



2025 CMS COACHES SYMPOSIUM

BUILDING MENTAL WELLNESS IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

Joanne Perry, Ph.D.

Senior Director of Sport Psychology | Novant Health
Team Psychologist | Carolina Panthers & Trackhouse Racing

Danielle Graham, Ph.D.

Clinical Sport Psychologist | Novant Health
Team Psychologist | USA Field Hockey, USA Archery, USA Table Tennis (Para)

John Brunelle, Ph.D.

Clinical Sport Psychologist | Novant Health
Team Psychologist | USA Judo, USA Football, USA Triathlon, USA Canoe/Kayak

Mallard Creek High School
July 29, 2025

EMPOWERING COACHES FOR EXCELLENCE



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STATE OF WELLNESS

CHALLENGES

Increasing Mental Health Concerns

2023: 11.5% of youth reported severe major depression.

Access to Care/How to use care

60% of youth with depression did not receive treatment. In US, there is 1 MH professional for every 350 people.

Resources at Schools

Schools do not have the resources to adequately support students with MH concerns (impacts variety of outcomes, including staff burnout).

Source: Mental Health America, State of Mental Health in America Report (2023).

A faded background image of a silver whistle attached to a grey lanyard. The whistle is on the right side, and the lanyard loops around the left and top. In the top right corner, there are two overlapping triangles: a black one pointing down and a blue one pointing up.

**OVER 90% OF STUDENT-
ATHLETES CONSIDER THEIR
COACH AN IMPORTANT
INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES.**

EMPOWERING COACHES FOR EXCELLENCE

**COACHES & ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT STAFF
ARE UNIQUELY SUITED TO SUPPORT
STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL HEALTH.**



Lots of time together

Respect & Influence

Coach support = more
attendance & utilization

Non-threatening
environment

You can make this stuff
“cool”

EMPOWERING COACHES FOR EXCELLENCE

SUPPORTING STUDENT-ATHLETE MENTAL WELLNESS

- 1** Establish good relationships
- 2** Integration of perspectives & skills
- 3** Tie everything back to performance
- 4** Know when to refer



**Building strong
bonds and
relationships with
adults at school
provides youth
with a sense of
connectedness.**

1. QUALITY CONNECTIONS

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

QUALITY CONNECTIONS

BE CURIOUS WITH OARS

Empathic listening

Includes (1) asking open-ended questions, (2) hearing and understanding, and (3) reflecting back content you hear.



USE YOUR OARS

We often listen to reply. Instead, we want to listen to understand.

Use your OARS to create connection & explore.

- **Open-Ended Questions:** How. What. Where. Why.
- **Affirmations:** Reflecting values and strengths that you hear.
- **Reflections:** Letting the individual know they are being heard and understood.





Incorporate
reminders for
wellness
throughout all
aspects of the
environment.

2. CREATIVE INTEGRATION

SUBTLE REMINDERS OF WELLNESS



VISUAL CUES

Post wellness resources, show short videos on mental wellness before or after meetings/practice,

STRATEGIES TO NORMALIZE

Whenever discussing physical health or physical training, ensure that you also speak about mental health/training. Empower leaders to check-in with teammates.

CREATE CONVERSATIONS

Examples: View videos as a team, Discuss famous athletes who have disclosed mental health concerns (can use clips from social media). **Use Conversation Starter Resources.**

MODEL WELLNESS PRACTICES

Discuss your own self-care and coping. Reference the importance of this in your own life.

BUILD WELLNESS PRACTICE INTO ROUTINE

Look for opportunities to incorporate mental skill practice into your team's typical daily/weekly routine.



**2025 CMS
COACHES SYMPOSIUM**

LET'S PRACTICE

EMPOWERING COACHES FOR EXCELLENCE



Speak in a language that matters to athletes. Look for opportunities to connect these principles back to performance.

3. TIE IT TO PERFORMANCE

THIS HELPS BUY-IN

EXAMPLE #1

MENTAL SKILLS



BREATHWORK

MINDFULNESS

ROUTINES

IMAGERY

MENTAL PERFORMANCE

Relaxation, emotional
regulation, focus, flow.

Flow, focus, confidence,
learning, & effort. Less
anxiety, worry, doubt

Provide sense of control,
increase focus, and help
achieve desired intensity

Confidence, skill
development, motivation,
focus, feelings of control.

