

# Depression

Athletes are at risk for depression--high pressure sporting events, personal and team expectations and individual disposition may increase bouts of depression in susceptible athletes. Identification and treatment of depression in athletes helps relieve symptoms and decrease the depression.

*Double Olympic Champion Kelly Holmes's self-harming as a "classic case" of an athlete's depression over injury turning to self-loathing. Holmes, the 800 and 1500 meters gold medalist in Athens, has revealed that she slashed her body with a pair of scissors 14 months before the Olympics after becoming depressed and frustrated by injury. She said: "I made one cut for every day that I had been injured."*

Individual and personal sports create a high pressure environment that focuses on winning and achieving progress. Setbacks, whether because of a loss or an injury, may challenge an athlete's esteem and feelings of self worth and contribute to the development of depression.

Categorized by society as physically and mentally fit and tough, athletes are represented as pillars of health and well-being in culture. Societal projections and expectations make it challenging for athletes to seek mental health help. According to Russ Johnson (former infielder for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays), physical ailments are tolerated in professional sports, while athletes with depression face stigmatization.

*"I've got a clean mind, and I'm healthy. I'm happier with myself than I've ever been," NHL enforcer Rick Rypien, returning to hockey after taking two leaves of absence from the Vancouver Canucks in three years due to depression. "I think it's going to be how I behave and how I act over time, but I'm just taking it one day at a time, and I'm more excited about hockey than I've ever been in my whole life."*

# Anxiety

People with social anxiety fear social and performance situations. The most common fear is public speaking. However, other types of performances such as musical and athletic may also elicit anxiety. Most sport psychologists work with athletes to help them overcome anxiety about performance during competitions.

*Earl Campbell, has been quite public about his struggles with Panic Disorder. Campbell reportedly developed Panic Disorder in 1988, three years after his football career had ended. After becoming agoraphobic, Campbell sought professional help and eventually went on to write a memoir of his struggles titled *The Earl Campbell Story: A Football Great's Battle with Panic Disorder*.*

Anxiety before or during athletic competitions can hinder your performance as an athlete. The coordinated movement required by athletic events becomes increasingly difficult when your body is in a tense state. A certain level of physical arousal is helpful and prepares us for competition. But when the physical symptoms of anxiety are too great, they may seriously interfere with your ability to compete.

*Houston Rockets Basketball player Royce White says he has suffered upward of three panic attacks – his heart racing in his chest, convinced he will die. "I've been terrified," says White about such attacks. "But I'm always worried, or more like abnormally cautious, pensive, and looking for things that might be a threat in everyday situations."*

A certain amount of worry about how you perform can be helpful in competition, but severe cognitive symptoms of anxiety such as negative thought patterns and expectations of failure can bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy. If there is a substantial difference between how you perform during practice and how you do during competitions, anxiety may be affecting your performance.

# Substance Abuse

*"Throughout the last couple of years, playing with pain and injuries and because of numerous surgeries, I became dependent upon medication. During this last surgery, a surgery on my ankle, I suffered a seizure in the hospital. Because of that I sought help through the NFL, I think the best thing to do was get some help" Brett Farve.*

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*"I tell people that when they see alcoholics or drug addicts on the streets, they should think about me.... NFL Man of the Year, family man, a man who loves God. Yes, those things are all part of the picture" Chris Carter .*

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# Anxiety

Anxiety may be an irrational dread of everyday situations, a disabling disorder.

Five major types of anxiety disorders are: Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Panic Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Social Phobia (or Social Anxiety Disorder). Each year approximately four million people suffer from Generalized Anxiety Disorder. It affects more women than men and may begin anywhere from childhood to adolescence.

Psychotherapy involves talking with a counselor to discover what caused an anxiety disorder and how to deal with its symptoms. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is very useful in treating anxiety disorders.

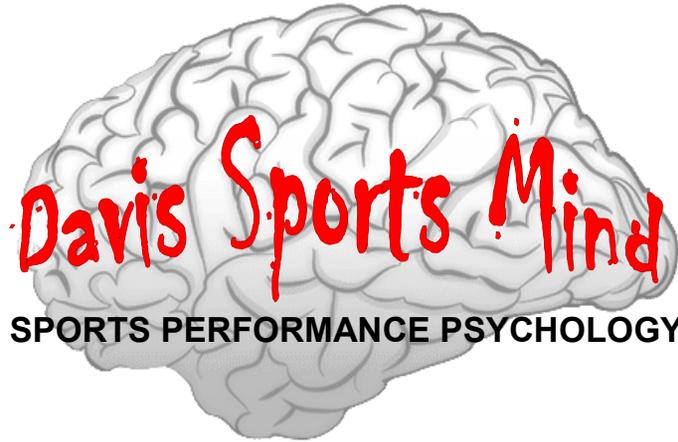
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