

## COVID-19 and Mental Health for High School Athletes

COVID-19 has caused significant disruption in most people's lives. This is painfully true for high school students, who are used to substantial amounts of social interaction throughout their daily lives at school. The lives of high school athletes may be particularly disrupted, as they typically benefit very much from in-person camaraderie from teammates and guidance from coaches. The social distancing recommended in the current context limits that camaraderie and guidance.

Some recommendations for daily strategies of self-care and awareness, adapted from the National Alliance on Mental Illness and National Collegiate Athletic Association, are as follows:

- Space. Create a structured, dedicated, distraction-free work environment to do any virtual school work.
- Routine. Try to maintain a routine that reflects your normal day routine, including how you dress and structured breaks for lunch and mini-breaks. Humans thrive on routine!
- Activity. Regular exercise and mindfulness activities are key during times of crisis. During this crisis in particular, high school students are at risk of experiencing a sudden drop-off in amounts of physical activity (as they no longer have required gym class or sports practices). Exercise and mindfulness activities help mitigate depression and anxiety while improving cognition and confidence. Develop a daily routine for both, even if this is as simple as a 15-minute walk and/or quiet time with deep breathing.
- Time and Energy Management. Be mindful of over- or under-working. Try to structure your daily work in a way that mirrors your normal school/sport hours.
- Accessibility. Develop ways in which you are accessible to friends and family. Public health recommendations may be to physically socially distance, and those should be abided, but connections can be maintained virtually. Humans need to feel and be connected. Utilize video tools such as Skype, Facetime, Google Hangouts, Facebook and WhatsApp to connect visually.
- Support. The National Alliance on Mental Health Illness [website](#) provides a comprehensive guide to mental health resources. Know that there is help when needed.