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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Things to Consider for Student-Athletes

**Athletic Transferable Skills**

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

(Stankovich, 2009)

**References**


**Counseling Student – Athletes**

**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**
- 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.**

**Appraoches 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 your 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 his/her sport's future
- **Supports – Identifying you're support system.**
- **Strategies – Develop an action plan to appropriately handle the transition.**

**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 shame in 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?**

(Stankovich, 2014)

**Acquire working knowledge of student-athlete’s sport**

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

(Stankovich, 2014)

**Value that comes from other aspects of their life.**

**While still understanding the importance of their sport.**

**The Big Picture**

Help student-athletes find and create value within themselves.

**References**


