.



CONTINUE

Mental health action plan

The mental health action plan is a tool that is designed for use with a participant. You can download the plan below.



Mental health action plan.pdf

511.1 KB



Part of the mental health action plan is understanding what it looks like when you are in the comfort zone (green), the challenge zone (yellow), or the overwhelmed zone (red).

The zones represent physical, emotional and psychological states that we experience as we move through life. We may feel comfortable (green zone), challenged (yellow zone), or at a point where we need to stop, take a step back and re-evaluate (red zone).

As participants, we are generally good at noticing the physical signals that indicate we are moving through these different zones during training and competition (for example, feeling out of breath, lactic acid build-up, dizziness), and we are well-trained in how to respond.

However, we're generally not as skilled at recognizing and labelling the behaviours, thoughts and emotions we experience as we move through our comfort, challenge and stop zones throughout our daily lives and in sport.

Often, we have been socialized to dismiss pain, push through discomfort, and suppress our emotional reactions (be stoic). But being able to recognize when you're not feeling like yourself is an important skill and can prevent distress if you intervene early.



Continued self-awareness is the foundation of mental health maintenance. In order to intervene when our mental health is declining, we first need to notice the signals.



Learning activity: Mental health action plan

Complete the chart in the mental health action plan for yourself. In this chart, you will identify some of the behaviours, thoughts and feelings (signals) that correspond to your mental health zones.



Your signals are likely very different from others' signals because many factors influence how we move through our day-to-day lives.



Reflection

Now that you have completed a mental health action plan, consider these questions:

- 1 In completing the mental health action plan for yourself, what did you learn about your own self-awareness?
- 2 How would you approach a participant to develop a mental health action plan?
- 3 What point in the season is most appropriate?

In this section, we have taken a look at your role as a coach in supporting mental health in participants. One of the most important things you can do as a coach is care for yourself and model positive behaviours. The next section will explore the importance of self-care.

[CONTINUE](#)

The importance of self-care



Self-care is the practice of taking an active role in preserving or improving one's health and well-being through lifestyle design and daily choices.

Self-care extends beyond your basic physical needs. You need to consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial and academic well-being. Throughout the module we have asked you to consider how these ideas apply to your own self-care. These next activities will describe specific actions that you can take to prioritize your own mental health.

Why engage in self-care?

Self-care can help you to:

- avoid burnout
- create a more positive environment
- model positive behaviours

In the video below, created in partnership with the Black Canadian Coaches Association, you'll hear from a number of people about why they think self-care is important and how they practice it.



Video transcript —

**Godi Jibi,
Coach**

I think that it's vital for both participants as well as coaches to be in self-care and to actually perform self-care every day.

**Alexander McKenzie,
Student**

taking time for yourself to take care of yourself is crucial.

**Payton Shank,
Athlete & Coach**

It is extremely important for participants and coaches to engage in self-care because it ensures that they are taking care of, and prioritizing not only their physical health, but their mental and emotional health as well.

**Marian Agyei-Gyamera,
Sport Administrator**

Self-care can be as simple as going for a walk, working out, or even going to grab a coffee or smoothie with a few of your friends.

**Aliyah Fraser,
Athlete**

Personally, I like to engage in self-care by taking a nap, going out with my friends, getting dinner or just spending time with family that allows me to recharge and just kind of calm down.

**Payton Shank,
Athlete & Coach**

some things that I do to be sure that I'm taking care of my own mental health are journaling, meditation, gentle and fun exercise that doesn't push me past my limits and knowing my limits, knowing when to take a break, take a day off, or when to say no to adding more on to my plate.

**Marian Agyei-Gyamera,
Sport Administrator**

Whether you're a coach, sport leader or even an athlete, self-care should be a priority. We can only be best for others when we're best for ourselves.

