



MENTAL HEALTH

This booklet will give you a general understanding of the topic of mental health and related aspects.
ARE YOU READY TO TALK?



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health includes your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how you think, feel and act. It also helps determine how you handle stress, relate to others and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

WELLBEING

Wellbeing can be defined as the balance point between a person's resources and the challenges they face. When there is an imbalance and the challenge is greater than the resources, the wellbeing of a person will decrease. When the resources are greater than the challenges, a person can have increased feelings of wellbeing.

Ensuring that players are looking after their overall wellbeing is vital for dealing with the ups and downs of being a football player.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Mental health problems relate to adverse/abnormal thoughts, feelings, moods and/or behaviour that might lead to functional (daily life, work, sport) problems.

ADVERSE/ABNORMAL THOUGHTS

Examples include: excessive self-criticism, low self-esteem, pessimism, hopelessness and problems with concentration, focus or memory.

ADVERSE/ABNORMAL EMOTIONS

Examples include: irritability, anger, mood swings, sadness, extreme disappointment that you just cannot shake off, depression, loneliness, emptiness, lack of passion and lack of motivation.

ADVERSE/ABNORMAL BEHAVIOURS

Aggression, withdrawal from others, not going out as much, being a lot quieter than usual and an unexpected drop of performance are some examples.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Examples are feelings of distress, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, and alcohol abuse. Among professional footballers, the prevalence of mental health problems ranges from 9% for adverse alcohol use to 38% for anxiety/depression. The majority of professional footballers mention that mental health problems influence their football performances negatively (e.g. concentration, reaction time, coordination) while adequate support is lacking.



DISTRESS

A state of emotional stress associated with unpleasant feelings or emotions that impact your level of functioning.

ANXIETY

A feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

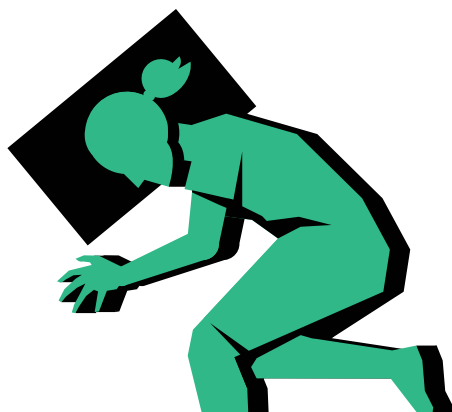


DEPRESSION

A mental health disorder characterised by a persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities, causing significant problems in daily life.

SLEEP DISTURBANCES

Sleep disorders involve issues with the quality, timing and amount of sleep, which cause problems with functioning during daytime.



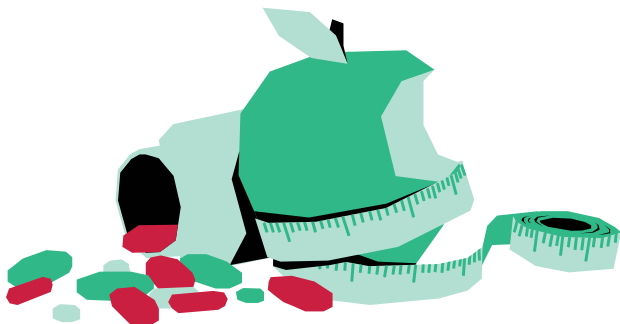
ALCOHOL ABUSE

Alcohol misuse describes alcohol consumption that puts individuals at an increased risk of adverse health and social consequences. It is defined as excess daily consumption, or excess total consumption, or both. Moreover, misuse is also defined as behaviour which includes risky (excessive) alcohol use, alcohol abuse, or alcohol dependence.



DISORDERED EATING

Disordered eating is a term used for unhealthy eating behaviours and worries about body image. Some of the most common types of disordered eating are restrictive eating, self-induced vomiting, binge eating, and laxative abuse.



TOOLKIT ELEMENTS

STRESS

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. Stress can be a result of changes in the environment, in the body or mind. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental and emotional responses. Also, positive life changes such as a new contract, winning a major title or the birth of a child can produce stress. Stress is a normal part of life.

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive as it keeps a person alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger if needed. Stress becomes

negative when it accumulates and not being coped with adequately. For instance, when facing continuous challenges without relief or relaxation in between, or when exposed to

major stressors, stress might lead to mental health problems.



STRESSORS

A stressor is any event or experience that causes stress in an individual. Some common stressors include the death of a loved one, a divorce or the end of a relationship, a change in financial status or relocation (i.e. change of residence). Some common football related stressors include a severe injury, performance pressures and a strained relationship with coach or teammates.



EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel. Essentially, it involves imagining yourself in someone else's position in order to feel how they must be feeling.



STIGMA

Stigma is defined as the mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person. For example, regarding mental health, there is a stigma that stops people from seeking help. Also in sports, a stigma exists around mental health problems. This can create an environment in which players are not comfortable speaking about their emotions, feelings and thoughts.

STEREOTYPING

A stereotype is a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or category of people. Some stereotypes that are commonly experienced by professional players are: "Only weak people experience mental health problems", "I can handle the mental health symptoms myself and I don't need professional help", "Strong people do not experience mental health symptoms", "If I am successful, I cannot have mental health symptoms".



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO IDENTIFY MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

It is not easy to figure out whether a player has mental health problems. However, if you are able to spot them in the early stages, it can be very helpful for the person in need because an early intervention can prevent these mental health problems from getting worse.

Signs and symptoms do vary depending on the type of mental health problem and the individual dealing with it.

Common experiences and symptoms to be aware of are:

Sleep changes

Dramatic changes in sleep schedule such as lack of sleep or oversleeping.

Sudden significant tiredness or low energy.

Appetite changes

Strong appetite changes such as eating too much or too little.

Decline in personal care

Change in the degree of personal care such as lack of showering and shaving or bothering to look representative.

Difficulties with everyday tasks

Inability to cope with day-to-day activities.

Mood swings

Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions, rapid mood swings, sudden bursts of anger, hostility and violence.



Social withdrawal

Recent social withdrawal from friends or family such as not attending social gatherings or parties.

Loss of interest

No interest in hobbies or activities normally enjoyed.

Thinking problems

Problems with concentration, focus, memory, logical thinking or speech, for which the cause is unclear.

Unusual behaviour

Odd, uncharacteristic, peculiar behaviour compared to the person's usual way of acting.

Physical pain

Several unexplained physical problems, such as stomach pain, back pain, headaches.

Substance abuse

Sudden frequent and heightened use of alcohol and/or drugs.

If you notice a player experiencing these symptoms, remember to remain non-judgmental and allow them to tell their story. Please take note of the fact that resources are available. Also, encourage seeking help, e.g. from a mental health specialist.

If a player has suicidal thoughts or is thinking about self-harm, call the emergency service right away.





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