

TRAUMA SENSITIVE COACHING



What type of behaviors should coaches be mindful of in identifying an athlete who may be experiencing trauma?

In School-aged children:

- Feelings of persistent **concern over their own safety** and the safety of others.
- Preoccupation with their own actions during the event - **guilt or shame** over what they did or did not do.
- Being overwhelmed by their **feelings of fear**, sadness, irritability and/or anger.
- **Sleep disturbances** - difficulty falling asleep, fear of sleeping alone, or frequent nightmares.
- **Reliving parts of the trauma** as if it is happening now.
- Greater **difficulties concentrating** and learning.
- **Loss of memory** about parts or all of the event(s).
- **Avoiding people or places** where the trauma occurred.
- **Headaches and stomach aches** without obvious cause.
- Engaging in unusually **reckless or aggressive behavior**.

In Adolescents:

- **Feeling self-conscious** about their emotional responses to the event(s).
- Feelings of fear, **vulnerability**, and concern over being labeled "**abnormal**" or "**different**" from their peers.
- **Withdrawal** from family and friends.
- Feelings of **shame and guilt** about the traumatic event.
- **Fantasies about revenge** and retribution.
- Radical **shift in the way they think** about the world (negative, fatalistic, uncaring).
- **Self-destructive** or accident-prone behaviors.
- Plus **any of the symptoms** experienced by younger children if the trauma occurred earlier in life.

Trauma symptoms can also be manifest within the sport environment. Significant exposure to trauma can cause an adolescent to have difficulty with emotional self-regulation, interpersonal disengagement, difficulties with attention, low levels of self-awareness, damaged sense of self, and heightened threat reactivity. This is how these symptoms might look in the realm of sports.

- Deciding to quit the team
- Suddenly deciding to stop playing in a game based on a seemingly minor incident, a minimal situation gets overblown; or an athlete can't tolerate when things don't go his or her way...lack of flexibility.
- Difficulty handling the pressure and stress of high-stakes competition, or tolerating defeat.

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