CONTINUE

Coping strategies



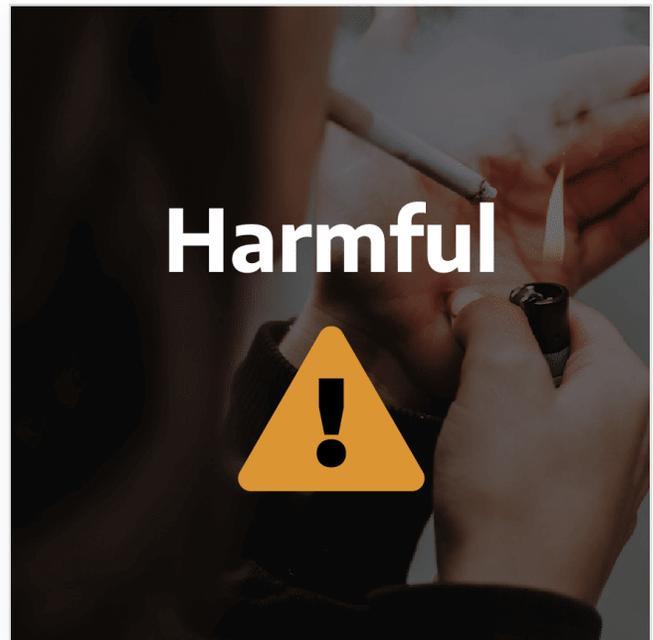
Coping strategies help you to manage and minimize stress in your life. Some coping strategies, while they may distract us from stress temporarily, will ultimately create new strains on your mental health. These are referred to as harmful coping strategies. Helpful coping strategies support you and reduce stress by keeping you in the moment.

i **Tip:** Below are a mix of harmful and helpful coping strategies. Can you pick out the 8 helpful strategies? Flip the card over to see if you are correct.

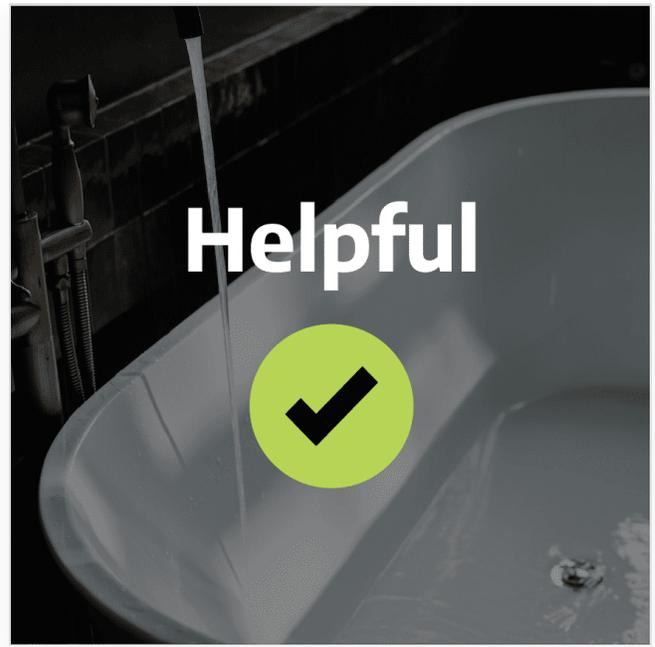
Keyboard instructions

- Use Tab and Shift+Tab to select a card.
- Press Enter or the spacebar to flip the selected card.

