



# Supporting Youth Through Anxious Moments

## Managing Athlete Stress & Anxiety

Competing always leads to some stress. And that can be good — a little stress helps the body face a challenge.

But too much stress can turn into anxiety and worry, which takes the fun out of a sport and makes it hard to perform.

### Common stressors for athletes:

- Pressure to perform
- Competition
- Injury
- Teammate & peer relationships
- Coach relationships
- Academics
- Time management with other commitments

As a coach, there are many things you can do to help manage these moments so your athletes can think more clearly, focus, perform better and ultimately have more fun!

## How a Coach Can Help:

Avoid telling someone to relax. It will not help them to actually relax. Remember: It's not an on-off switch.

Let them know anxiety is normal and take time to actively listen and understand their fears and worries.

- Be reassuring and encouraging as they face a fear or anxious moments.

Resist the urge to have them avoid the situation that is causing anxiety.

- When anxious thoughts and the situations causing them are ignored, they usually manifest themselves more persistently later on.
- It's much more effective to teach your athletes techniques and tools for confronting the root cause and managing their feelings.

Reflect on your own anxiety and how you cope.

- Role modelling positive mental health practices lets your athletes know that it is something you prioritize and they should as well.

Know when to step aside

- If the anxiety seems excessive or is worsening, connect your athletes with professional help.

## Relaxation Techniques for Managing Anxiety

Relaxing releases endorphins, which are hormones that help us feel good.

- **Breath Deeply -**  
Inhale for a count of 3, exhale for 4. Repeat.  
The goal is to slow everything down.
- **Let it out -**  
Sometimes just talking it out with a trusted coach can be enough.
- **Crank up the music.**
- **Laugh -**  
it's true that sometimes laughter is the best medicine.
- **Spend time with pets/animals.**

## References & Resources

[AnxietyCanada.com](https://www.anxietycanada.com)

[AboutKidsHealth.ca](https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca)

[KidsHelpPhone.ca](https://www.kidshelpline.ca)

