

GOOD PRACTICES



IN THE SPORTING WORLD

Mental wellbeing is a fundamental pillar in the performance and life of any athlete. Over the years, sport has been associated primarily with physical effort, discipline and pushing limits, leaving the importance of mental health in the background. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that emotional and psychological balance is essential to reach one's full potential and, above all, to ensure a sustainable sporting career and a fulfilling life.

This document aims to provide a set of good practices to promote mental wellbeing in sport.

Through these examples of good practice, we aim to promote a healthy sporting environment, where mental health care is normalised and tools are provided to prevent stress, anxiety, burnout and other issues that can affect athletes. A focus on mental health improves performance and motivation, as well as strengthening resilience, teamwork and enjoyment of sport.

This document is a step towards a more conscious and inclusive sporting culture, where the well-being of athletes is a priority.

DWAYNE JOHNSON

FERNANDO ALONSO

BRITTNEY GRINER

ANA MARÍA MARKOVIC

ANDRÉS INIESTA

OIHANE VALDEZATE

ABBY WAMBACH

MACARENA CABRILLANA

PAU GASOL

SERENA WILLIAMS

TONY ADAMS

ÁLEX ABRINES

DEMAR DEROZAN

CAROLINA MARÍN

YULIMAR ROJAS

NAOMI OSAKA

FRAN KIRBY

LYDIA VALENTÍN

FEDE GÓMEZ

RICKY RUBIO

KEVIN LOVE

IAN THORPE

MICHAEL PHELPS

ANA PELETEIRO

SIMONE BILES

RICKY WILLIAMS

CLINT MALARCHUK

ANA PELETEIRO

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Ana Peleteiro-Compaoré Brión is a Spanish athlete who competes in athletics, specialising in the triple jump. She won the bronze medal in the triple jump at Tokyo 2020.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

She said that she fell ‘into that pit where I thought I thought I was going to stay there’ after her ‘very early success’ and an injury that prevented her from participating in Rio 2016. The athlete has valued mental health: ‘If I had known that psychological help was going to help me so much I would have started earlier, but I never took the step because I thought I had it under control’.



DEFODI IMAGES//GETTY IMAGES

‘I don't know why it's hard for us to admit that we need to take care of our heads. It has helped me a lot personally and obviously professionally’.

ANDRÉS INIESTA

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Andrés Iniesta Luján is a former Spanish footballer. He played as a midfielder, spending most of his career with F. C. Barcelona and the Spanish national team, being the most successful footballer in the history of his country, with a total of 40 official titles.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Behind his success on the pitch, Iniesta lived in silence an internal struggle that was marked by depression, a subject on which he has become increasingly open and outspoken.

The footballer was one of the first to speak out about mental health in the world of sport, where psychological weakness has always been stigmatised.



ETSUO HARA/GETTY IMAGES

'I told my mother 'either we go down to see the doctor or I'm going to die'. I had lost everything that was me.'

RICKY RUBIO

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Ricky Rubio has been one of Spain's most outstanding basketball references, with a successful career both in the NBA and with the national team. His ability on the court and his ability to lead his team have earned him worldwide recognition.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Ricky Rubio's story is marked by moments of great success, but also by an accumulation of emotional pressure and stress that was not visible to the public. The death of his mother in 2016 was a devastating blow for him, a pain that he never fully processed due to the need to move forward with his professional career.



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'I've been in the dark, but by working and with the help of the necessary professionals, you can get out. A word, a hug, an 'I'm here', everything helps. I've been saved and now I'm at ease. I am proud of myself. I'm giving basketball another chance.'

CAROLINA MARÍN

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Carolina Marín is synonymous with success in the world of badminton. Olympic champion, multiple world champion and a benchmark in Spanish sport, her career has been marked by exceptional achievements that have placed her among the best sportswomen in history.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

In several interviews, Carolina has talked about how her team relies on a psychologist. In fact, she has been working with psychologists since she was 15 years old and today she works with a psychologist who for her is a fundamental support in her team as a result of the injuries she has had and the family loss she had years ago.