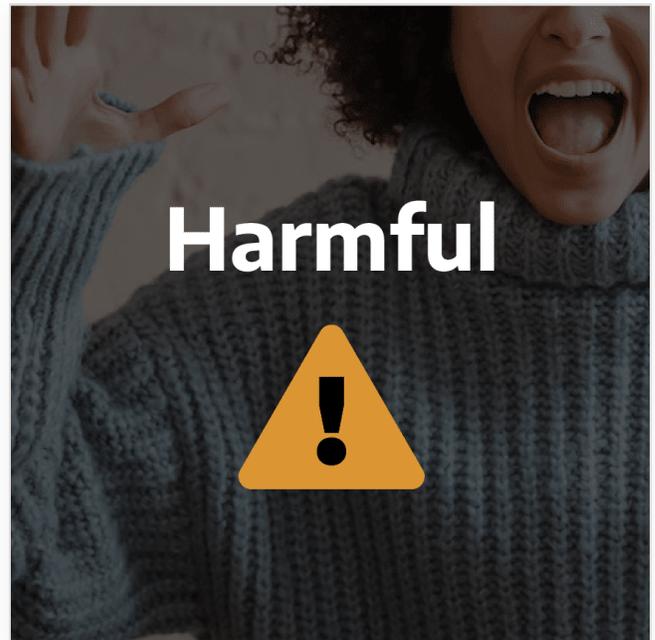
Using alcohol or drugs, or
smoking



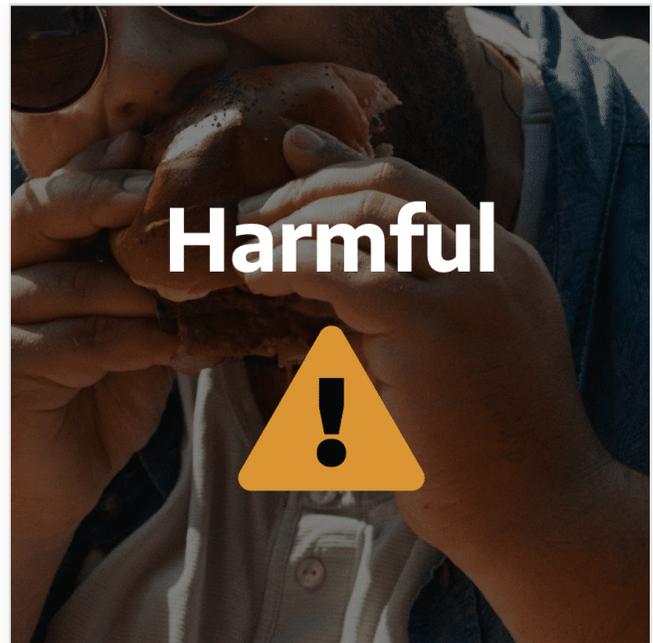
Taking a bath



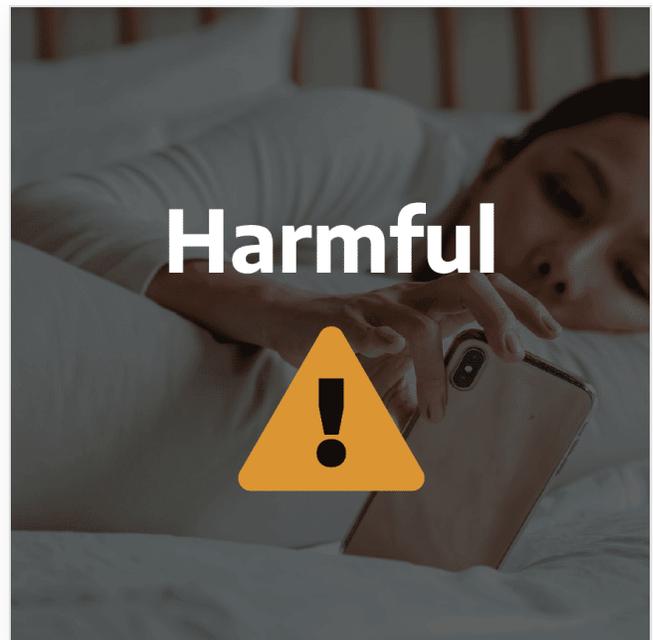
Yelling/acting aggressively



