

BACK TO SCHOOL

Take
Action

FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Caring for Your
Mental Health as a

STUDENT
ATHLETE



You train to compete. You show up for your team. And you give everything you've got — every practice, every game, every time.

As an athlete, you're known for your hustle, discipline, and drive. You've learned to push past limits, ignore the noise, and keep grinding. That mentality helps you stand out on the field or track and in the gym — but it can also make it hard to speak up when something's off.

Here's the truth: taking care of your mental health doesn't take away from your strength — it adds to it.

When you check in with yourself, you're building the mindset it takes to handle pressure, bounce back from setbacks, and lead with confidence. You're not just helping yourself — you're showing up stronger for your teammates, your friends, and your future.

Mental health isn't a weakness. It's part of the game. Own it.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESSURE

Whether you're repping your school, grinding in a local league, or putting in extra work on your own — the pressure to perform is real.

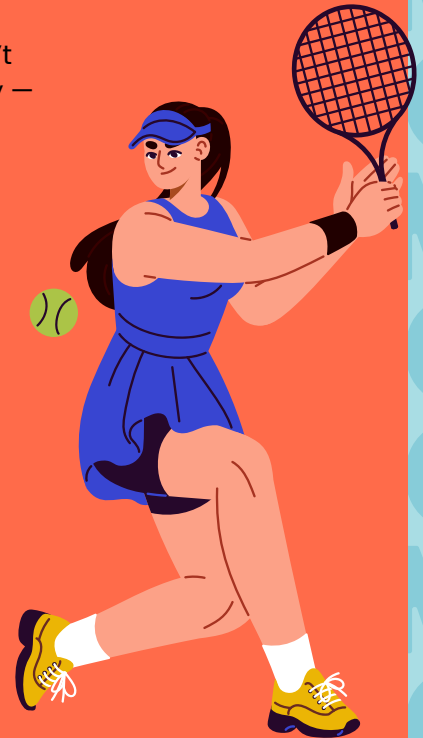
It can come from coaches, teammates, parents — or even just the high standards you set for yourself. You might worry that admitting you're overwhelmed means you're falling short or letting someone down.

When pressure builds and you don't talk about it, it doesn't just go away — it continues to build up.

Maybe you feel more frustrated, on edge, or disconnected from the people around you. Maybe your sleep takes a hit. Maybe your love for the game starts to fade, and what used to be your passion starts to feel like a burden.

Those feelings don't mean you're weak — they're signals that something needs your attention.

You don't have to push through it alone. Real strength is knowing when to reset, reach out, and respond in healthy ways — before things boil over.



WHAT STRESS CAN LOOK LIKE

Stress doesn't always appear as a physical symptom like panic or tears. It can also show up as:

- Giving up on personal goals or avoiding responsibilities
- Irritability or mood swings you can't explain
- Trouble focusing or remembering things in class
- Feeling like no one understands what you're going through
- Pushing yourself to the limit because rest feels like failure

Every athlete's experience handling stress is different. Mental health challenges present themselves in a variety of ways. Tuning into your own signs — and being honest about them — is a healthy step in taking care of yourself.

ASKING FOR HELP SHOWS STRENGTH

There's a myth in sports culture that the best thing you can do is "power through." But pushing past your limits — emotionally or physically — without a break can lead to burnout. This can have long-term effects on your mind and body. We know that sounds scary — but on the flip side, learning how to deal with pressure can become a healthy habit that assists you for life.

If you're feeling off, talk to someone. It could be a parent or a friend, a teammate or coach you trust, a school counselor, or a therapist. Your support systems are here for a reason.



FOR STUDENT ATHLETES WHO ARE ALSO CAREGIVERS

Some student athletes carry a lot more than just a backpack and gear. You might be caring for younger siblings after school. You might be working a part-time job to help with bills. Maybe you're helping translate for your family, or dealing with the aftermath of a wildfire or housing instability.

When you're juggling sports, school, and caregiving, it can feel like there's no space for your own needs. But your needs don't go away just because you're holding it together for others. In fact, they become even more important.

**It's okay to say you're tired. It's okay to ask for help.
And it's more than okay to take a break without guilt.
You deserve to rest.**



YOU BELONG IN THIS CONVERSATION

You don't have to look or feel a certain way to care about your mental health. You don't have to be a varsity starter or the team captain. What matters is that you're human — and that means your experiences, emotions, and challenges are valid.

Whether you're navigating your identity, balancing family responsibilities, living with a disability, managing stress, or just trying to make it through the day, you're not alone.

Mental health doesn't look the same for everyone, and that's exactly why conversations about mental health need to be open, honest and include everyone. California's student athletes come from all walks of life, and no two journeys are alike. This resource is here to meet you wherever you are.

So take the time. Ask for help.

**You are more than your performance.
You are more than your role. And your
well-being matters.**



RESOURCES AND CARE

Need someone to talk to? If you're struggling or just need support, you're not alone. These free resources are available:

The Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988** anytime to connect with the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Teen Line

If you're a teen, call **1 (800) 852-8336** from **6 PM to 10 PM PT** or text **TEEN to 839863** from **6 PM to 9 PM PT** to get free anonymous support from trained teen listeners.

The Trevor Project

Free 24/7 support for 2SLGBTQIA+ young people.

Trevor Lifeline: **1 (866) 488-7386**

TrevorChat:

TheTrevorProject.org/Get-Help

TrevorText: Text **START** to **678-678**



Take Action

CalMHSA
California Mental Health Services Authority



Funded by counties through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop. 63).