

MAKING MENTAL HEALTH A PART OF YOUR MISSION

Three Powerful Ways to
Help Coaches and
Sponsors Support Their
Students

LITTLETON
PUBLIC 
SCHOOLS



PRESENTERS:



NATE THOMPSON

Director of Social,
Emotional & Behavior
Services



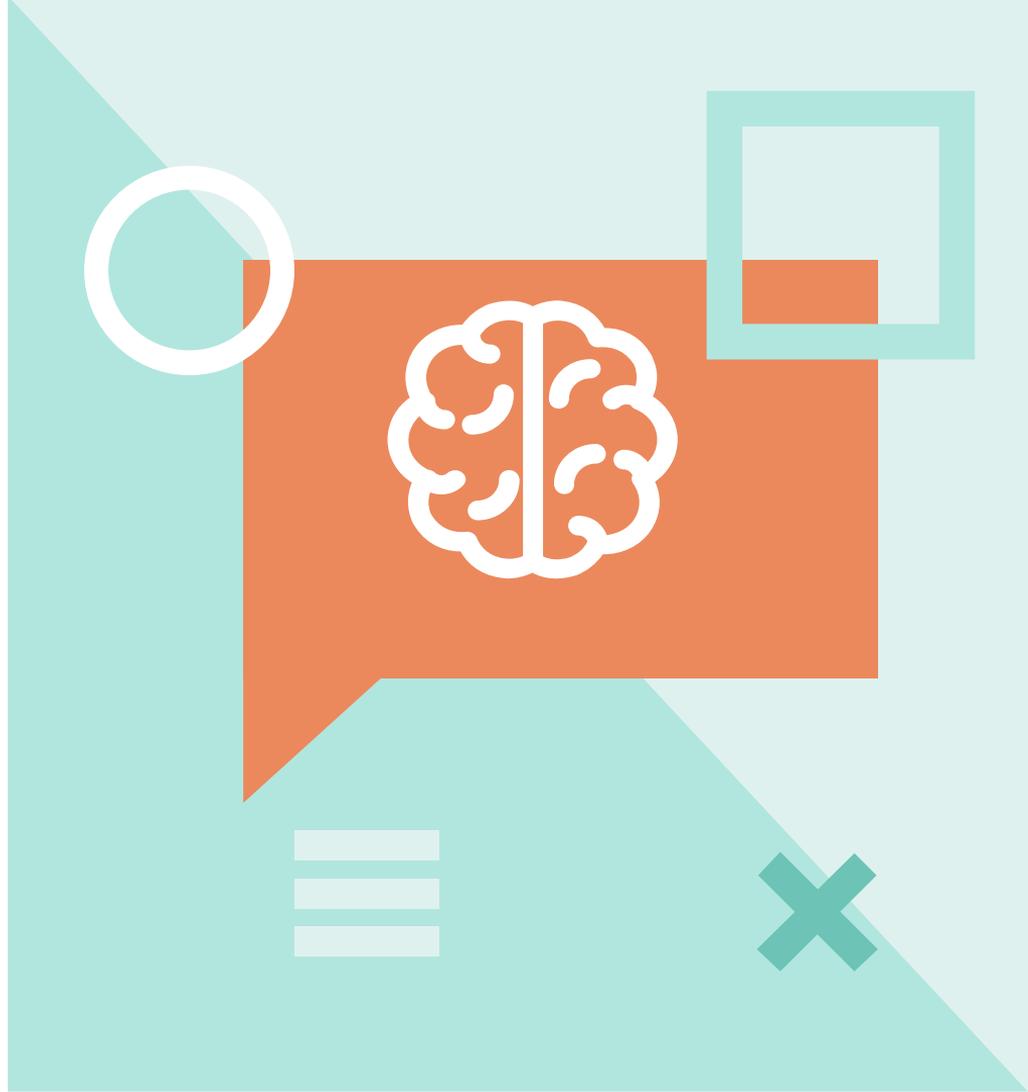
CLAY ABLA

Director of Secondary
Education and District
Athletic Director

**“A GOOD coach can
change a game.**

**A GREAT coach can
change a life.”**

- John Wooden



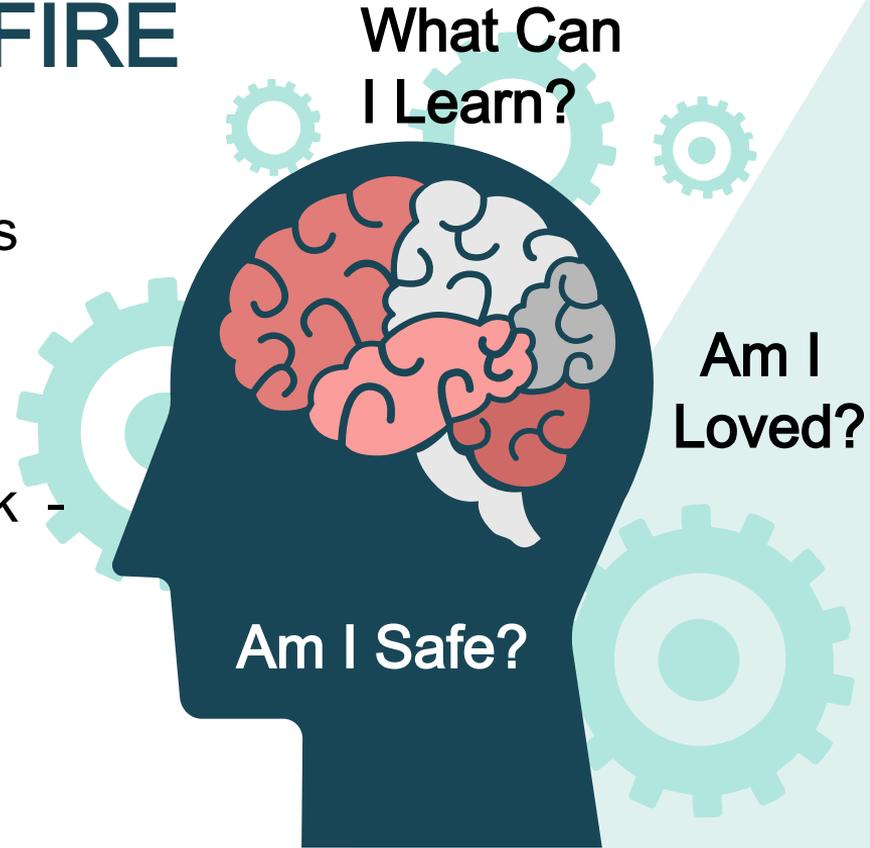
Five Characteristics of a Great Coach:

From Tony Price, Randolph (MA) High School

- 1. The coach is committed to the school community and knows the student dynamic.**
- 2. The coach genuinely and deeply cares about their athletes.**
- 3. The coach is educated in the sport they teach and can effectively communicate their ideas to athletes.**
- 4. The coach is organized and has a practice plan they execute on a daily basis**
- 5. The coach is committed to values of education, family, and maintaining integrity and diversity.**

TEEN BRAINS ARE ON FIRE

- Rapid pruning and growth of neurons and neural pathways
- Exploring identity and social relationships
- Increased sensation seeking and risk - taking
- Highly influenced by their environment
- Emotional reactions
- Need sleep and time off screens



BEING PREPARED FOR REAL SITUATIONS:

CAR ACCIDENT

MAJOR INJURY

DEATH OF STUDENT OR STAFF

DISASTERS

FAMILY ISSUES

HOMELESSNESS

OVERDOSE

SUICIDE

RACIAL CONFLICT

CAR ACCIDENT

SEXUAL ASSAULT