MENTAL WELLNESS

Anxiety, management of
difficult emotions,
improved sleep, health.

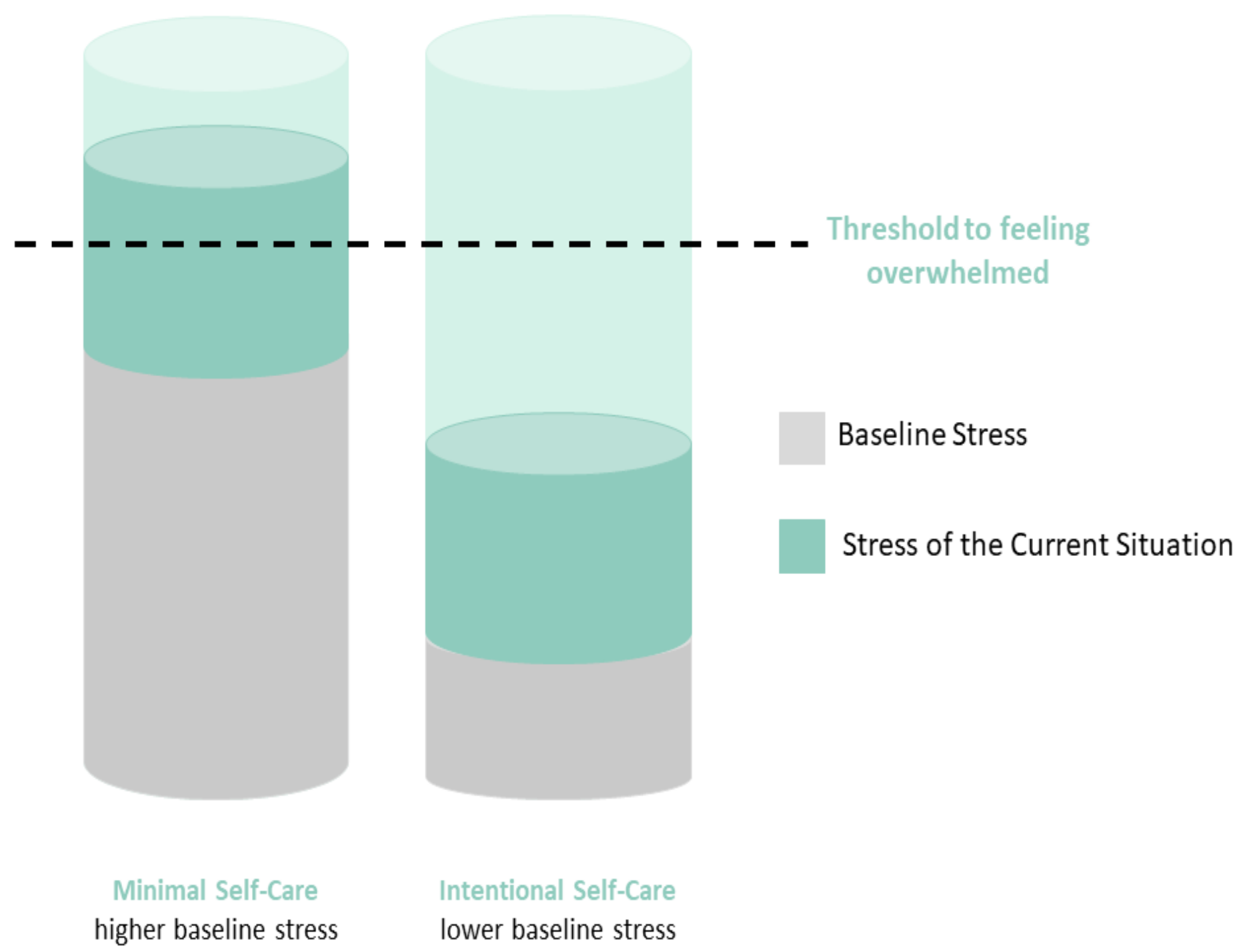
Stress management,
optimism, mood,
management of thoughts
& emotions.

Improvements in mood,
decreased stress (less
decisions)

Positive emotions, self-
esteem, happiness.

