

Healthy Communication



As we combat the youth mental health crisis, it is up to parents, educators, coaches, and more to step up and support them. The most important thing we can do is to foster healthy communication—there are ways to make athletes feel more comfortable talking honestly about their mental health.

Some of the most impactful lessons we can share are:

It's OK to not be OK

- One of the most important lessons we can share is that it's OK to be upset or frustrated.
- Model positive coping mechanisms to help kids navigate and cope with increased stress.

Listen to understand, not to solve

- When kids vent to us, they are often simply looking to be seen, heard, and understood. Legitimize their experiences without judgment or offering solutions.
- Simple statements like, "Wow, that sounds frustrating," or "I'm sorry you're going through this," could give them the validation they need.
- Ask teens if they are open to suggestions before imposing them.

Establish safe spaces

- Having conversations in places that don't require much eye contact can decrease the discomfort that might come with these heavy topics.
- On the sidelines or on a bus ride can be the perfect opportunity to check in with them.
- Acknowledging mental health as part of overall health is a step toward combating this ongoing crisis. We can work together to validate and improve the mental health of our youth.