

# EMOTIONS IN SPORTS

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## **What is mental health?**

Our mental health is influenced by our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel, and act. It also has an impact on how we handle stress, connect with others, and make decisions. From childhood and youth through maturity, mental health is critical.

If you have mental health problems, it is possible that your thinking, mood, and behavior will be affected for the rest of your life.

Many variables lead to mental health issues, such as:

Genes and brain chemistry are examples of biological influences.

Experiences in life, such as trauma or abuse.

There is a family history of mental health issues.

## **Mental health in sports:-**

Physical obstacles, such as intensive training and injuries, can lead to psychological challenges, whether cognitive, emotional, or behavioral. Athletes, like the general population, must deal with personal issues such as relationships or catastrophic life events. All of these different demands can have an impact on athletic performance, training, career transitions, interpersonal relationships, and physical rehabilitation if they are not managed correctly. One in every five adults in the United States has a mental health problem.

That is more than 46 million individuals. And, as impressive as they may be, athletes are still people. They also face stress in their daily lives.

We believe great athletes are composed of stronger stuff than the rest of us because of their extraordinary strength and achievement under duress.

However, athletes may be more vulnerable to mental health difficulties than the overall population. As a result, it is even more critical to raise mental health awareness among athletes.

## **Mental health issues in athletes:-**

Anyone at any stage of life can be affected by mental health difficulties. Athletes deal with enormous demands and pressure. As a result, they are more susceptible to stress triggers than the overaged individual.

To be more specific, we've highlighted a few of the most common reasons for mental health problems in athletes below:

1. The demanding culture.
2. The lifestyle necessities.
3. The competitive setting.
4. Perfectionism is a personality trait.

##### 5. The influence of social stigmas.

Sports psychologist Matthew Sacco, Ph.D., says that while athletes report depression at roughly the same rates as the general population, "the unique culture of sports can serve as a pressure cooker."

Toughness, perfectionism, and competition are often rewarded in sports. At the same time, athletes are discouraged from "taking it easy" or seeking assistance. Researchers discovered that collegiate athletes are less likely than other young adults to seek treatment for mental health concerns in a study of college students.

#### **Emotion in sports:-**

Emotions often run high when participating in sports. Athletes may be frightened before tryouts or a huge competition, unhappy after losing or doing poorly, or excited and delighted after a big win or major success. Athletes can learn to manage their emotions and cope with stress in order to perform well in sports.

The majority of emotion theorists contend that emotions have the ability to inspire and govern cognitions and behaviors in sports. Theorists have attempted to categorize emotions in order to better understand their antecedents, experiences, and repercussions. One key topic is whether certain emotions should be deemed fundamental. Is it true that some emotions are inherent to the human experience? To answer this issue, explore the criteria for identifying such basic emotions, the purposes of basic emotions, and if basic emotions may be modified through social learning.

#### **Positive emotions in sports:-**

Mindfulness is just the mental act of paying complete attention to the current moment. It entails being fully aware of your environment, behaviors, and mental and emotional state at all times. It is about improving your mental control and capacity to focus. Mindfulness is a talent that may be honed through practice, education, and intentional effort.

Practicing mindfulness can help us stay centered and focused. It can assist us in becoming aware of each emotion as it comes and in making deliberate judgments about how to respond to these feelings. It gives us more control since we can recognize our emotions earlier and contain them before they surge beyond our control.

It appears self-evident that pleasant emotions such as happiness or enthusiasm can lead to beneficial and constructive outcomes. Sports, in addition to relieving stress, can help young athletes grow more confident and focused. Pleasant emotions in sports are also related to a sense of belonging, accomplishment, satisfaction, and success. This leads to peak performance and mental health.

#### **Negative emotions in sports:-**

For athletes, negative emotions such as worry or fury can have a negative impact on their performance. Too much emphasis on winning can cause emotional and psychological discomfort. Pressure to perform and expectation-related stress can lead to weariness, athletic burnout, and, in severe situations, melancholy. Athletes who suffer from sports injuries typically experience negative emotions such as restlessness, hopelessness, and hatred. Other negative emotions encountered in athletics include exhaustion, tension, anger, and a sense of uncertainty.

Many events during a competition can elicit negative emotions, such as bad calls, stupid mistakes, making an error at a vital time of the competition, and just performing poorly. All of these occurrences have two things in common

that are at the root of the negative emotions: You have the impression that your road to a goal is being obstructed, and you lack control over removing the impediment.

Assume a tennis player is losing to an opponent he believes he should beat, and no matter what he does, he can't seem to turn the match around. Initially, the tennis player is likely to be frustrated and angry. These emotions can be beneficial at first since they push him to fight in order to clear the road to his goal and recover control of the game. However, if he is unable to alter the direction of the game, he may suffer despair and helplessness, in which he acknowledges that he cannot win and simply gives up.

### **The individual zone of optimal functioning:-**

The individual zone of optimal functioning is as follows: Aside from anxiety, the Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) model focuses on functional emotions that improve athletic performance and dysfunctional emotions that degrade athletic performance (Hanin, 2007). The IZOF concept suggests that athletes select their own zone using a unique strategy that takes into account a maximum amount of functional and a minimum amount of dysfunctional emotions.

An athlete's performance is good when his or her pre-competition anxiety is within or near the individually optimal zone, according to the individual zones of optimal functioning (IZOF) concept. When anxiety levels fall below the appropriate level, performance suffers.