EXAMPLE #2

SELF-CARE & PERFORMANCE



EXAMPLE #3

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN SERIES


CAROLINA PANTHERS SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

MENTAL PERFORMANCE
WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAYS
1:30PM - 1:55PM
TEAM MEETING ROOM

DATES: 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14, 5/21



TRAIN YOUR BRAIN SERIES


Wednesday, April 23RD
Sharpening Your Tools: Common mental skills (EFFORT)

Wednesday, April 30TH
Breathe Strong, Play Stronger: Breath training (TOUGHNESS)

Wednesday, May 7TH
Staying Present: Master your attention & focus (PLAY SMART)


Wednesday, May 14TH
Visualize to Execute: Imagery (ENTHUSIASM)

Wednesday, May 21ST
Staying Locked In: Incorporating mental routines (FINISH)



BRAIN BARBELL

Mental Training
Resources





**Know the signs that
suggest when someone
might benefit from
speaking to a mental
health professional.**

4. KNOW WHEN TO REFER

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS.

MENTAL WELLNESS CONTINUUM

Crisis

Emergency Attention

Struggling

Diagnosis

Existing

"Aches & Pains"

**Thriving &
Excelling**





MENTAL HEALTH ACHES & PAINS

Signs we are moving to the left

EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	BEHAVIORAL	PHYSICAL
low motivation low self-esteem impulsivity irritability feeling on edge frequent sadness heightened emotionality	distracted worrisome negative thinking racing thoughts difficulty making decisions trouble focusing	isolation excessive substance use over- or under-eating avoidance or procrastination reduced performance snapping at others	muscle tension low energy sleep difficulties changes in appetite upset stomach headaches clenched jaw

MAKING REFERRALS

1. After OARs, ask permission to offer your perspective.

"It certainly sounds like there is a lot going on for you at this moment – and I really want to be a support through this process. Would it be all right if I shared my perspective on what I think could be helpful?"

2. Name what you have heard or seen.

"Over the last few weeks, I've noticed that you've been a bit more quiet at practice and I've heard you say some pretty critical things to yourself. You've just told me this stuff kinda lingers with you & impacts how you play."

3. Introduce referral & normalize

"I'm really glad you told me all of this. This can all be pretty tough to sit with. I think it might be worthwhile to talk to your parents about getting you with a [sport psych, therapist, counselor, etc.] – I've had a lot of other athletes do this & have found it helpful."

4. Check-in with athlete

"How willing are you to talk to your parents about this and see if we can get you in with sport psych"

"I can see you're uncertain about that – tell me what your thoughts are? What are your reservations about sharing this with them? Could we do this together?"



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APPS

- Headspace
- Calm
- Oxygen Advantage
- ACTCoach
- FreeCBT
- Insomnia Coach
- PTSD Coach
- DBT Coach

GETTING CONNECTED

- Psychologytoday.com
- Primary Care Physician
- APA Psychologist Locator
- Consider Creating Vetted Provider Directory

OTHER

- Mental Health America:
<https://mhanational.org>
- NCAA Handbook: Mental Health Best Practices (NCAA Sport Science Institute)
- NCAA Handbook: Managing Student-Athletes’ Mental Health Issues
- IOC Consensus Statement (2019):
Mental Health in Elite Athletes

TRAININGS

- teen Mental Health First Aid
- Question. Persuade. Answer (QPR)
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

Podcasts:

Finding Mastery, Michael Gervais

The Professional Athlete, Ken Gunter

The Sport Psych Show, Dan Abrahams

Talking Bull, Red Bull Racing

The Huberman Lab, Andrew Huberman

The Mark Divine Show, Mark Divine

UNIT3D, Hilsinki's Hope & Josie Nicholson

Mindful Sport Performance Podcast, Keith Kaufman & Tim Pineau

The Happiness Lab, Laurie Santos

Books & Audiobooks:

Legacy: What the All-Blacks Can Teach us about the Business of Life, James Kerr

The Confident Mind: A Battle-Tested Guide to Unshakable Performance, Nate Zinner

The Mindful Athlete: Secrets to Peak Performance, George Mumford

Coaching Athletes to be their Best, Stephen Rollnick et al.

Talent Code, Daniel Coyle

Culture Code, Daniel Coyle

Grit, Angela Duckworth

Daring Greatly, Brene Brown

Endure, Alex Hutchinson

Other:

The Player's Tribune

Dinners with DeMar

Athletes Connected
(University of Michigan)

THANK YOU!

Connect with NH Sport Psych

704-316-6251 (program coordinator)



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