

Special Considerations for Student-Athletes

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During this uncertain time of change and global health crisis, it is important to help decrease the spread of COVID-19 and this has come with some unprecedented decisions. With the recent difficult announcement from the NCAA regarding cancelling winter and spring sport championships, it has led to a wide range of emotions and reactions all of which are valid. As student-athletes impacted by these decisions know that there is support and resources for you as well as continuing to lean on the relationships you have with your teams and coaches.

It is important to acknowledge that you may have a wide range of emotions during this time. Allowing yourself to experience and feel the range of emotions that may be present can help with the healing process. Some common reactions to the sudden ending of sport may include:

- Grief and loss
- Increased sadness, hurt and uncertainty about the future
- Increase anxiety and worry
- Loss of identity
- Anger
- Fear and social isolation
- Engaging in unhealthy coping strategies
- Frustration and disappointment
- Change of schedule

Who am I?

This is a question I frequently get when student-athletes are thinking about transitioning out of their sport, have an injury or an unexpected life event occurs. The identity as a student-athlete is one that is important and can be a core identity for a lot of student-athletes. For many it is finding ways to maintain their identity as an athlete outside of competition and for others it is working to embrace other aspects of their identities. Grieving the change in athletic identity is natural and can be difficult especially when unexpected. The shock of this change can lead to questioning of self and trying to gain a new understanding of who you are. It can be helpful during transitions and in times of change to gain support in ways in which you find helpful as well as do things that you enjoy when possible.

<http://www.ncaa.org/static/champion/when-the-playing-days-end/>

5 Tips to Stay Connected and Active

1. Call teammates

Calling teammates, friends and family is different than texting or using other forms of social media to connect. As social distancing is encouraged, calling friends and

teammates is a great way to stay connected and talk through different thoughts and emotions. Your teammates may be experiencing similar and/or different reactions and emotions and it can be helpful to not feel alone in everything you may be experiencing.

2. Keep an exercise routine

You are used to being active so try and be creative during this time of social distancing. Go for a run outside on a trail or find a fun workout video online. Keeping your body moving and active will help alleviate stress.

3. Energize your body

Daily routine activities like getting proper nutrition, sleeping and engaging in self-care are all good ways to help take care of yourself. You ask your body to do a lot for you each day so remember to fuel it!

4. Focus on the present

During this time of uncertainty, it is hard to focus on the present moment with all the “what ifs” of the future and past. So much disappointment related to what could have been. Increased anxiety, depression, uncertainty, fear and anger may all be present as so much has changed in a short period of time. After allowing yourself to reflect on your emotions and reactions, trying to engage in mindfulness exercises can help bring your attention to the present moment.

<http://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/selfguidedsupport.html>

5. Engage in hobbies or other interests

You will probably have more free time than you are normally accustomed to. Finding fun and productive ways to utilize the time you do have may help in feeling accomplished and setting new goals. This may be an opportunity to engage in some other activities you enjoy that you normally do not have as much time for.

It is important to have connection and support during this time. Continue to utilize your supportive relationships in your life. Know that if you are experiencing a variety of emotions that you are not alone! If you feel like it would be helpful to have additional support or someone further to talk to during this challenging time, please contact the Counseling Center. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us and call if you are interested in speaking with someone at 507-389-1455 (Monday through Friday 8-12 and 1-4:30).

Resources for Further Support & Information

<http://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/>

<http://www.mnsu.edu/counseling/coronavirus.html>

<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://theconversation.com/7-science-based-strategies-to-cope-with-coronavirus-anxiety-133207>

<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mind-body-and-sport-student-athletes-transition>