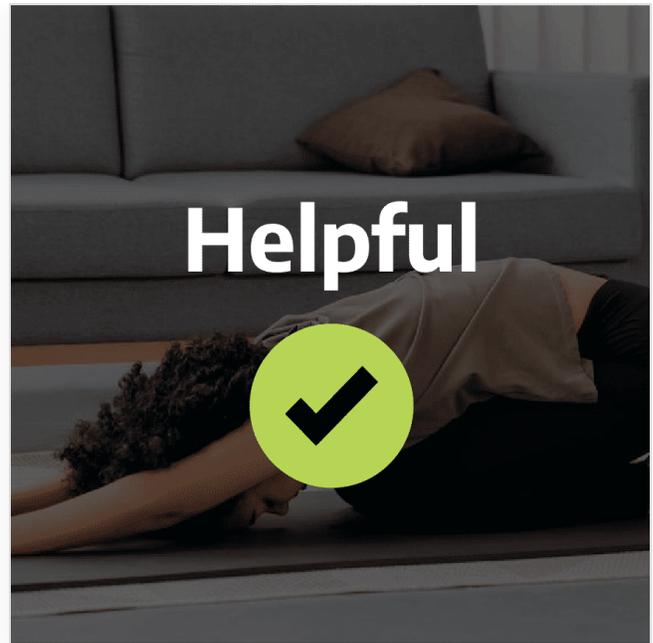
Overeating or skipping meals



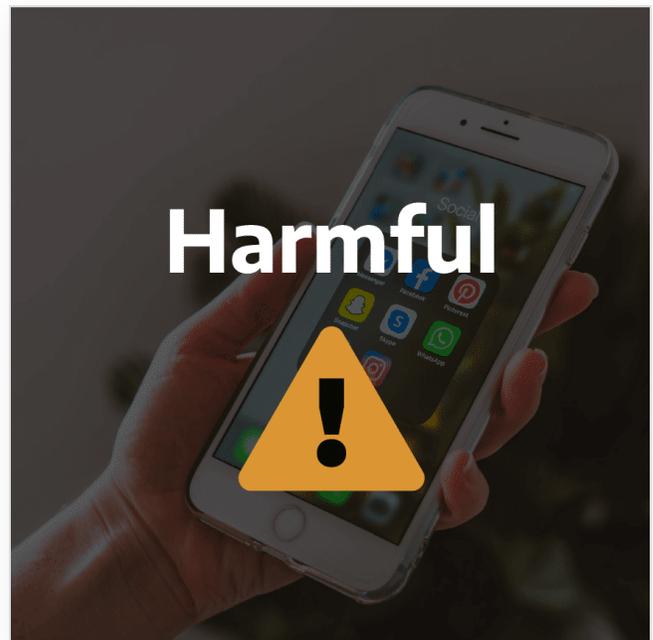
Procrastinating



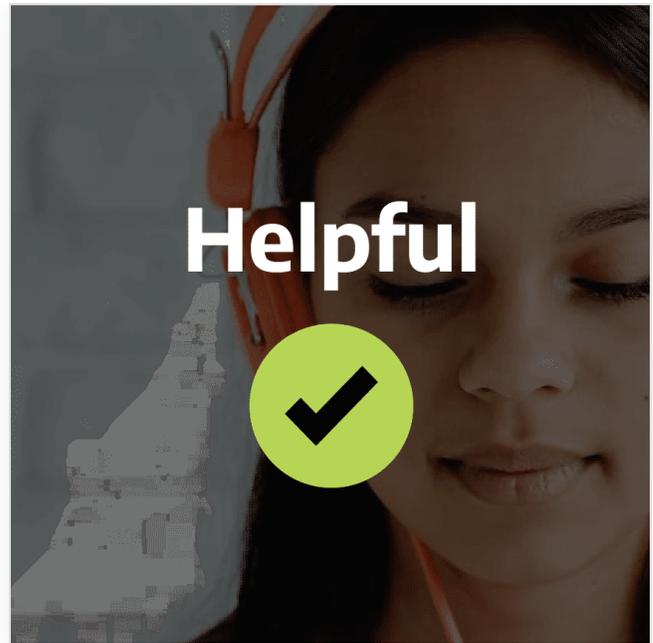
Stretching



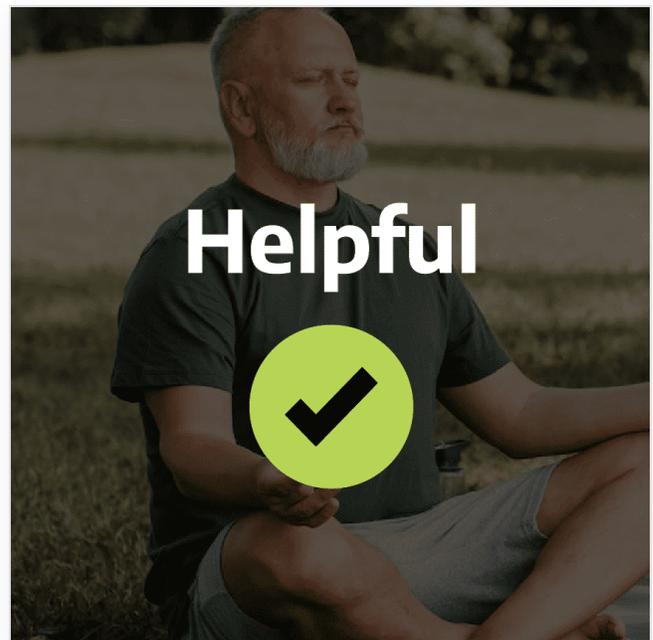
