

Signs & Symptoms of Mental Health Issues for Athletes



Mike Gulino, CAA
Interim Director of Health, Phys. Ed. and Athletics.
Tarrytown Unified School District
Tarrytown, NY

Steve Young, CMAA
Director of Athletics
City School District of New Rochelle
New Rochelle, NY

Statistics

1 in 5 US adults experience a mental illness each year

1 in 6 US youth aged 6-17 experience a mental disorder each year

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34

Only 50% of US youth aged 6-17 with a mental disorder received treatment in 2016



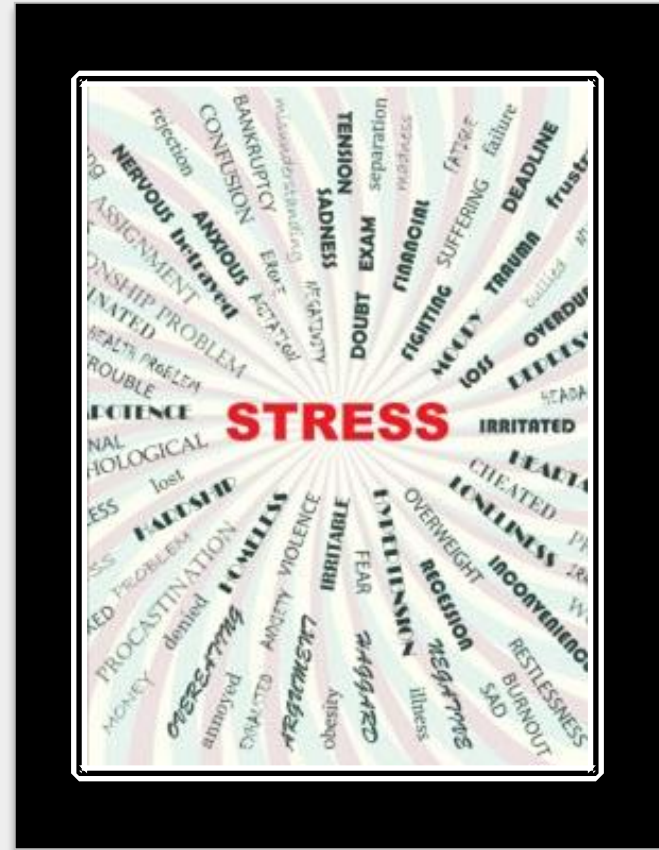
A close-up photograph of a person's lower leg and knee. The person is wearing dark shorts and is holding their right knee with their right hand, suggesting pain or discomfort. A bright red circular highlight is placed over the knee joint. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a gym or sports facility with various pieces of equipment.

Stressors for the athlete

- ★ **Time Demands**
- ★ **Athletic Performance & Anxiety**
- ★ **Injury and return from injury**
- ★ **Pressures leading up to the game**
- ★ **Pressure to perform during a game**

Stressors for the athlete

- ★ The Opposition
- ★ Playing time
- ★ Interpersonal issues with team/coaches
- ★ Personal stressors (outside commitments, financial situation, lifestyle changes (alcohol/drugs))
- ★ Intensive parenting



Mood Disorders

**Are also known as
“affective disorders” or
“depression”.**

**10% of the population
will suffer from a mood
disorder at some point
in their life**



Signs & Symptoms

Low or sad moods, often with crying episodes.

Irritability or anger.

Feeling worthless, helpless and hopeless.

Eating and sleeping disturbance.

A decrease in energy and activity levels with feelings of fatigue or tiredness.

Decreases in concentration, interest and motivation.

Social withdrawal or avoidance.

Negative thinking.

Thoughts of death or suicide.





Causes

A specific event (death in family or a bad break-up)

Without any trigger because it is biological or they have a genetic predisposition

Negative thought patterns

Athlete's sport performance (injury, overtraining syndrome)

Risks with Mood Disorders

Suicide thoughts or attempts

3 suicides occur daily among college students

7-10% of college students either attempt or contemplate suicide each year





If a student athlete...

Expresses a suicidal thought

Indicates and intent or plan

Makes a suicidal attempt

MAKE AN IMMEDIATE REFERRAL

Recommendations

Do not assume the athlete is trying to get attention.