SCHOOL SHOOTING



THREE THINGS TO EXPECT FROM YOUR COACHES AND SPONSORS

01

Promote mental
wellness and life
balance

02

Know what to do
when a youth is in
crisis

03

Help with recovery
after a traumatic
event

PREVENTION

Promote mental wellness and life balance

- Be positive, encouraging, & respectful
- Check in with your athletes on a deeper level How are you?
- Be honest, clear about expectations and avoid shaming
- Encourage sleep, nutrition, and healthy activities
- Support a healthy balance of sports vs. other activities
- Don't ignore hazing or conflicts between athletes
- Keep healthy boundaries be a coach, not a friend



COACHES HAVE HUGE POWER... ...BUT USE THE FORCE WISELY

It is two days before the big playoff game and your star player/performer tells you that he/she went to the hospital last night due to a panic attack and depression. This is the first time you have heard about any mental health concerns.

How would you respond?



INTERVENTION

Know what to do when a youth is in crisis

- Look for behavioral changes, isolation, or signs of distress
- Take it serious- express concern and ask questions
- Act immediately, don't wait to intervene
- Don't handle it by yourself. Call your admin, AD, or school counselor/psychologist/social worker
- Communicate and share concerns with parents
- Remind athletes their mental health is more important than sports
- Reduce stigma by reinforcing the benefits of getting help



RECOGNIZING POTENTIAL CONCERNS



BIG REMINDERS:



