



Psychological Safety and Mental Wellbeing

Sherwood Park Minor Hockey Association is committed to create a high-performance sport environment that is psychologically safe and healthy. Psychological safety in sport focuses on creating a healthy atmosphere that allows players to thrive and be the best players they can be. In addition, it allows athletes to feel safe to share “interpersonal risk-taking” such as asking for help, admitting one’s errors, or seeking feedback from others”.

Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety is an environment where every reasonable effort is made to protect the mental health of individuals.

Psychological Health

Psychological health is an environment where every reasonable effort is made to promote the mental health of individuals.

Benefits of a psychologically safe environment in sport?

Athletes in a psychologically safe environment demonstrate a genuine interest in their teammates, have positive intentions toward one another, in addition to mutual respect for other’s competence, especially when mistakes are made.

What happens when the sporting environment is deemed psychologically unsafe?

When athletes feel psychologically unsafe in their team, this means they are reluctant to demonstrate their vulnerabilities, even if it could benefit the team, as they believe it puts them at risk of appearing incompetent or weak and posing a threat to their self-image. This is not a healthy environment for athletes to be able to work in.

Why is a psychologically safe environment so important?

- It is a key component in cultivating successful performance
- It allows for better teamwork, resilience and athlete satisfaction
- It is important for the health of athletes by protecting them from burnout
- It creates an environment where athletes feel safe to speak up and share ideas, ask for help and admit to mistakes
- Athletes embrace their mistakes and treat failure as learning
- It allows team members to feel accepted so they can flourish and fulfil their full potential without fear





Mental Wellbeing

Sherwood Park Minor Hockey Association understands and promotes the mental wellbeing of its participants through psychologically safe and healthy environments and mental wellness practices.

What is Mental Wellness?

Mental Wellness is defined as “A state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.

One's overall Mental Wellness can be affected by biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry, life experiences such as trauma or abuse, toxic stress, family history of mental health problems and brain injury.

1 in 5 Canadians are affected by mental health problems, no one is immune, including athletes.

According to the Raising Canada September 2020 report by Children First Canada, suicide is now the leading cause of death for children aged 10-14.

Sports and positive mental health

- Team sports build strong relationships
- Improves sleep
- Teaches resilience
- Teaches perseverance
- Builds leadership skills
- Physical activity distracts the brain and reduces stress

What to do if an athlete approaches you about their mental health

1. Be approachable – their approach indicates a need to talk
2. Give total attention and listen
3. Ask clarifying questions – not judgmental such as ‘are you thinking of hurting yourself’ or ‘do you have a plan’
4. Indicate you want to help and ask if there is anything they need
5. Make a referral – know the limits of your role

If the athlete prefers to meet with a professional, encourage them to seek help from another Mental Performance Consultant, their family physician, clinical counsellor, registered psychologist or psychiatrist.