Take what they are saying seriously

Make an immediate referral to a mental health professional

Have names and numbers of referral sources handy



A photograph of a locker room with rows of yellow lockers and wooden benches. A person is sitting on a bench, hunched over with their head in their hands, appearing distressed. A football helmet is on the bench next to them. A large black circle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

Anxiety Disorders

Most common mental
illness in the US

[illegible]

Feeling of out of control

Types of Anxiety Disorders

GAD (General Anxiety Disorder)

Panic Attacks

Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Phobias



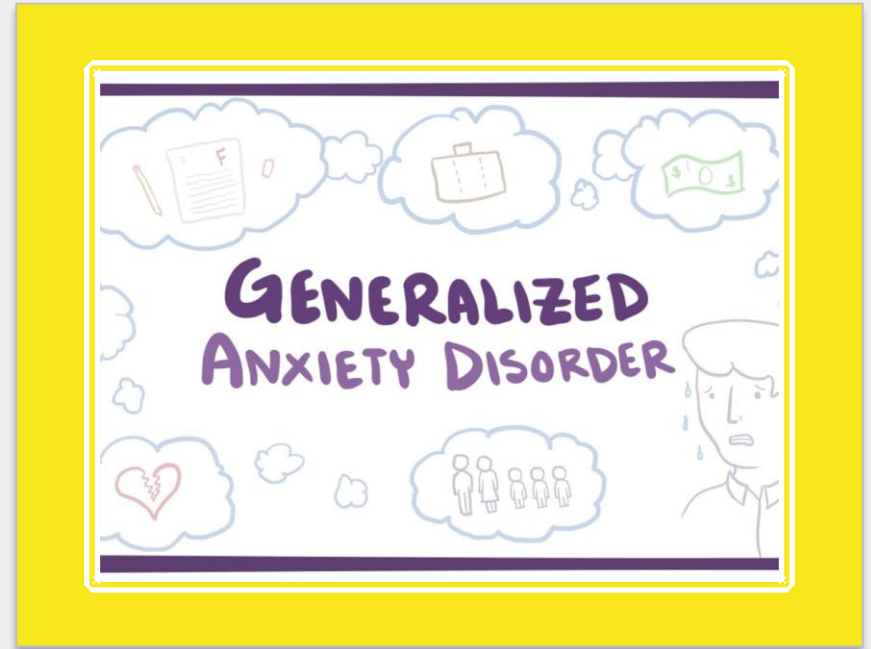
PANIC

GAD

Can occur without a particular incident

They find it difficult to sit still and relax

They have constant worries that affect their daily life



ANATOMY OF A PANIC ATTACK



Panic Attacks

Can occur without warning

Sense of impending doom

Heart races

Excessive sweating

Shortness of breath

Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Obsessions are recurring, redundant, ruminative or irrational thoughts

Compulsions are behaviors that individuals feel they need to perform



Phobias

Exaggerated fear of a situation or specific object

Effects on Performance

**Can negatively affect
concentration**

**They are more distracted by
physical and psychological
symptoms**

Difficulty focusing

**They will be drawn to the negative
rather than the positive**

**They will express negative emotion
more before, during and after
competition**



Sport Participation

Should be decided by mental health professionals

Sometimes the sport can reduce stress and other times it is an added stress

Most times people who suffer with anxiety are tired and exhausted by their symptoms and are looking for relief

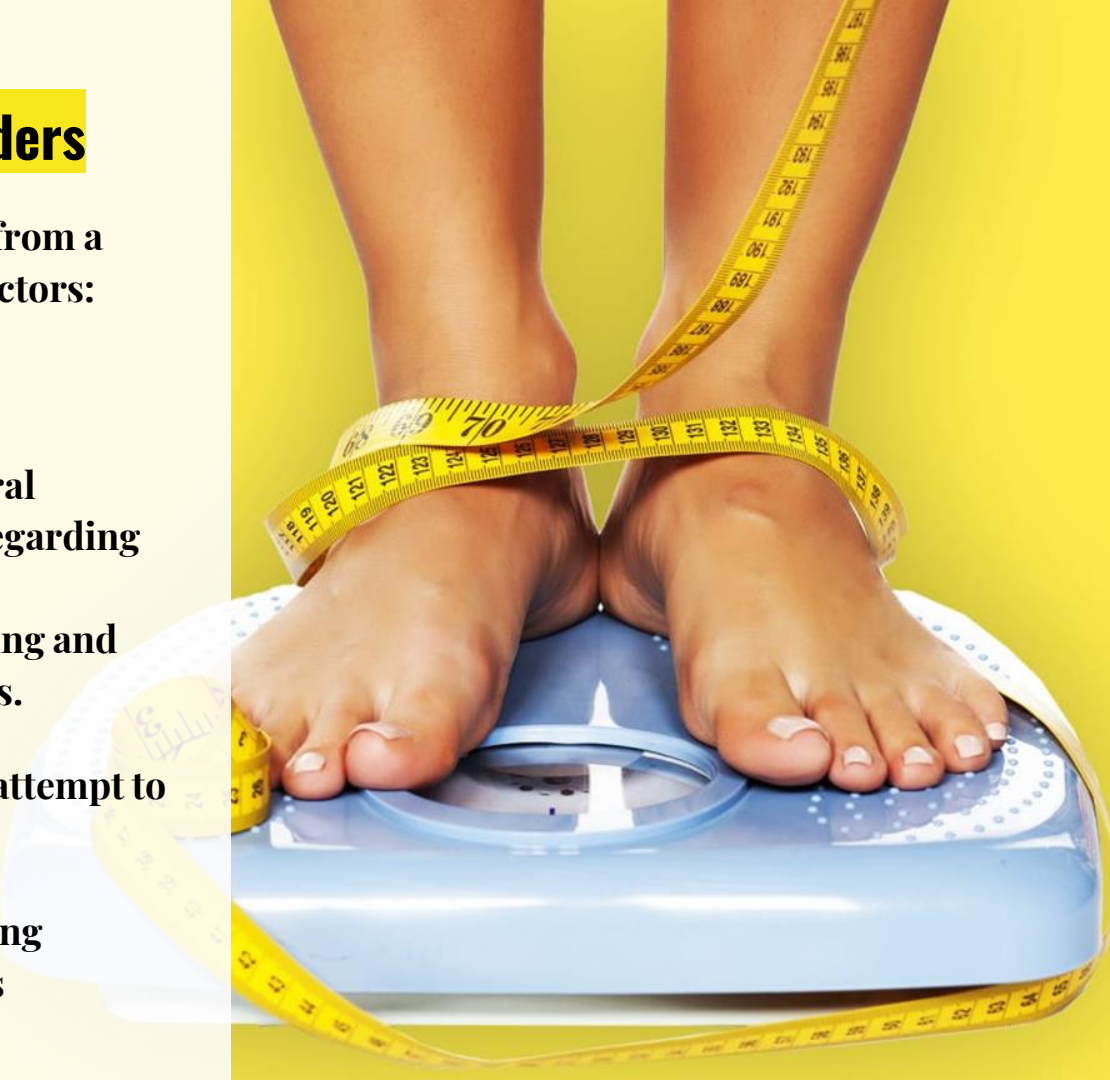
Eating Disorders

They are a result from a combination of factors:

- ★ Genetics
- ★ Personality
- ★ socio-cultural pressures regarding thinness
- ★ social learning and family issues.

Most begin as an attempt to lose weight

They worsen during transition periods



Types

Anorexia

Bulimia

EDNOS (Eating Disorder Otherwise not Specified)