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‘I’m not an alien or a superhero, I’m a human being. I have my emotions, my feelings, and working on the mental part and talking about my emotions and expressing my feelings helps me a lot because I am very emotional’.

ÁLEX ABRINES

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Alejandro Abrines Redondo is a Spanish basketball player who currently plays for F. C. Barcelona. At 1.98 metres tall, he plays in the shooting guard position. He is the son of former ACB player Gabriel Abrines.



IMAGO

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

After excelling in the NBA with the Oklahoma City Thunder, Abrines faced an internal struggle that many were unaware of. He began to experience bouts of anxiety and depression. Alex Abrines decided to put his mental health above his athletic career. This act of courage was not only a necessary change for him, but also a powerful message to the sports world.

‘I tried to fight my mental health while playing basketball but there came a time when I decided to take a step back.’

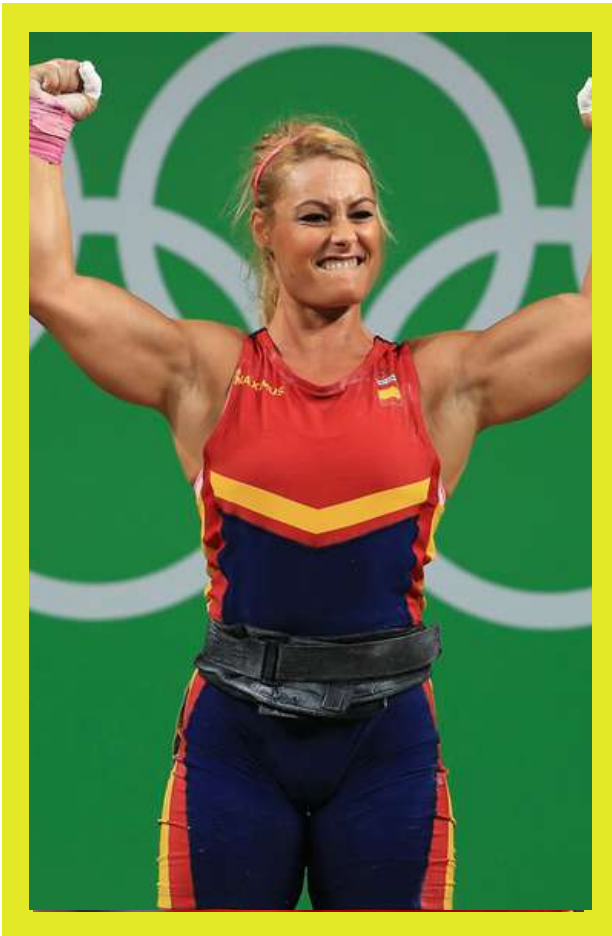
LYDIA VALENTÍN

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Lydia Valentín is an Olympic champion and multiple world and European weightlifting medallist, as well as one of the most outstanding examples of mental strength and perseverance in Spanish sport.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

In a sport like weightlifting, which demands not only impressive physical and technical discipline, but also high-level psychological preparation. Throughout her career, Lydia has worked extensively with sports psychologists to manage the pressure inherent in elite competition, as well as the emotional challenge of recovering from injury.



MIKE EHRMANN//GETTY IMAGES

‘I work with a psychologist because weightlifting is a strength sport, but it's a very mental sport and you can't focus on anything other than the moment of competition.’

PAU GASOL

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Pau Gasol is one of the most emblematic figures of Spanish basketball and the NBA.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Throughout his successful career, Gasol has spoken openly about the emotional challenges that athletes face, especially in times of transition, such as retirement from professional sport. In a sport as demanding as basketball, where pressure and expectations are constant, Gasol decided to enlist the support of sports psychologists to manage the anxiety, pressure and emotional difficulties that arise in the day-to-day life of a professional athlete.



MIKE EHRMANN//GETTY IMAGES

‘Elite athletes can help raise awareness of issues that are worth changing’.

