

# Understanding the Transition



## More Demands, Less Time

Balancing coursework, team commitments, travel, and recovery is a constant challenge



## Greater Pressure to Perform

Many athletes tie self-worth to performance



## New Environment, New Support Systems

They may hesitate to reach out for help due to stigma or pride



## Identity Shifts

Balancing the “athlete” identity with their academic and social selves can be disorienting

You don't need to fix these challenges.

Solely understanding what they're going through is a powerful first step.

# Resources to Know About

📌 Encourage your student to save key numbers in their phone before they need them. **Having resources doesn't mean they're weak, it means they're prepared.** Help your student know where to go when they need support.

## Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Confidential therapy, support groups, and mental health workshops

## Athletic Department Mental Health Staff

Some schools have sport psychologists, performance counselors, or wellness coordinators

## NCAA Mental Health Resources

Articles, toolkits, and guidelines for student-athletes

## National Suicide Lifeline

Call or text 988



## Supporting Your Student Athlete

## A Parent's Guide to Athlete Mental Health During the Transition to College Sports

Dragonfly Initiative  
[www.dragonflyinitiative.org](http://www.dragonflyinitiative.org)





## Common Mental Health Challenges

**Performance Anxiety:** fear of failure or letting others down

**Depression & Homesickness:** feeling persistently sad, unmotivated, or alone

**Identity Confusion:** pressure to define themselves solely as an athlete

**Burnout & Overtraining:** loss of motivation, irritability, and increased risk of injury

**Body Image & Disordered Eating:** undereating, overexercising, or unhealthy habits

## Warning Signs to Watch For

- ✓ Withdrawal or avoiding communication
- ✓ Changes in mood, eating, or sleep
- ✓ Loss of interest in school, sport, or social activities
- ✓ Frequent injuries or complaints of fatigue

## Your Role Matters More Than Ever

As your student-athlete embarks on this exciting new chapter, your support remains a cornerstone of their success not just in their sport, but in their mental health and overall well-being.

Transitioning from high school to college athletics is a huge milestone. It brings new opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities for your student — many of which they've never faced before. This period is not only a physical and academic adjustment but an emotional one, too.

This pamphlet is designed to help you:



Understand what your student athlete is experiencing



Learn how to recognize early signs of mental health struggles



Gain practical tools to support them

You don't need to have all the answers. Being present, listening, and checking in with intention can make all the difference.



## What Parents Can Do

You don't need to be a mental health expert to make a difference. Your encouragement, compassion, and consistent presence can help your student-athlete thrive on and off the field.

- **Normalize Talking About Mental Health** - encourage open, judgment-free conversations
- **Focus on the Person, Not the Performance** - remind them that they are *more than their sport*.
- **Stay Connected in Simple, Consistent Ways** - texts like "Thinking of you" or "Proud of you no matter what" go a long way
- **Encourage Healthy Habits** - check in about sleep and social balance — not just practices or grades
- **Know When to Step In** - if your student expresses hopelessness, isolation, or drastic changes in behavior, help them access support