The ideal arousal zone varies depending on the activity. Weight-lifters, for example, require high levels of arousal to generate maximum power during the lift. Low levels, on the other hand, aid golfers about to make a putt so that they can undertake controlled, precise motions. Individuals pursuing the same activity may have different zones of optimal arousal. Individual zones of optimal functioning are occasionally used to emphasize the idiographic aspect of the zone of optimal functioning.

### **How should sports people manage emotions while playing sports?**

When players get frustrated, their performance often suffers. But practicing mindfulness, as Positive Psychology researcher Lara Mossman explains, “ helps them to buy a split-second to think before they act.”

Some ways in which sportspeople can cope with extreme emotions are:-

#### 1. MUSIC

Listening to music can help an athlete get into the zone. Upbeat or encouraging music, for example, boosts an athlete's confidence and motivation, resulting in improved performance on the pitch. Music increases arousal levels while also helping to block out distracting thoughts.

#### 2. SELF TALK

Negative self-talk leads to a negative emotional state, which negatively impacts athletic performance. Replacing it with positive self-talk like "I played really well in my last match" or "I've succeeded at this before, I know I can now" counteracts negative emotions while also creating good ones. This positive self-talk generates beneficial emotions like happiness.

#### 3. RELAX YOUR BODY

To feel physically and mentally peaceful, try tensing your muscles for a few seconds and then actively relaxing them. According to research, this results in a lower heart rate, less physical tiredness, and less worry.

#### 4. DEEP BREATHS

Focusing on taking deep, slow breaths, similar to muscle relaxation, can be beneficial in regulating emotion. These breaths promote feelings of relief and reduce physical manifestations of negative emotions such as muscle tension. It also gives you a sense of control over the situation, slows things down, and gives you time to think about how to continue.

#### **Reasons why sports people should go for counseling if they find it hard to cope with their emotions:-**

1. If a player has doubts about the game and his own abilities, he will be unable to test his abilities. Furthermore, the player will have a lack of confidence, which is enough to derail the entire game. Sports counselors can easily support the player by clearing his doubts and providing him with the necessary knowledge.
2. One of the most common strategies for obtaining optimum performance is sports counseling, which is only possible with the help of an experienced sports counselor. Counselors can also unearth the true motivations for a player's engagement in order to better support him.
3. As previously stated, confidence is essential for success in the sports industry. It has been shown that athletes who experience injuries while participating in sports have less confidence and are less likely to compete at the same level again. A sports psychologist can help a player's injured confidence by clearing away mental scars. Counselors have a greater understanding of the players who have sustained sporting injuries, which is why they are so vital.
4. There is a good likelihood that a team of many players will engage in an argument. A therapist can help athletes improve their communication and teamwork abilities in instances like these.

#### **Interview:-**

I conducted an interview with a sportsman, Aditya Dhayanand. These are his insights into the few questions I had asked him.

1. "Is it important for sportsmen to have good mental health?"

It is a very vital and necessary requirement for a sportsman. After talking and listening to my friend who is a sportsman Aditya Dhayanand, I've understood that it is important for sports-playing individuals to talk about mental health and have a good strong head. He feels that every individual expresses his emotions differently regarding sports, while some are motivated if they fail, others are willing to give up and not try again, some get angry, some get afraid and some even crumble under the pressure of results. So he feels for an athlete or sportsman to perform and do well in his/her sport she needs to have good mental health or a better understanding of how to manage it and help them do better. Some of the pressure that sportsmen go through are :

Bad performance  
 Poor Results  
 Unfortunate games  
 Injuries

Lack of confidence after unfortunate games

To cope with these and well to fight back stronger mental health plays a very important role.

In his opinion, it's more required for sports players who represent their country and who have a career in that game rather than those who play it as a hobby. Because the pressure in those levels of the game is much higher compared to any other. If you take Formula 1 into consideration every driver's life is on the line. At such high speeds and calculated decisions, one small mistake from the driver and he could potentially die so keeping all that in mind it's important to maintain good health and to be on top of your performance.

2. "What Emotions do you feel while playing a sport?"

Since Aditya Dhayanand is a football player, he said that there are a lot of emotions that a player feels while he's in the zone and in the field playing. Firstly, it's adrenaline and there's the hunger to win no matter how much you need to put in for it. He hates to lose and puts everything into each of his games. And if he were to be upset or dealing with something he would channel it into his games and just use that to motivate himself to do better. There's a lot of competition while playing professional football and each of the players is as hungry as another is for victory, so there's always that fear of getting injuries but it's very minor compared to the hunger for victory. A player in the zone whose focus will only feel adrenaline, hunger for victory, and his/her motivation for it.

3. "Should counseling for sportspeople be mandatory?"

He personally thinks it shouldn't be mandatory for every player but it should be an option for every player like how every school and college institution has counselors each club or sports team should have the option of their player talking to a professional. Although it is important it shouldn't be mandatory cause every player needs to have the option to choose to talk or not. Every player works and functions differently so those who think they'll do better talking to someone if they had to build their confidence up or to increase the drive to perform better, they should have the option. While the others who don't feel that talking to someone would help them should have their choice not to and making it mandatory would cause a lot of problems later on.

But it is a very good idea of having a professional on the team.