**KNOW THE AFTERHOURS
PROTOCOLS AND CONTACT
NUMBERS.**

**NEVER WORK ALONE. BE
HUMBLE ENOUGH TO GET HELP.**

**PROVIDE FREQUENT REMINDERS,
ESPECIALLY TO COACHES &
VOLUNTEERS WHO DON'T WORK
AT THE SCHOOL.**

POSTVENTION

Help with recovery after a traumatic event

- Be prepared to play a role some kids want to talk to you
- Allow youth to share and express emotions
- Prioritize emotional recovery over normal practice routines
- Promote healthy grieving and avoiding drugs and alcohol
- Be a role model for sharing thoughts, emotions and ways to manage grief and anger
- Connect kids back to parents and school mental health staff



Examples of Prioritizing Recovery:

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a teal background with a white diagonal line. There are several geometric shapes: a teal square at the top, a white circle on the left, a white circle at the bottom left, and a white 'x' at the bottom. A large orange speech bubble is in the center, containing a dark blue diamond with a white gear icon and a white 'x'. A teal circle is partially visible behind the speech bubble.

Coordinating with the school mental health staff

Using practice time to talk

Cancelling a game when kids aren't ready to play

Encouraging ways to practice service or generosity

Resources:

HOW HIGH SCHOOL COACHES CAN SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ATHLETES

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COLORADO CRISIS SERVICES | 844-439-TALK (8255) | 1-800-TALK-TO-28255

Written by Maria Thompson, LCSW
Director of Social, Emotional, and Behavior Services
Littleton Public Schools, Littleton, CO

[Suicide Prevention Training Options](#)

[NFHS Mental Health Course](#)

[NCAA Mental Health Site](#)

THE TEEN BRAIN: 7 THINGS TO KNOW

From the NATIONAL INSTITUTE of MENTAL HEALTH

DID YOU KNOW THAT **BIG AND IMPORTANT CHANGES** ARE HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN DURING ADOLESCENCE? HERE ARE **7 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE TEEN BRAIN:**

1 THE BRAIN REACHES ITS BIGGEST SIZE IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE.

For girls, the brain reaches its biggest size around 11 years old. For boys, the brain reaches its biggest size around age 14. But this difference does not mean either boys or girls are smarter than one another!



2 THE BRAIN CONTINUES TO MATURE EVEN AFTER IT IS DONE GROWING.

Though the brain may be done growing in size, it does not finish developing and maturing until the mid- to late 20s. The front part of the brain, called the prefrontal cortex, is one of the last brain regions to mature. This area is responsible for skills like planning, prioritizing, and controlling impulses. Because these skills are still developing, teens are more likely to engage in risky behaviors without considering the potential results of their decisions.



3 THE TEEN BRAIN IS READY TO LEARN AND ADAPT.

The teen brain has lots of plasticity, which means it can change, adapt, and respond to its environment. Challenging academics or mental activities, exercise, and creative activities such as art can help the brain mature and learn.



4 MANY MENTAL DISORDERS MAY BEGIN TO APPEAR DURING ADOLESCENCE.

Ongoing changes in the brain, along with physical, emotional, and social changes, can make teens vulnerable to mental health problems. All the big changes the brain is experiencing may explain why adolescence is a time when many mental disorders—such as schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders—can emerge.



THANK YOU!

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HOW HIGH SCHOOL COACHES CAN SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ATHLETES



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OR TEXT TALK TO 26255



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5 TEEN BRAINS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE TO STRESS.

Because the teen brain is still developing, teens may respond to stress differently than adults, which could lead to stress-related mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. Mindfulness, which is a psychological process of actively paying attention to the present moment, may help teens cope with and reduce stress. More information on managing stress is available in the National Institute of Mental Health's fact sheet, *5 Things You Should Know About Stress* (www.nimh.nih.gov/stress).



6 TEENS NEED MORE SLEEP THAN CHILDREN AND ADULTS.

Research shows that melatonin (the “sleep hormone”) levels in the blood are naturally higher later at night and drop later in the morning in teens than in most children and adults. This difference may explain why many teens stay up late and struggle with getting up in the morning. Teens should get about 9 to 10 hours of sleep a night, but most teens do not get enough sleep. A lack of sleep can make it difficult to pay attention, may increase impulsivity, and may increase the risk for irritability or depression.

7 THE TEEN BRAIN IS RESILIENT.

Although adolescence is a vulnerable time for the brain and for teenagers in general, most teens go on to become healthy adults. Some changes in the brain during this important phase of development actually may help protect against long-term mental disorders.



FINDING HELP

If you or someone you know has a mental illness, is struggling emotionally, or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to get help. Find more information at www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

Communicating well with your doctor or other health care provider can improve your care and help you both make good choices about your health. Find tips to help prepare and get the most out of your visit at www.nimh.nih.gov/talkingtips.

If you are in immediate distress or are thinking about hurting yourself, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or the toll-free TTY number at 1-800-799-4TTY (4889). You also can text the Crisis Text Line (HELLO to 741741) or go to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