Scrolling through social media



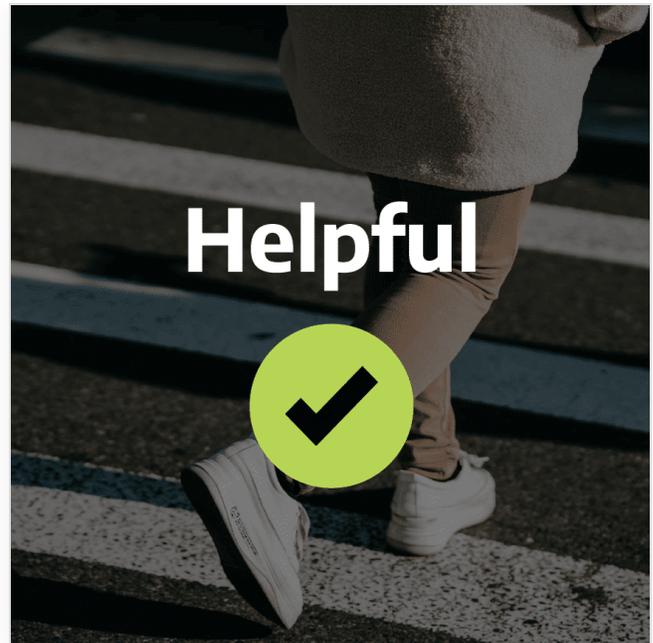
Listening to music



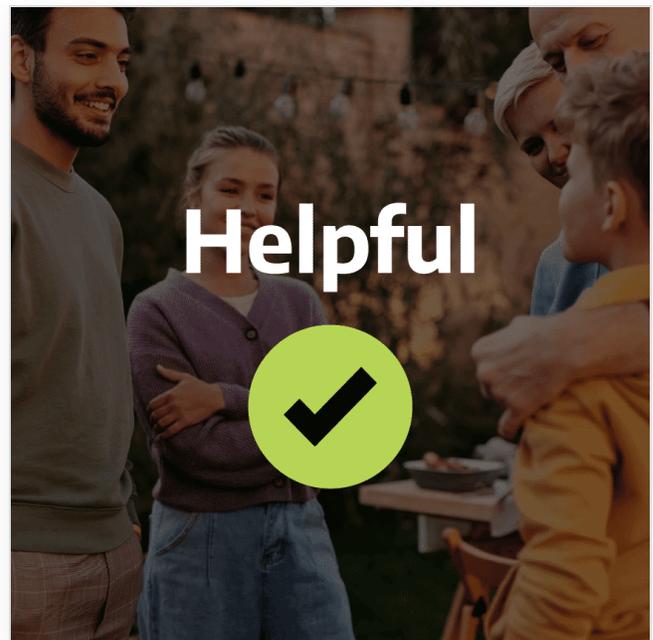
Deep breathing (recall the activity earlier in this module)



