

CLUB TOOLKIT

SUPPORTING CLUB MEMBERS' MENTAL HEALTH



OUTSIDE THE
LOCKER ROOM



CLUB EDUCATION SESSIONS:

CHOOSING YOUR NEXT SESSION

Mental health

Identifying symptoms of mental ill-health and how to support someone going through a mental health challenge.



Mental wellbeing and lifestyle

Addressing the four pillars of mental health, how to boost them and identifying coping mechanisms.



Drugs and alcohol

Discussing the characteristics of a range of drugs and debunking myths around alcohol.



Gambling

How to identify a possible gambling addiction, and how to offer support.



Cyberbullying

This session discusses why people might bully others, and the power of the bystander in supporting a bullying victim.



Inclusion and respect

Discussing the seven pillars of inclusion, the benefits of inclusion on mental health, and how to show respect to your peers



Leadership and culture

Focusing on goals and values, and turning goals into reality.



Thank you for participating in Outside the Locker Room's program.

We've put together this toolkit to help you support the wellbeing of your clubs members. It includes:

What to look out for: Signs and symptoms that may underlie a mental health challenge	p.4
Approaching the conversation: Ways to approach the topic of mental health	p.5
Responding to someone in need of support: Tips on holding a conversation regarding mental health	p.6
Support & Services: Further information and referral pathways	p.7
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We hope you find this toolkit useful.

If you have any feedback or questions, for the OTLR team, please get in touch via welfare@otlr.org.au.

Technical Support - Here is our [App Tutorial](#)

Background information:

Research shows that participating in sports promotes positive mental health¹. Sporting clubs provide many benefits to community members and their families, such as promoting positive physical and mental health and a sense of belonging². Additionally, research suggests that it is important to foster a culture where athlete mental health is viewed as equally important as their physical health, in order to detect mental health challenges as early as possible³. Research has also found that club members view their sporting community as providing an important opportunity to learn more about mental health and wellbeing⁴).

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to assess the effect of sport and recreation clubs on members' sense of connectedness and mental health. Players who were not able to participate in their sport during the lockdown reported generally poorer mental health than compared to when they were playing⁴. These findings suggest that the athletes and club support staff may benefit from learning practical skills related to identifying and managing mental health challenges, as well an increased awareness of available support services. These skills and knowledge can be applied to everyday life and extended to the wider community to build awareness and resilience for those facing a mental health challenge.



KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR...

If a member of your club is acting in a way that is **uncharacteristic** of their usual behaviour, this may indicate that they are facing a mental health challenge. For example, a teammate who is known to be motivated and heavily involved in club social activities may appear “flat” at training and decline invitations to events.

Identifying some of these signs can be a crucial step in initiating support for an individual.

The signs of mental health challenges can be highly individualised, however, below is a list of some traits to look out for.

EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	PHYSICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaying outbursts of emotion, or significant mood swings • Quiet and withdrawn (when normally outgoing) • Loud, erratic behaviour (when normally quiet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding, resisting or reluctant to engage in tasks they usually enjoy, such as training and club activities • Rebellious or antisocial behaviour such as making threats or getting into fights • Avoiding friends and/or people generally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in appearance (e.g. Loss of general fitness and/or hygiene, tired appearance) • Making significant changes to their appearance (e.g. dying hair, dressing inappropriately) • Having unexplained injuries, including cuts, burns or bruises



APPROACHING THE CONVERSATION

If you identify a club member going through a mental health challenge, it is important to initiate communication in a way that feels comfortable for them. Finding a safe space away from the rest of the group (if appropriate) can help provide privacy during the conversation where others won’t overhear you, and helps to minimise distractions. If you don’t feel comfortable doing this alone, grab a trusted adult club member to join the conversation.



“I’ve noticed that lately you’ve been very quiet during training...”

“You are normally the first to arrive and last to leave training, but lately you’ve been missing sessions, how is everything going for you at the moment?”

“I saw a number of dark bruises on your arm last week. When I saw that I felt really worried about you. I would like to talk to you about them, is that ok with you?”

To approach the topic of mental health, we recommend starting with an empathetic statement (something that demonstrates you genuinely are understanding of their situation) and identifying specific examples of the uncharacteristic behaviours you’re concerned about which lead you to approach them. Don’t worry, whilst direct statements like this might feel daunting, they can help to clearly express your concern and show others that it is okay to talk about mental health openly.

RESPOND

Listen without interrupting, which is more important than offering solutions.

Express calmness, patience, acceptance and affirmation through your facial expressions, body language and words.

Avoid judgment or blame.

Ask open-ended questions (questions that start with “what” or “how”) to encourage them to continue speaking.

Normalise their feelings. You can do this by sharing some reasons they may be feeling the way they are and expressing that you understand why they feel this way.

