

GENERAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

TOPIC 5:

RELAXATION & DEALING WITH STRESS

INTRODUCTION

Whilst it is important to train hard to improve your performance, it is also vital to bear in mind the need to relax and unwind.

Difficult/ life events may occur which cause you to feel anxious and stressed. This can include poor results academically and athletically, family bereavement, relationship issues ...

Here are some stress management strategies for you to consider.

PROTECTED RELAXATION TIME

- Put aside some free time on a regular basis to unwind and relax. For example, this might be an hour or two at night before going to bed where you can call a friend to chat or pick up a magazine to read.
- Try to keep at least 1 day a week free from training. This will give you the chance to recharge both physically and mentally.
- Avoid taking on too many commitments which will leave you feeling overstretched, jaded and fatigued.

HOBBIES

- It is important to have hobbies outside of your sport. They can confer benefits not immediately apparent. Chess, for example, is a good hobby to take up as it allows you to switch off from your usual sport, whilst sharpening your observational, mental and tactical skills!

CLOSE FRIENDS & FAMILY

- Maintain a support network of close friends and family that you can speak to at any time.
- Don't keep your worries and anxieties bottled up.
- If things are not going your way, it can be therapeutic to speak to a friend who can lend a 'sympathetic ear'.

MINDFULNESS

- Whatever you are doing, try to savour the present and enjoy it!
- Meditation can be a helpful way of dealing with stress.
- Recognise the issues that are causing you stress/ anxiety, you will then be better placed to come up with a solution to resolve it.
- Learn also to recognise when an issue is beyond your control and try to come to terms with it. In these situations, worrying will not make anything 'better' and only serves to be detrimental to your mental wellbeing.

AVOID EXCESS

- In times of stress, there may be a temptation to eat more/ drink more alcohol/ drink more coffee/ smoke/ take illicit drugs/ become more reckless.
- Be aware of these detrimental lifestyle excesses- In some cases (caffeine/ alcohol/ food), make an effort to control and moderate your intake. In other cases (smoking/ drugs/ reckless behaviour), it is best to avoid this completely.

SEEKING HELP

- The list above is not comprehensive but will hopefully act as a starting point.
- If you are still struggling despite the above, seek help from a qualified professional (e.g. Doctor or Counsellor)

Key phrases: Protected time, Hobbies, Friends & Family, Meditation, Mindfulness, Avoiding excess, Seeking help.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

VIDEOS-

STRUGGLING WITH STRESS?

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/understanding-stress.aspx

COPING WITH EXAM STRESS.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/coping-with-exam-stress.aspx