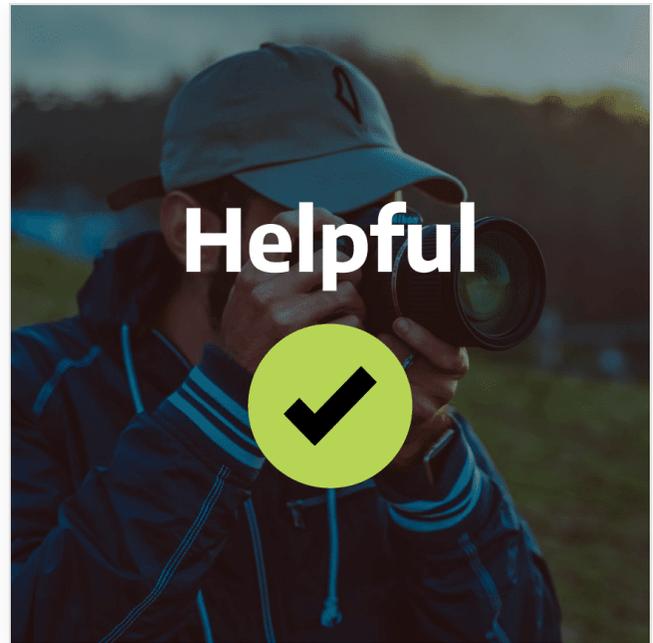
Going for a walk



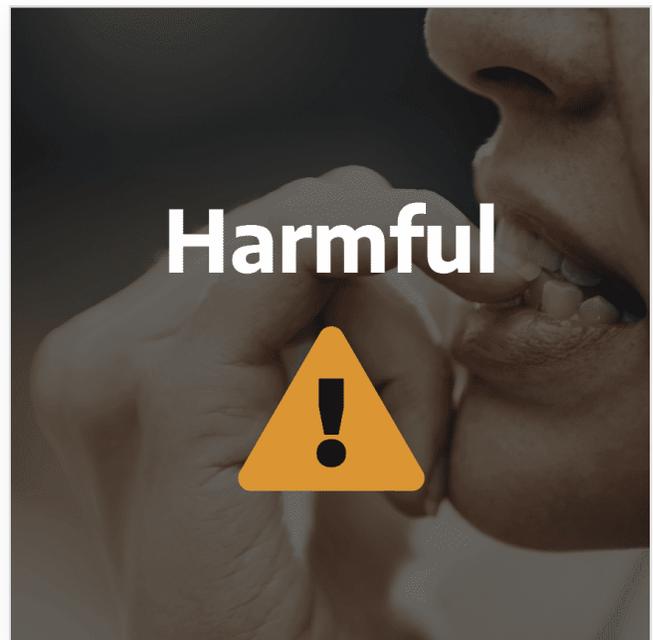
Socializing with friends



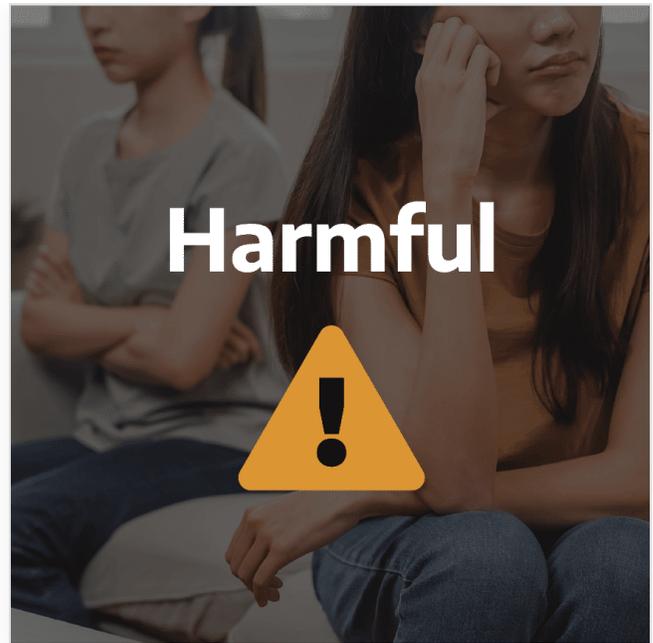
Engaging in a hobby



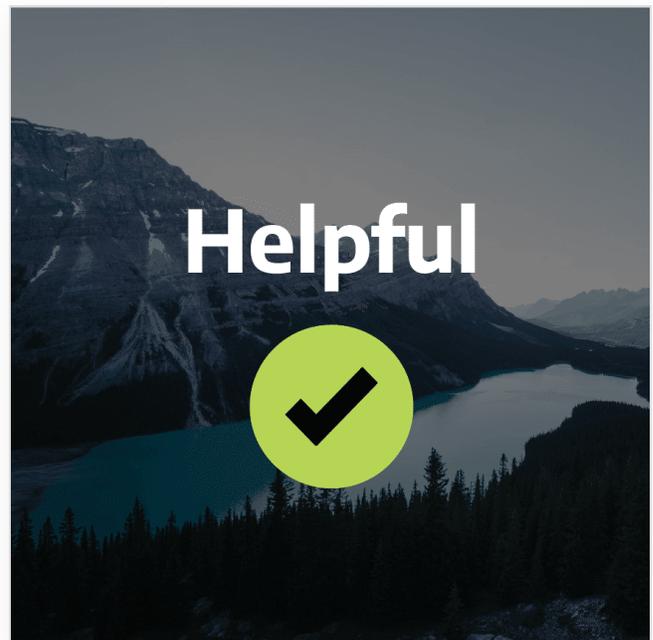
Biting fingernails



Avoiding the situation or person



Being in nature



Did you find all 8 helpful strategies?

CONTINUE

Self-care plan

The self-care plan is a structured template to help you to examine your own coping strategies, consider your daily and emergency self-care, and identify your go-to person. This walk-through will prepare you to complete the self-care plan on your own.

Note that this is not a replacement for mental health support. If you think you may need to speak to a mental health professional, don't wait.

Section 1

Coping strategies

Examining your own habits is an important first step in developing a self-care plan.

- How do you typically deal with life's demands?
- Can you identify when you need to take a break?
- When faced with challenges, we can use either helpful coping strategies or harmful coping strategies. Which strategies do you use?

Recall the helpful and harmful coping strategies you looked at in the previous activity.

Section 2

Daily self-care

We are all faced with unique challenges, and no two people have the same self-care needs. Take a moment to consider what you value and need in your everyday life and what you value and need in the event of a crisis. Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs. Consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social and financial well-being.

In this section, you will identify strategies you use and strategies you might want to try for daily self-care within the domains of well-being (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual/cultural).

Section 3

Emergency self-care

When you are faced with a crisis, you likely won't have time to develop a coping strategy. Take time to create a plan in advance so it's there when you need it. In this section, you will explore helpful strategies to identify your unique self-care needs during times of distress.

Section 4

My go-to person

Your go-to person is that one person that you can go to at a moment's notice with anything. Consider letting your go-to person know that they are a safe haven for you. Communicate to them how you're likely to get in touch (text, call) and what you'll say if you are in need of support ("Do you want to go for a walk?", "Could we have dinner this week?" or any code word or phrase you decide on).