Empathise by acknowledging that what they’re experiencing is difficult.

Determine if there are any immediate risks or safety concerns (see box below for more information). In a situation where the person is not ready to talk, be patient and don’t pressure them. **Invite** them to reach out to you should they want to speak in the future.



DID YOU KNOW?

Individuals from varying cultural backgrounds may have a different understanding/perspective on mental health challenges and suicide. On page 6 and 7 we have included mental health services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

What to do if you detect risk or safety concerns when supporting others:

- While it can be uncomfortable, we recommend asking directly about self-harm or suicidal thoughts. Contrary to popular belief, this will not ‘put the idea into someone's head’. Rather it will show the person you are supporting that you’re willing to help no matter what.
- E.g. “Have you been thinking about suicide?”
- **Do not panic if someone says “yes”.** Ask the individual if they currently feel at **immediate risk of harm**, and if not, you can continue speaking with them and can take further action after you finish the conversation.
- ***Important:** If you leave the conversation concerned about self-harm, thoughts of suicide or suspected abuse, you must notify club management/support staff immediately. Your response in these situations must be consistent with Child Safety Standards applicable to your club and state. If you are currently unclear about your clubs guidelines regarding these risks, please consult your management team at the earliest possible opportunity.

If you feel that the individual is at **immediate risk of harm** to themselves or others, (i.e. expressing intentions of suicide and/or self-harm with an active plan), it is important to create a safe environment and ensure that a trusted adult is present. You must notify club management/support staff immediately. Next steps may include accompanying the individual to the nearest Emergency Department, assisting the individual to arrange sessions with a qualified mental health professional, communication with their family or guardian, or calling emergency services (000) or your local Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (CATT Team).



SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Below is a list of OTLR’s recommended mental health services that may be helpful in seeking out support for your club members.

Important: Please **do not** take an individual’s long-term mental health support into your own hands, do anything you feel uncomfortable doing or take any high-risk intervention strategies upon yourself. This is the role of a qualified mental health professional. If you are unsure what to do to help someone experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis, your club management team and Outside the Locker Room’s welfare team are available to help link you to relevant resources and services.

**FREE, NATIONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
IN AN EMERGENCY, ALWAYS DIAL 000**

CRISIS	Lifeline Australia (13 11 14) Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467)	24/7 crisis support for anyone in Australia who is feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping or staying safe. Australia’s only 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25
GENERAL SUPPORT	Outside The Locker Room Beyond Blue (1300 224 636)	Throughout the duration of our program with your club, all members can reach out to our dedicated welfare team for free consultation advice and referrals. Email welfare@otlr.org.au or message us via our mobile app for a confidential conversation. 24/7 telephone support where you can speak one-on-one with a trained mental health professional.
YOUNG PEOPLE	Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) eHeadspace (1800 650 890)	Australia’s only 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 Phone and online counselling for young people aged 12 and 25, and their family and friends. 9am-1am AEST, every day.
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS	Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services	Culturally appropriate mental health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. ACT: www.winnunga.org.au NSW: www.ahmrc.org.au NT: www.amsant.org.au QLD: www.qaihc.com.au SA: www.ahcsa.org.au TAS: www.tacinc.com.au VIC: www.vaccho.org.au WA: www.ahcwa.org.au
CALD	embracementalhealth.org.au	Mental health and suicide prevention service for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This resource has been created with reference to:

- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [Emerging Minds](#)
- [Kids Health](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [MentalHealth.gov](#)
- [Life Supports Counselling](#)
- [Queensland government website](#)
- [ReachOut.com](#)

Endnotes

1. di Cagno, A., Buonsenso, A., Baralla, F., Grazioli, E., Di Martino, G., Lecce, E., ... & Fiorilli, G. (2020). Psychological Impact of the Quarantine-Induced Stress during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak among Italian Athletes. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(23), 8867
2. Parnell & Krstrup P. Sport and health: Exploring the current state of play. New York, NY: Routledge; (2018)
3. Purcell, R., Gwyther, K. & Rice, S. M. (2019) Mental health in elite athletes; increased awareness requires an early intervention framework to respond to athlete needs. *Sports medicine-open*, 5(1), 1-8.
4. The University Of Western Australia Young Lives Matter Foundation and West Australia Country Football League (2020). Get Around Me: An investigative study into the impact COVID-19 has had on the mental health of country footballers in regional Western Australia and the role that country football clubs can play in supporting and connecting communities and individuals. https://www.wafooty.com.au/download/d/8PkwW6JT00QsuFZ6VL_scJ-VLtEfJ6AWN6zabfJeyEs

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Please note we are not an emergency response or crisis support service. If at any point you are concerned for your safety, or the safety of someone else, please call 000.

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