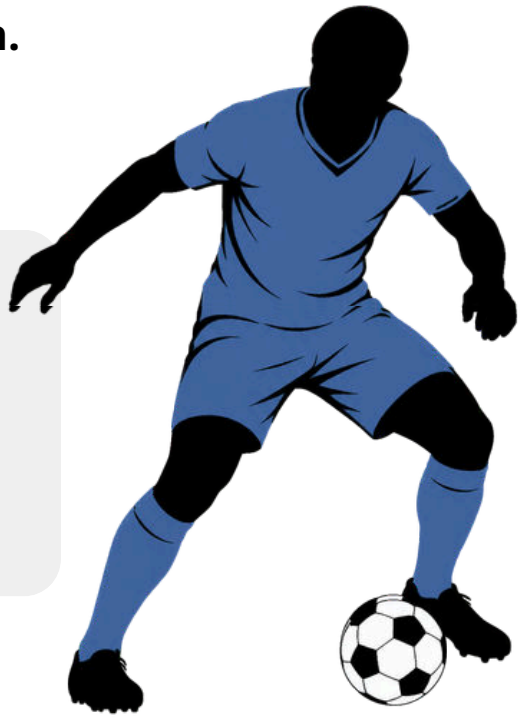
Stress & Mental Health

Understand the impact. Notice the pattern. Know what to do.

WHAT IS IT?

Stress is the body's response to feeling threatened or under pressure. In short bursts it can sharpen focus or motivate action.

Concern grows when stress feels overwhelming, continues for a long time or affects mood, sleep, relationships, daily life or sport. Stress is not weakness. A coach should support—not diagnose.



5 WAYS STRESS CAN AFFECT SOMEONE

01 Feelings & mood

Someone may feel worried, irritable, tearful, angry, scared, hopeless or overwhelmed.

02 Thinking & focus

Racing thoughts, forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating or deciding can affect performance.

03 Sleep & body

Headaches, dizziness, muscle tension, stomach problems, poor sleep or a faster heartbeat may occur.

04 Behaviour & habits

They may withdraw, avoid situations, eat differently or use alcohol, smoking or substances to cope.

05 Energy & burnout

Long-term or severe stress can cause physical, mental and emotional exhaustion—often called burnout.

A coach notices and supports—a coach does not diagnose.

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Notice. Respond. Connect.
SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice—and what to do next.

- More irritable, worried, tearful or overwhelmed than usual.
- Poor concentration, forgetfulness or unusual mistakes.
- Missing sessions, withdrawing or avoiding pressure situations.
- Poor sleep, headaches, stomach problems or muscle tension.
- Drinking, smoking or using other substances more to cope.
- Feeling hopeless, unable to cope, or talking about self-harm or suicide.



Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign? Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

URGENT / MEDICAL

Take self-harm or suicide seriously. If someone is in immediate danger, at immediate risk of suicide or has seriously harmed themselves, call 999 or go to A&E. Stay with them. If urgent but not an emergency, contact a GP or GP out-of-hours service. New or severe chest pain, breathing difficulty or collapse needs urgent medical assessment.

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

GP / LOCAL SERVICE
www.mindingyourhead.info

TEXT "TEAMMATE" TO 85258
LIFELINE 0808 808 8000

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5 WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

01 Talk and Listen

Choose a suitable moment and ask: “I’ve noticed you seem under pressure—how are things?”

Listen without interrupting, judging or immediately trying to fix everything. Social support can reduce isolation and help people see problems differently.

02 Reduce the Immediate Pressure

Help identify what is causing the stress. Break large problems into smaller steps, agree what can wait and offer practical adjustments, such as a short break or reduced-pressure role.

Feeling more in control can reduce stress.

03 Calm the Body

Encourage slow breathing, grounding or a few quiet minutes away from the situation. These techniques can settle the body’s stress response and make it easier to think clearly.

Avoid simply saying “calm down.”

04 Protect Healthy Routines

Support regular sleep, meals, physical activity, relaxation and connection with others.

Avoid relying on alcohol, drugs, gambling or smoking to cope—they may provide temporary relief but can worsen mental health.

05 Connect With Further Help

Encourage support from a GP, school, workplace or mental-health service when stress persists, becomes overwhelming or affects everyday life.

Offer to help make contact and continue checking in. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999. In Northern Ireland, Lifeline: 0808 808 8000 is available 24/7.



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