Once you've created your self-care plan, look at it regularly. It takes time to form good habits. Add self-care time to your calendar the same way you prioritize other things. Make a commitment to yourself to practise your self-care routine as often as possible. You're worth it!



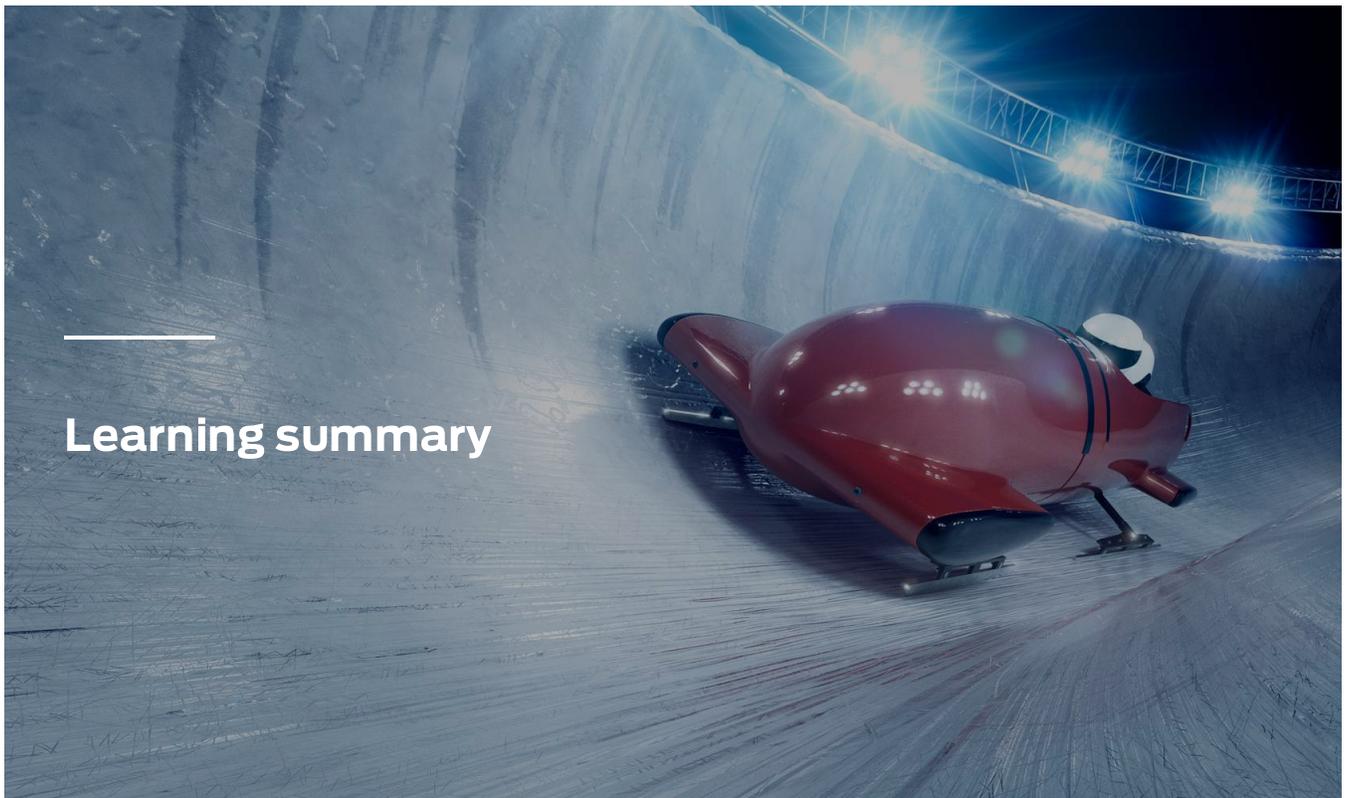
Learning activity: Self-care plan

Download and complete a self-care plan for yourself. This will be kept only for you, so dig deep and explore options for your own self-care.

 **Self-care plan.pdf**
378.1 KB 

CONTINUE

Conclusion



We have one final video message for you:

Mental Health *in Sport*

Promoting coach and
participant well-being



Video transcript

Hi, I'm Luke Richardson, former NHL player and current NHL assistant coach. Thank you for completing this module. As a coach, you play an important role in reducing the stigma in mental health and supporting the athletes that you coach.



In this module, you learned about the following:

- the foundations of mental health, including the domains of **well-being** and **mental illness**
- your role as a coach in supporting participants' mental health through building a **healthy training environment** and understanding the factors that have an impact on mental health
- what to do when someone is struggling with mental health: **recognize, listen,** and **refer**
- how to develop a **self-care plan** to prioritize and value your own mental health

You are now ready to apply the knowledge you gained from this module to your particular coaching context.

