



99 COPING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

1. Lift weights
2. Read
3. Listen to upbeat and uplifting music
4. Listen to a podcast
5. Create a list of positive affirmations
6. Squeeze a stress ball
7. Do a word search or Sudoku puzzle
8. Clean and organize
9. Walk
10. Dance
11. Watch a humorous movie or sitcom
12. Sit and mediate by a body of water
13. Do yoga
14. Sing loudly
15. Journal for 30 minutes
16. Volunteer
17. Listen to an inspiring YouTube clip
18. Visualize your favorite/safe place
19. Count backward from 100
20. Scream into a pillow
21. Consult a friend
22. Pray
23. Drink tea
24. Eat a sweet treat
25. Draw or doodle
26. Blog
27. Swim
28. Do some breathing exercises
29. Take a nap
30. Practice guided imagery
31. Create an audio journal entry
32. Recite situational-specific positive affirmations
33. Design a comic series
34. Pet an animal
35. Make a virtual collage
36. Find a safe, quiet place to sit
37. Browse Pinterest
38. Smile at three people
39. Create a gratitude list
40. Learn something new
41. Memorize a poem or song in under 10 minutes
42. Hang out with your friends
43. Learn/practice a foreign language
44. Stretch
45. Do schoolwork
46. Make a smoothie
47. Sigh
48. Perform a body scan
49. Identify your emotions
50. Write a poem or rap
51. Go for a car drive or ride
52. Light a scented candle
53. Color or paint
54. Rearrange bedroom furniture
55. Go out to eat
56. Muscle relaxation exercises
57. Prioritize calendar and commitments
58. Cry
59. Jog in place
60. Hum a favorite tune
61. Go for a hike on the trails
62. Create 3 SMART goals
63. Take selfies
64. Compliment yourself
65. Use a relaxation app
66. Talk to a trusted adult
67. Do 50 push-ups
68. Play a game on your phone
69. Sit in the sun
70. Rock back and forth
71. Hit a punching bag
72. Make a playlist
73. Work on a jigsaw puzzle
74. Chew gum
75. Jump rope for 12 minutes
76. Tend to a plant
77. Shred paper
78. Ride a bike
79. Perform a random act of kindness
80. Study game film
81. Challenge negative thoughts
82. Create an exercise routine
83. Cook using a new recipe
84. Competitively play a game board or card game
85. Take a bath or shower
86. Text the Crisis Hotline (Text HOME to 741741)
87. Write an email to a mentor
88. Do some online shopping
89. Inhale essential oils
90. Feel and focus on the texture of a rock or stone
91. Laugh
92. Drink a cold glass of water
93. Refrain from social media use
94. Find online support groups
95. Learn to sign your full name (ASL)
96. Hug a loved one
97. Put on your favorite outfit
98. Think of 9 more coping methods
99. Immerse yourself in a happy memory



ATHLETES AND MENTAL HEALTH

“I say put mental health first.” – *Simon Biles*

“When I first heard the term ‘mental health,’ the first thing that came to mind was mental toughness. Masking pain. Hiding it. Keeping it inside. That had been embedded in me since I was a kid. Never show weakness. Suck it up. Play through it. Live through it. Now, I realize that mental health means the total opposite.” – *Brandon Marshall*

“For the longest time, I thought asking for help was a sign of weakness because that’s kind of what society teaches us. That’s especially true from an athlete’s perspective. If we ask for help, then we’re not this big macho athlete that people can look up to. Well, you know what? If someone wants to call me weak for asking for help, that’s their problem. Because I’m saving my own life.” – *Michael Phelps*

WHY WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for those aged 10-14 and 3rd among those aged 15-24.
- 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24.
- In 2021, more than 4 in 10 (42%) students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless.
- Injuries, emotional stress, and physical strain increase the risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts in student-athletes more than in their non-athletic peers.

(NAMI, 2020) (CDC, 2023)

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEING AN ATHLETE

Physical activity is not only physically beneficial but also mentally. Physical activity can boost our mood and improve overall mental health. When we exercise, our brain releases a “feel-good” hormone – dopamine.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE BRAIN

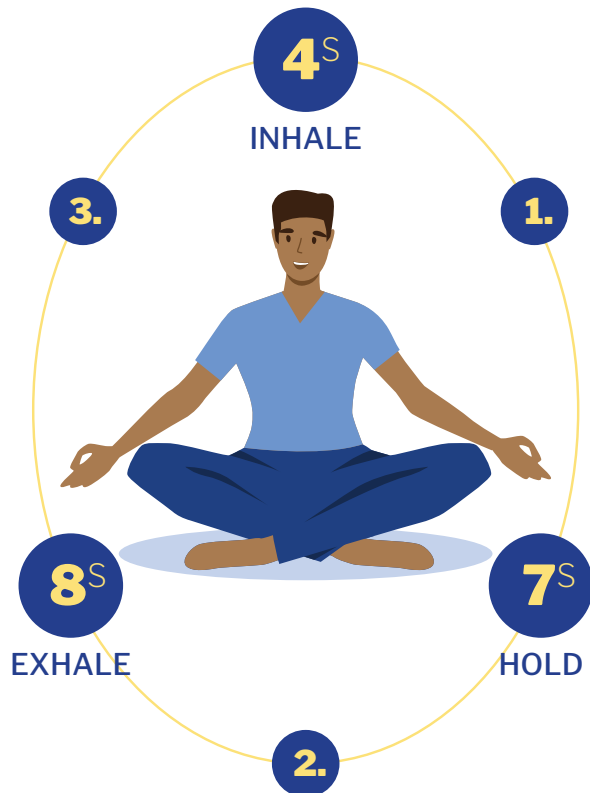
- Roughly 75% of the brain is made up of water, which means that dehydration, even in small amounts, can have a negative effect on our brain functions.
- The brain can’t feel pain. It interprets pain signals sent to it, but it does not feel pain.
- The brain isn’t fully developed until the age of 25. The prefrontal cortex is the region of the brain that is responsible for complex problem-solving and decision-making and is the last part of the brain to develop.

(Healthline, 2023)



THE POWER OF DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is an effective way to reduce anxiety, stress, and depression. The **4-7-8 breathing technique** is a relaxation exercise that involves breathing in for 4 counts, holding your breath for 7 counts, and exhaling for 8 counts.



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

CRISIS SERVICES

Caring Connection for Youth - Dial 2-1-1 and Press 3
Crisis Text Hotline - Text HOME to 741741
SAMHSA's National Helpline - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
resolve Crisis Services - 1-888-7-YOU-CAN (796-8226)

FINDING MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTANTS

Psychology Today - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>
Therapy Den - <https://www.therapyden.com/>
Therapy for Black Girls - <https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>
LGBTQ+ - <https://www.persadcenter.org/>

ENCOURAGEMENT

Motivational Speakers on YouTube: Les Brown and Eric Thomas
Podcast Facilitated by Teens on Mental Health: On Our Minds

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Planet Fitness' Free Summer Teen Membership Program - <https://www.planetfitness.com/summerpass/pre-registration>
The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's summer food program - [://pittsburghfoodbank.org/what-we-do/kids/summer-youth-cafe](https://pittsburghfoodbank.org/what-we-do/kids/summer-youth-cafe)