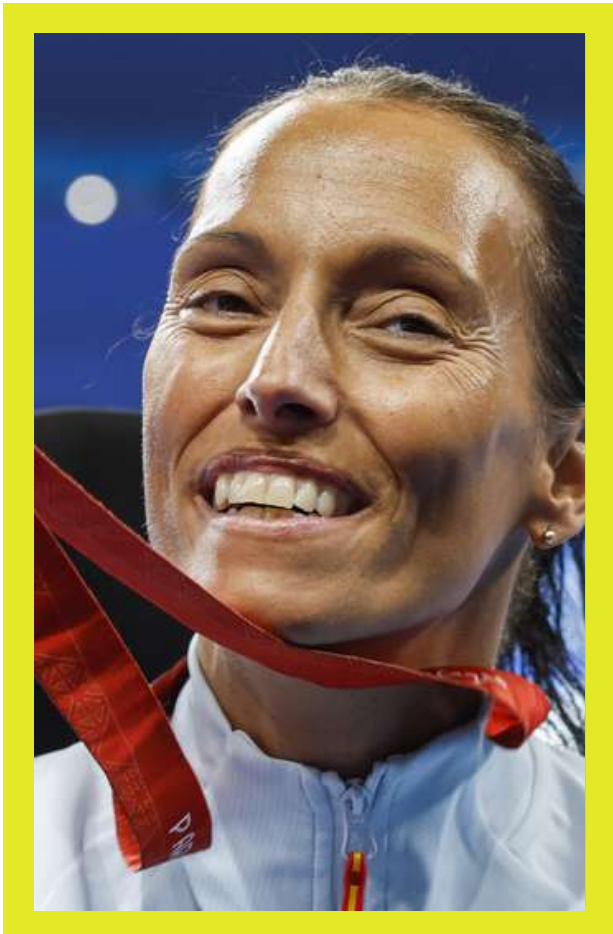
TERESA PERALES

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

María Teresa Perales Fernández is a Spanish swimmer, former politician and writer, recognised with the Princess of Asturias Award for Sports. She is the most decorated Spanish athlete at a Paralympic Games, with a total of 28 medals won between the 2000 and 2024 Games.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

She has shown that resilience and mental toughness are key to success in sport. Although her career has been full of successes and achievements, Perales has been candid about the moments of doubt, frustration and emotional difficulties she has also experienced along the way. To manage these difficult moments, Teresa has worked closely with sports psychologists, learning how to handle pressure and stay motivated when circumstances are not easy.



EFE

‘We need a sports coach or a sports psychologist to reinforce our mental health’.

FERNANDO ALONSO

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Fernando Alonso is one of the most successful and iconic drivers in the history of Formula 1.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

He has witnessed and witnessed the enormous mental demands of competing at the highest level of the sport. Formula 1 not only tests the physical and technical skills of the drivers, but also requires a great deal of psychological preparation to handle extreme pressure, make split-second decisions and maintain concentration on every lap. Alonso has had to overcome a number of extreme situations since he made his Formula 1 debut in 2001. However, his most difficult episodes have come in the last few years of his career. Mentality is as important as skill.



ADRIÁN MANCEBO

‘I attach a lot of importance to it, it is something to take into account and fortunately we are talking about it more and more. We all agree that you have to be healthy inside and out and you have to work on that aspect’.

ANA MARÍA MARKOVIĆ

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Ana Maria Marković is a Croatian footballer who plays as a striker and currently plays for Sporting Clube de Braga in the Portuguese National Women's Football Championship. She has been capped for Croatia since 2021.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Croatian footballer Ana Maria Markovic reflected on how the nickname 'the sexiest player in the world' affected her career and mental health. 'I liked the articles calling me the most beautiful footballer or one of the most beautiful players because I am happy to know that I am beautiful. But then articles appeared in the newspapers describing me as the sexiest footballer. I didn't like that. Also because of my family.'



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'I didn't like being called the sexiest footballer in the world. I think you have to be careful what you write about people, especially if you don't know them.'

DARIO ŠIMIĆ



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WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Dario Šimić is a former Croatian footballer who played as a defender for clubs such as Dinamo Zagreb, A. C. Milan, Inter Milan and A. S. Monaco. He played for his country at three World Cups: France 1998, South Korea - Japan 2002 and Germany 2006.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Dario Šimić, former Croatian national team and AC Milan player, has highlighted the pressure athletes are under and the importance of addressing mental health in sport.

‘Athletes are under a lot of pressure, as their every performance is scrutinised in public and we often set targets that are too high.

SIMONE BILES

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Simone Arianne Biles Owens is an American artistic gymnast, winner of 41 medals between Olympic Games and World Championships. In individual all-around competition, Biles is an Olympic champion at Rio 2016, and a six-time World Champion.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Gymnast Simone Biles has sparked a global debate on mental health in sport through her withdrawal from the women's team final at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the four subsequent individual finals to prioritise her mental health while dealing with the now-infamous 'twisties'. Looking back, Biles admits that even taking the first steps on her mental health journey, which became a big part of her path to winning three golds and a silver medal at the Paris Games, was a struggle.



NAOMI BAKER/GETTY IMAGES

'At the beginning, I think the hardest thing was going to my therapy sessions and convincing myself that I had to go (...) But as soon as I see my therapist and we start talking, it's like I'm chattering the whole time. I'm very grateful for that.'

NAOMI OSAKA

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Naomi Osaka is a Japanese tennis player. Osaka has been ranked number one in the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) singles rankings and is the first Asian player to achieve this.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

In 2021, Osaka withdrew from the Roland Garros tournament and later from Wimbledon, citing the need to take care of her mental health due to media and personal pressure. Her stance opened a dialogue on the emotional well-being of athletes and the relationship with the media.



NAOMI BAKER/GETTY IMAGES

‘Nobody knows how much we sacrifice to be good (...). I think it takes a lot of mental strength to play tennis because it's an individual sport. In a way, you're on your own’.

MICHAEL PHELPS

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

The American, the greatest medal winner in the history of the Olympic Games (23 gold medals and 28 in total), gave a talk at the World Business Forum 2023 in Madrid (Spain) and admitted that in his worst moments he even thought about taking his own life.

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GETTY IMAGES

'I thought about committing suicide and that's scary. There is light at the end of the tunnel and I want to encourage people to fight. Talking about mental health has saved my life'.

KEVIN LOVE

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

The American, the greatest medal winner in the history of the Olympic Games (23 gold medals and 28 in total), gave a talk at the World Business Forum 2023 in Madrid (Spain) and admitted that in his worst moments he even thought about taking his own life.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

He has put a face to the fight against depression and the mental problems suffered by elite athletes. Love said he never actually tried it, but he did have a thought about how to do it: 'I know it's scary to think about the idea of taking your own life, but it's something that crossed my mind quite often. I had several ways in mind.

'The future started to become meaningless. And when you lose hope, the only thing you can think about is, 'How can I make this pain go away? I don't think I have to say much more than that''The future started to become meaningless. And when you lose hope, the only thing you can think about is, 'how can I make this pain go away'. I don't think I have to say much more than that'.



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FEDE GÓMEZ

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Federico Agustín Gómez is an Argentine tennis player who reached his highest individual ranking of 133rd on 3 February 2025. In doubles, his best ranking was 133rd, achieved on 25 November 2024.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Gómez posted on her social networks a reflection on her time in tennis, the sport that has given her everything but at the same time has made her go through some very tough episodes. 'Dear tennis... the sport that has given me everything and at the same time has taken so many other things from me. I'm sorry I've hit rock bottom, but at the same time I want to grab hold of this situation to gain momentum and push myself upwards to get back to the surface.'



GETTY IMAGES

'The last 6 months have been some of the hardest I have had to live through as a human being. Living with thoughts of quitting tennis altogether, of really questioning if all this is really worth it and even on several occasions suicidal thoughts of not wanting to live anymore and leave this world'.

YULIMAR ROJAS

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Yulimar Andrea Rojas Rodríguez is a Venezuelan triple jumper who holds the world record in this speciality with a mark of 15.74 metres.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Venezuelan athlete Yulimar Rojas, Olympic champion in the triple jump at Tokyo 2020 and two-time outdoor world champion in 2017 and 2019, is clear that pressure is 'a fundamental part' of the elite athlete, although she recognises that competing at the highest level generates 'anxiety and excitement' in equal parts.



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'Being an important and prestigious athlete makes you anxious and excited'.

OIHANE VALDEZATE

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Oihane Valdezate Cabornero es una futbolista española. Juega de defensa y su equipo actual es la AS Roma de la Serie A italiana

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

La jugadora Vizcaína de la Roma, tras una rotura del ligamento cruzado de su rodilla derecha, estuvo varios meses sin poder competir. Durante su recuperación, mantuvo una mentalidad positiva, destacando la importancia de la salud mental en su proceso de rehabilitación. Es la suya una lesión relativamente habitual en el mundo del fútbol, por lo que al comienzo le llegaron todo tipo de experiencias.



PHOTO BY FABIO ROSSI/AS ROMA VIA GETTY IMAGES

'I have always been close to players who have been injured. I've received all kinds of opinions, some saying I was going to be out. Since I was diagnosed with a cruciate fracture, I've had a positive mentality. I've been focused on working and thinking about getting through it.'

MACARENA CABRILLANA

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Macarena Andrea Cabrillana Sanhueza is a Chilean wheelchair tennis player and athlete. She has been ranked 16th in singles and 13th in doubles in 2017. She is one of the twenty-nine athletes who will represent Chile at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Macarena, at the age of 16 in 2008, suffering from depression, jumped off a building to take her own life. She survived, but was left with lumbar paraplegia and was unable to walk again. Cabrillana found in tennis a way of rehabilitation and self-improvement. She has shared her life experience, being a spokesperson for the importance of mental health and combating depression.



MAURICIO PALMA/COPACHI

I had depression. Depression is a taboo subject, unfortunately it is not talked about. This is just another illness that requires medical, psychological and/or psychiatric treatment and with that you can lead a life like everyone else. It has a solution and it is more common than you think.

TONY ADAMS

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Known as Mr Arsenal, he spent his entire 19-year career as a central defender, making 672 appearances and winning four English league titles. He is considered one of the greatest players in Arsenal's history, and is also listed among the Football League's 100 legends.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

After recovering from alcoholism, Adams founded the Sporting Chance Clinic, a charity aimed at providing treatment and support for athletes suffering from addictions. He has also been involved in mental health and addiction initiatives through Six Mental Health Solutions.



GETTY IMAGES

'After drinking I didn't want to live, but I didn't know how to kill myself'.

FRAN KIRBY

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Francesca Kirby is an English footballer. She plays as an advanced striker or playmaker and currently plays for Chelsea in the English Women's Super League and is also a member of the England national team.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

After the loss of her mother at the age of 14, Kirby suffered from depression that took her away from football. Her return to sport and subsequent success has made her an advocate for mental health, sharing her story to help others. She talks about it all openly; how the death of her mother affected her at the age of 14 and how depression kept her away from the pitch for a time when the ball and the competition didn't make her happy.



PA

'I spent almost 10 years playing football and decided I just wanted to be Fran. I didn't want to sit in a room with someone telling me how to play or be the best'.

SERENA WILLIAMS

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Serena Jameka Williams is an American former tennis player and winner of 23 Grand Slam singles titles, with the feat of winning all four majors consecutively in two different periods of her career, 2002/2003 and 2014/2015.



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WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

The American tennis player has spoken openly about her struggles with postpartum depression following the birth of her daughter in 2017. She has emphasised the importance of seeking help and support, and has used her platform to raise awareness about mental health for mothers and athletes. On 28 November 2023, Serena shared on her social media:

'I'm not well today. And it's okay not to be okay. No one is fine every day. If you're not well today, I'm with you. There's always tomorrow. I love you.'

DEMAR DEROZAN



GETTY IMAGES

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

DeMar Darnell DeRozan is an American basketball player for the Sacramento Kings of the NBA. At 1.98 metres tall, he plays the shooting guard position.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Sacramento Kings player DeMar DeRozan spoke openly about his mental health issues on his X account. In a series of posts, the six-time All-Star described the emotional volatility that comes with suffering from depression.

'I was dying inside, dealing with depression, I was really lying to myself.'

ABBY WAMBACH

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?



GETTY IMAGES

Mary Abigail Wambach, known as 'Abby' Wambach is a former American footballer who played as a forward. She is an Olympic medalist and the leading scorer for the United States national team with 184 goals. She was a Ballon d'Or winner in 2012.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

The former footballer and two-time US Olympian has spoken about her struggles with substance abuse, anxiety and depression. After her retirement in 2015, she fell into a period of self-destruction, consuming excessive alcohol and pills. In her book *Forward: A Memoir*, Wambach recounts her recovery process and how therapy helped her find stability. She is now an active advocate for mental health and support for retired athletes facing emotional crises.

When you fall, get up and keep going. No matter how many times you fall, you always have the opportunity to get up one more time.

IAN THORPE

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Ian James Thorpe is an Australian swimmer, nicknamed Thorpedo and Thorpey. He won five gold medals at the Olympic Games, the most by any Australian athlete, and in 2001 became the only person to win six gold medals at a single World Swimming Championships.



SCOTT BARBOUR/GETTY IMAGES

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Ian Thorpe, one of the greatest swimmers of all time, revealed that he has struggled with depression since he was a teenager. His words come as part of a campaign to prevent mental disorders among young people launched in his home country of Australia. The former swimmer was hospitalised for depression in 2014 after being found wandering the streets of Sydney in a disorientated state.

‘I am a person who struggled with mental problems since adolescence (...) From the outside, many could not perceive my daily suffering; they could not even understand the struggle I was going through’.

BRITTNEY GRINER

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Brittney Yevette Griner is an American basketball player currently with the Phoenix Mercury of the WNBA, previously with UMMC Ekaterinburg of the Russian Basketball League. She played college basketball at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

American basketball star Brittney Griner has been an outspoken advocate for mental health, especially after being detained in Russia in 2022, an event that led her to face extreme emotional challenges. Griner has spoken about how this experience affected her mental health, from anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder. Upon her return, Griner vowed to be more vocal about mental health in sport.



KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES

'You can't plan when you are going to need some time. You see that there are athletes who really take a moment for themselves. As long as more people do that and normalise it, it's good. Before, nobody dared to say that. You were considered weak or that you didn't want to play or compete, which is a completely opposite mentality'.

DWAYNE JOHNSON

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Famed former professional wrestler and actor, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, has been extremely open about his experiences with depression and suicidal thoughts during his youth.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

In various interviews, Johnson has shared how, despite his success in wrestling and later in Hollywood, he struggled with isolation and loneliness. He has used his personal story to inspire others to talk about their emotions and ask for help, highlighting the importance of vulnerability in overcoming mental health problems.



MIKE COPPOLA | GETTY IMAGES

'I found that with depression, one of the most important things you can realise is that you're not alone. You're not the first one to go through it, you're not going to be the last one to go through it'.

RICKY WILLIAMS

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Errick Lynne Williams, Jr., better known as Ricky Williams, is a former professional American football player. He played running back and played eleven NFL seasons and one CFL season, with stints with the New Orleans Saints, Miami Dolphins, Baltimore Ravens and Toronto Argonauts.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

When he started with the New Orleans Saints in 1999, the athlete was known to give interviews with his helmet on and avoid interactions with both fans and teammates. He was eventually diagnosed with social anxiety disorder, which he addressed with mental health therapy and antidepressants.



SUZANNE PLUNKETT / AP

'I understand that many people, especially men, look up to me because of my profession, so I have the opportunity to reach out to people and let them know what I've been through and how treatment has made my life so much better.'

CLINT MALARCHUK

WHO IS THE ATHLETE?

Clint Malarchuk is a Canadian former professional ice hockey goaltender who played in the National Hockey League between 1981 and 1992.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

In 2019, the athlete manifested symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He had a severe injury in 1989 and suffered the consequences. After leaving the NHL in 1996, he continued to struggle with anxiety and his addiction to alcohol.

Regarding his injury, Clint argued that he joined 10 days later and no one offered to counsel him on the possible mental effects this could have on him. 'None was provided. I didn't think about it at the time, nor did they.'



GETTY IMAGES

'I would sit with my back completely straight on a chair so as not to fall fast asleep (...) Then I wouldn't visualise in a dream the memory of that skateboard coming up and cutting my jugular vein'.

MINDFiT



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