For further development, visit coach.ca by selecting the buttons here to see either sport-specific modules or multi-sport modules.

SPORT-SPECIFIC

MULTI-SPORT



Thank you for taking the Mental Health in Sport module. We wish you great success and enjoyment in your coaching activities!

Acknowledgements

Task force

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Photo credits

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Video

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- Black Canadian Coaches Association

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References

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Canada

You've completed this module.

Select the button to exit the module.

EXIT MODULE

Tools



All of the PDF tools mentioned in the course are available to download below.



Breathing exercise.pdf

427.1 KB





Know the participant.pdf

460.5 KB



Mental health action plan.pdf

511.1 KB



Self-care plan.pdf

378.1 KB



Tools for a healthy training environment.pdf

388.2 KB



Links



A variety of resources are listed below. Select any resource to learn more about it, including contact information.

Kids Help Phone —

Call 1-800-668-6868

Text CONNECT to 686868

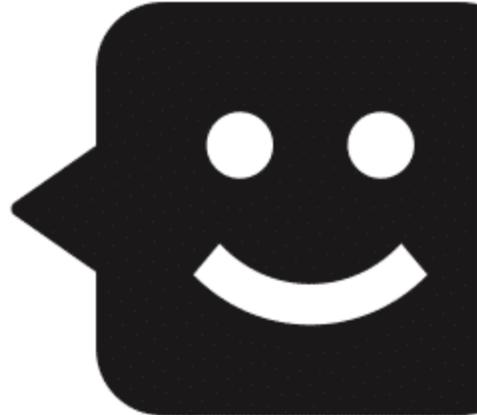
[Kid's Help Phone chat services](#) (6 pm to 2 am EST)

[Kid's Help Phone downloadable resources](#)

**Whenever you
need to talk,
we're open.**

KidsHelpPhone.ca

Kids Help Phone 



Canadian Sport Helpline —

A national toll-free helpline offering assistance to victims or witnesses of harassment, abuse or discrimination in sport.

[Canadian Sport Helpline website](#)

Email info@abuse-free-sport.ca

Call or text 1-888-83SPORT (1-888-837-7678)

Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (CCMHS) —

Provides sport-informed mental health care (not a crisis centre).

[CCMS website](#)

Youthspace.ca —

Offers online crisis and emotional support chat and NEED2 suicide prevention, education and support.

Youth text (6 pm to 12 am PT): 778-783-0177

[Youthspace.ca youth chat](#) (6 pm to 12 am PT)

Crisis Services Canada —

Offers suicide prevention services.

Call toll-free (24/7): 1-833-456-4566

Text (4 pm to 12 am ET): 45645

Black Mental Health Canada —

[Black Mental Health Canada](#) exists to provide access to affordable mental health services and education for the Black community.

The Lifeline App —

The [Lifeline Canada Foundation](#) is dedicated to positive mental health and suicide prevention.

- Direct access to phone, online chat, text and email crisis services

- E-counselling, self-management tools, access to crisis centres across Canada
- Available for iPhone and Android users

Togetherall —

[Togetherall](#) is an online service providing access to people with anxiety, depression, and common mental health issues. The anonymous peer support community is accessible anytime, anywhere.

Wellness Together Canada —

[Wellness Together Canada](#) supports Canadians on their mental health and wellness journey.

9-1-1 —

Emergency dispatch for situations where an individual's safety is in danger.

Trans Lifeline —

[Trans Lifeline](#) offers support to trans people in crisis – for the trans community, by the trans community.

Call 1-877-330-6366

Hope for Wellness Help Line —

Hope for Wellness Helpline offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.
Call 1-855-242-3310

[Hope for Wellness online chat](#)

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line —

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former Residential School students to access emotional and crisis referral services.
Call 1-866-925-4419

Suicide Prevention Line for Quebec residents (24/7) —

Suicide Prevention Line for Quebec provides qualified help to assist and answer questions.

Call 1-866-APPELLE

Healthy Living —

[Healthy Living](#) supports your physical, mental and spiritual health through healthy eating, physical activity and more.

Student-Athlete Mental Health Initiative —

The [Student-Athlete Mental Health Initiative](#) is a charitable organization dedicated to promoting wellness and mental health and supporting student-athletes who may suffer from a mental health problem or illness. Not a crisis centre.

Mental Health Commission of Canada —

The [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians.