

Player wellbeing

Well-being and mental health care for sports participants and competitors can start with...

1. **Psychologically Safe Environments:** where the thoughts, feelings, experiences and personalities of its participants are considered when striving to understand behaviour (and when considering every policy, every practice, and every process). "Who is the person and why do they behave in this way...and how can we best behave and interact with this person."
2. **An attitude that every person counts:** if they're here, then we care!
3. **Psychological safety:** giving participants a voice in policy, practice, and process...and where participants are given a safe space to express vulnerability (while appreciating individual differences in attitude towards such safety)
4. **Motivational climate:** leaning towards a mastery orientation (a focus on developmental and performance tasks), while appreciating individual differences in motivational patterns, from internal (feeding intrinsic rewards) to external (feeding extrinsic rewards).
5. **Safe uncertainty** (thanks Dr Suzanne Brown): providing safety with the above approaches, while providing an environment that stretches (a balance between stretch and support).
6. **Coach-athlete relationships** that are close, committed, co-operative, and co-orientated (see work of Professor Sophia Jowett)
7. **Optimal coaching engagement:** a range of coaching practices from free play through deliberate practice through conditioned activities
8. **Coach with strong teaching skills to enhance learning:** a strong knowledge of cognitive architecture of the brain

(working memory and long term memory) helping players to enjoy the process of learning

9. **Teaching that encompasses decision-making:** a strong knowledge of decision-making models
10. **Comprehensive player development plans:** what, how, why...providing players with greater certainty as to where they are with their game
11. **Mental skills frameworks for all...**shared!
12. **Leadership and teamship development** on and off the pitch (court): simple, practical ideas that give players the opportunity to experience leadership and develop both task and social cohesion
13. **Incorporation of positive psychology** practices including gratitude, optimism etc where possible

Mental health and well-being in a sports setting starts with helping players have an adaptive, flexible, and positive relationship with engagement, development and performance (that isn't to suggest that it is highly recommended that clubs with resources offer access to appropriately trained clinical professionals for mental health education and intervention, but it is to say that coach practice and coach environment matter!)

It's so important that our biggest sporting organisations/clubs sit with complexity, and strive to understand the dynamic sporting environment their participants are

engaged in (and avoid making isolated and arbitrary decisions around their mental health strategies) Performance, development, mental health, and well-being are heavily integrated