

Counseling Student – Athletes

“In a League of Their Own”

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ABSTRACT

In today’s society there is a major emphasis placed on athletics and competition in sports at the high school, college, and professional levels. The perception of student athletes at the high school and collegiate ranks often comes with scrutiny, specifically their intentions and priorities within an educational setting, usually coming from an outsider’s perspective looking in. Thus, the goal of this presentation is to increase the awareness of school counselors and other behavioral health practitioners who are not familiar with the world of athletics and the developmental challenges student athletes face during a critical time of their lives.

Research shows that student athletes struggle with identity issues that manifest in other aspects of their lives, such as forging a new identity when they must retire young due to injury or lack of academic eligibility. Their identities as student athletes may also impact their post-secondary college and career planning process. When addressing these developmental transitions with student athletes, the challenge becomes exploring and acknowledging other areas of their self-identity and helping these athletes recognize the value of these other aspects of their identity so they may become well-rounded individuals. Allowing these athletes to enhance their own value while validating the importance of athletics to their identity is paramount.

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Struggles of Student-Athletes

Athletic Identity is the major theme behind the struggles of student-athletes.

(Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013)

- **Athletic identity** : a student-athlete becomes so **strongly tied to his or her sport**, that other **aspects of their life** do not get **developed, recognized, acknowledged, or created**.

Within **Athletic Identity** are **subgroups**:

(Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013)

- **Retirement** due to **eligibility**
 - Student-Athletes can no longer participate
 - Ex. Senior Year of High School or College
 - Being released from a professional team
- **Retirement** due to **injury**
 - Student-Athletes can no longer participate in sport due to career-ending injury.
- **General injuries**
 - Injuries student-athletes endure throughout their career.
- **Career** Development
 - Student-Athletes **struggle** with their **interests** and **passions** as it relates to initiating their career.
 - What **opportunities** exist with their **degree**.
 - **Interviewing** Skills
 - **Cover Letter** and **Resume** building
 - **Job Search** strategies
 - **Networking**
- **Transitioning** out of the sport.

Approaches to Counseling Student-Athletes

Schlossberg’s Transition Model (4S Approach)

(Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988)

- **Situation** – What type of transition is occurring?
- **Self** – Understanding oneself as it relates to the transition.
- **Supports** – Identifying you’re support system.
- **Strategies** – Develop an action plan to appropriately handle the transition.

Reality Therapy:

(Stankovich, 2014)

- Being in the **here and now** with student athletes, while **focusing** to the **future**.
- Example : A student-athlete experiences **sport retirement** and understanding he or she can shift to **possible coaching opportunities** within their sport.

Rational Emotive Therapy or RET:

(Stankovich, 2014)

- Helps **reframe** a student-athletes **perspective**
- Regarding an issue or event (A)
- Shaping their response to the issue or event (B)
- Thus having positive reactions as a result (C)

Cognitive – Behavioral Therapy or CBT:

(Stankovich, 2014)

- Aims to turn **irrational thinking** into **rational thinking** based on the **student-athletes perception** of a given **situation** or **issue**.

Things to Consider for Student-Athletes

Becoming familiar with a student-athlete’s mentality

- “**Full ride scholarships**” turns into becoming a “**professional athlete**.”
- No showing signs of **weaknesses**, being **tough**.
- Likely to be **resistant** towards **seeking support** because of the need to be “**tough**.”

Working awareness of their lifestyle from a social perspective

- **Family**: Getting the “**full ride scholarship**” and parents “**living**” through their **son or daughter**.
- **School**: Pressure from the **student body** and the **stereotypes** that exist among student-athletes.
- **Community**: How much of an **emphasis** does sports have in the community?

Acquire working knowledge of student-athlete’s sport

- Ex. Knowing baseball is a **game** and tennis is a **match**.
- Ex. Scoring in football is a **touchdown** and in baseball is a **run**.

(Stankovich, 2014)

	NCAA Participants	Approximate # Draft Eligible	# Draft Slots	# NCAA Drafted	% NCAA to Major Pro*	% NCAA to Total Pro^
Football	71,291	15,842	256	255	1.6%	3.7%
M Basketball	18,320	4,071	60	47	1.2%	11.6%
W Basketball	16,319	3,626	36	32	0.9%	4.7%
Baseball	33,431	7,429	1,216	638	8.6%	--
M Ice Hockey	3,976	884	211	60	6.8%	--
M Soccer	23,602	5,245	76	72	1.4%	--

Reality of playing in college and professionally

	High School Participants	NCAA Participants	Overall % HS to NCAA	% HS to NCAA Division I	% HS to NCAA Division II	% HS to NCAA Division III
Men						
Baseball	486,567	34,198	7.0%	2.1%	2.2%	2.7%
Basketball	541,479	18,697	3.5%	1.0%	1.0%	1.4%
Cross Country	250,981	14,330	5.7%	1.9%	1.4%	2.3%
Football	1,083,617	72,788	6.7%	2.6%	1.8%	2.4%
Golf	148,823	8,654	5.8%	2.0%	1.7%	2.1%
Ice Hockey	35,875	4,071	11.3%	4.6%	0.5%	6.3%
Lacrosse	108,450	13,165	12.1%	2.9%	2.2%	7.1%
Soccer	432,569	24,477	5.7%	1.3%	1.5%	2.8%
Swimming	137,087	9,715	7.1%	2.8%	1.1%	3.2%
Tennis	157,240	8,211	5.2%	1.7%	1.1%	2.4%
Track & Field	578,632	28,177	4.9%	1.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Volleyball	54,418	1,818	3.3%	0.7%	0.8%	1.8%
Water Polo	21,626	1,044	4.8%	2.6%	0.7%	1.5%
Wrestling	258,208	7,049	2.7%	1.0%	0.7%	1.0%
Women						
Basketball	429,504	16,589	3.9%	1.2%	1.1%	1.6%
Cross Country	221,616	16,150	7.3%	2.7%	1.7%	2.8%
Field Hockey	60,549	5,894	9.7%	2.9%	1.2%	5.7%
Golf	72,582	5,221	7.2%	3.0%	2.1%	2.1%
Ice Hockey	9,418	2,175	23.1%	9.0%	1.1%	13.1%
Lacrosse	84,785	10,994	13.0%	3.7%	2.5%	6.7%
Soccer	375,681	26,995	7.2%	2.4%	1.9%	2.9%
Softball	364,103	19,628	5.4%	1.7%	1.6%	2.1%
Swimming	166,838	12,428	7.4%	3.2%	1.1%	3.1%
Tennis	182,876	8,960	4.9%	1.6%	1.1%	2.2%
Track & Field	478,726	28,797	6.0%	2.7%	1.5%	1.8%
Volleyball	432,176	17,026	3.9%	1.2%	1.2%	1.6%
Water Polo	19,204	1,152	6.0%	3.5%	1.1%	1.4%

Athletic Transferable Skills

Student-athletes acquire skills that transfer to other areas throughout their career. It is vital that student-athletes understand how their skill set can be used in other aspects of their lives.

- **Setting goals**
- **Resiliency**
- **Motivation**
- **Communication**
- **Working with others/Teamwork**
- **Focus**
- **Leadership**
- **Ambition**
- **Making decisions**
- **Handling pressure**
- **Punctuality**

(Stankovich, 2009)

The Big Picture

Help student-athletes find and create value within themselves.

Value that comes from other aspects of their life.

While still understanding the importance of their sport.

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