Binge Eating

Disordered Eating



**EATING
DISORDERS**

Anorexia



Self-starvation Syndrome

Excessive exercise

Fear of Body Change

Bulimia

Binge/purge syndrome

Vomiting

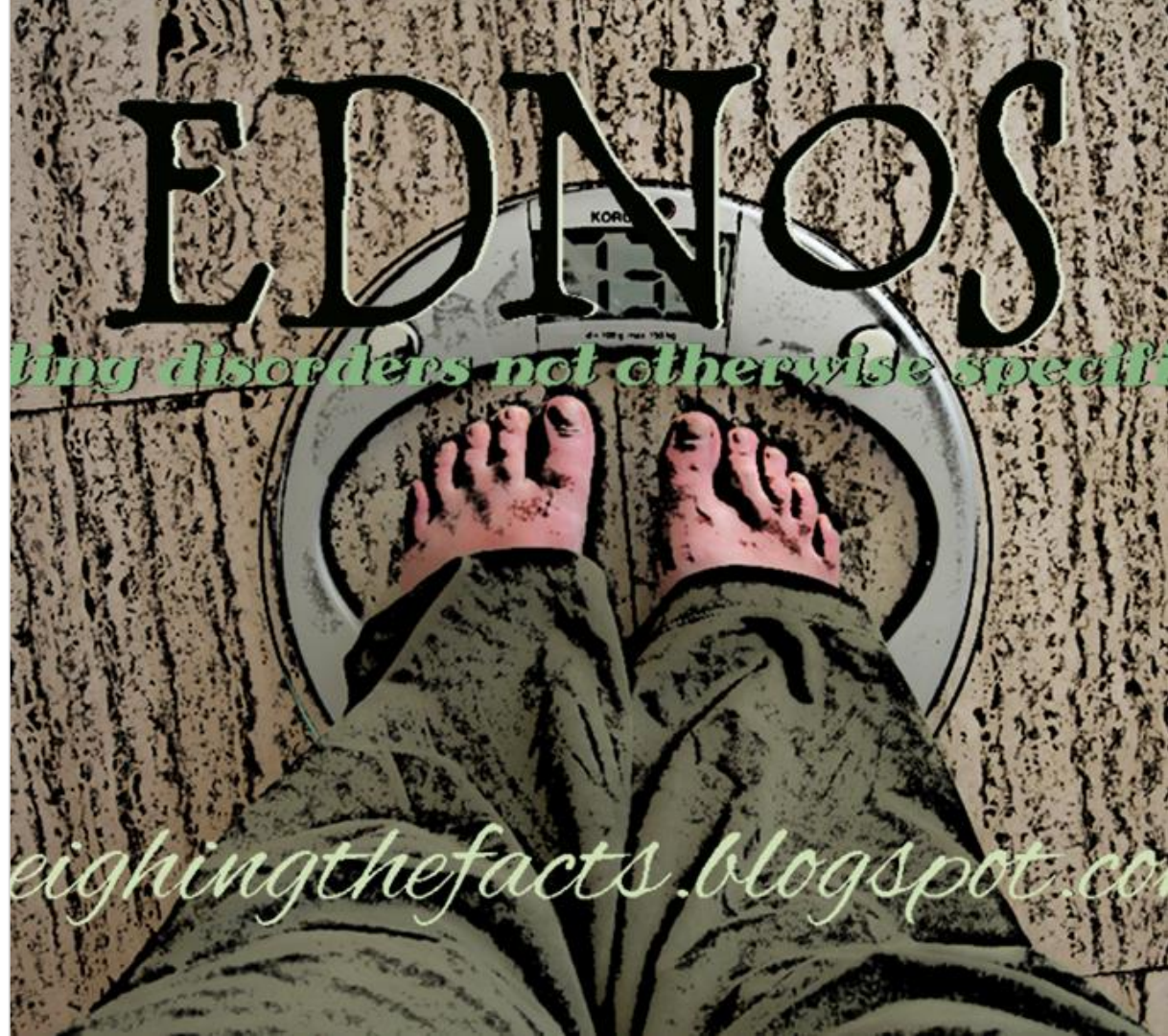
Laxatives

Excessive exercise



EDNOS

Eating problems
with a little of
both anorexia
and bulimia



Binge Eating

**Eating large
amounts of
food
without
purging**



Disordered Eating

Unhealthy eating from simple dieting to clinical eating disorders.



Effects on Performance

Low energy

Weakness

Dehydration

Increased risk of injury

Decreased running speed



Female Athlete Triad

Coping Strategy
to deal with body
image and sport

Consists of
disordered eating,
amenorrhea,
osteoporosis

78%
of female high school
athletes meet criteria for
Female Athlete Triad

Low Energy Availability

- Disordered eating
- Restricted eating
- Not eating enough

65%
of female high school
non-athletes meet criteria
for Female Athlete Triad

Female Athlete Triad

Menstrual Disturbance

- Irregular periods
- Amenorrhea

Low Bone Mineral Density

- Osteopenia
- Osteoporosis

Substance Related Disorders



Includes a variety of drugs or chemicals, including those that are legal, illegal, prescribed, over-the-counter (OTC) and performance-enhancing.

Signs & Symtoms of Alcohol Abuse

It is a central nervous system depressant

It slows coordination, reaction time, concentration, strength, power and endurance



Signs and Symptoms of Abusing Stimulants

Nervous or jittery could affect motor coordination and concentration

Increases heart rate and blood pressure

Increases body heat production and temperature

Can lead to over exertion and injury

Shakiness, rapid speech or movements

Difficulty sitting still or concentrating



Signs and Symptoms of Marijuana Use

It can slow reaction time

**Impair both motor and
eye-hand coordination**

Affect time perception

Red eyes

Lethargy

Increased appetite



What coaches could do to help...

Encourage positive self-talk

Create a supportive team environment

Model a positive attitude

Praise performance and effort

Establish pre-game routines

**Communication with all mental health
professionals involved with student**

Make referrals when necessary

**Your job is to recognize and refer - not
solve!**

The background of the slide is a photograph of soccer players in action on a grass field. The players are wearing dark blue jerseys with white stripes on the sleeves and shorts. One player in the foreground is wearing a jersey with the number 14. Another player to the right is wearing a jersey with the number 1. A soccer ball is visible on the grass near the player with number 14. The image is slightly blurred, suggesting movement.

Individual Health Plan

Family Physician

School Physician

Nurse

Counselor

School Ad

After Hours Emergency Plan

1.

What is your plan if there is a mental health emergency?

Mental Health First Aid

Call 911

Resources

Document your concerns with school counselors



Resources

<http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/mental-health-educational-resources>

<https://www.atyourownrisk.org/athlete-mental-health/>