



## Recognizing and Addressing Mental Health Concerns

Mental health is an essential component of overall well-being. In the fast-paced, high-energy environment of the world, students, coaches, mentors, and volunteers may experience stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges. Creating an open, supportive culture where mental health is prioritized is crucial to fostering a positive and productive environment. This guide provides valuable resources and strategies for supporting mental well-being.

### Recognizing Mental Health Challenges

Understanding the signs of mental health struggles can help create a culture of support and proactive intervention. Common indicators include:

- Persistent sadness or withdrawal from activities
- Changes in sleep or eating habits
- Increased irritability, frustration, or mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Talking about wanting to die or self-harm

If you notice these signs in yourself or someone else, it is essential to reach out for help.

### Guidance on Supporting Others:

If you are concerned about someone who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts, consider the following steps outlined by the [National Institute of Mental Health](#):

1. **Ask:** Initiate a conversation by asking directly about their feelings
2. **Be There:** Offer your presence and listen without judgment
3. **Help Keep Them Safe:** Reduce access to means of self-harm
4. **Help Them Connect:** Encourage them to reach out to professional resources
5. **Follow Up:** Check in regularly to show ongoing support

### Building a Supportive Team Culture

#### 1. Encourage Open Conversations

- Normalize discussions around mental health by incorporating check-ins at meetings
- Create a safe space where team members feel comfortable sharing their concerns

#### 2. Promote Work-Life Balance

- Encourage breaks, rest, and stress management strategies

- Foster an environment where it's okay to step away and take time for self-care
- 3. Reduce Stigma**
  - Provide education on mental health topics
  - Reinforce that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness
- 4. Look Out for Each Other**
  - Encourage teammates to check in with one another
  - If someone seems to be struggling, offer support and guide them to available resources

### **Tips for Managing Mental Well-Being During the Season**

- ✓ **Set Realistic Goals:** Avoid burnout by balancing ambition with achievable objectives
- ✓ **Practice Self-Care:** Ensure proper sleep, nutrition, and exercise habits
- ✓ **Take Breaks:** Step away from work to refresh your mind and reduce stress
- ✓ **Stay Connected:** Talk to friends, mentors, and family for support
- ✓ **Utilize Team Resources:** Make use of mental health resources within your school or local community

### **Immediate Support**

- ✓ **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Dial or text **988** for free, confidential support available 24/7 (USA & [Canada](#))
- ✓ **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 for immediate support from a trained counselor
- ✓ **International Suicide Hotlines:** Find country-specific hotlines [here](#).
- ✓ **In Cases of Immediate Danger:** If someone is at immediate risk, contact local emergency services or call **911**

### **Additional Support Services**

- **Students and Young Adults:** Jed Foundation – Visit [jedfoundation.org](http://jedfoundation.org) for mental health education and support
- **Mentors and Coaches:** Mental Health First Aid – Learn how to support youth mental health at [mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://mentalhealthfirstaid.org)
- **LGBTQ+ Youth:** [The Trevor Project](#) – Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678

### **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Concerns**

- **In Cases of Immediate Danger:** If someone is at immediate risk, contact local emergency services or call 911
- **Reporting Concerns:** For issues such as child abuse or neglect, promptly contact Child Protective Services (CPS), local law enforcement, and inform our Youth Protection team
  - [State Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Numbers](#) (USA)
  - [Provincial and Territorial Assistance](#) (Canada)
  - *FIRST* Youth Protection - [Report a Concern](#)

By fostering an environment that prioritizes mental well-being, *FIRST* teams can create a healthier, more inclusive space where everyone thrives. Encourage conversations, educate team members, and take proactive steps to ensure all participants feel supported. Together, we can make mental health a priority in the *FIRST* community.