

DEFINING A PSYCHOLOGY OF SPORT INJURY: PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICE

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The practical experience of psychologists who work with athletes and sport epidemiologic research has led to a growing understanding of the significant impact of injury on athletic success. From this has followed an interest in developing treatment approaches specifically designed to meet the unique needs of athletes. This psychology of sport injury is built on a set of principles that evolve from a synthesis of sport psychology, behavioral medicine, and sports medicine. These are summarized below:

- * Managing injury effectively (i.e., avoiding it initially and recovering well following its occurrence) is an aspect of the game that the athlete must play well in order to succeed.

- * Injury rehabilitation is a performance task, the effectiveness of which relies on much the same skills as used in sport performance.

- * Just as relatively small changes in behavior in sport can significantly impact performance, so do small changes in behavior significantly impact rehabilitation.

- * Speedy, effective return to play depends not only on physical function but also on psychological status. The athlete whose injury is physically healed but who is not mentally ready to return to play is not yet recovered.

- * The goals of treatment are to reduce the psychological impact of injury, to help the athlete maintain a performance-oriented mental set, and to speed readiness for return to play. This implies benefits from intervention, even in the absence of evident adjustment problems.

- * A multidisciplinary team that simultaneously addresses medical and psychological issues offers the best quality of care.

- * Optimal injury management requires a proactive program that incorporates a psychological approach to routine rehabilitation as well as early identification and treatment of adjustment problems.

- * The pillars of a psychological approach to rehabilitation are education, goal setting, mental training, and social support.

- * Severe injury and adjustment problems demand specialized treatment approaches. When these are delivered to the athlete in a timely fashion, the impact of injury is reduced.

- * Optimal treatment evolves from a therapeutic relationship in which the athlete feels an alliance with treatment providers. This implies that the athlete takes an active role in rehabilitation and decision making.

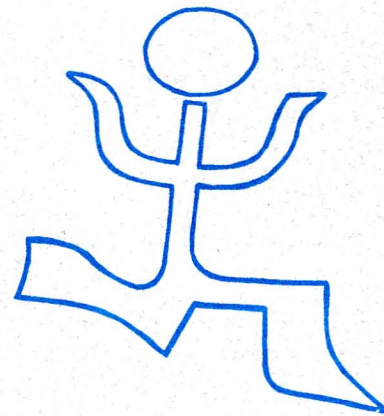
- * Treatment effectiveness is enhanced when the athlete senses the alliance of treatment providers with one another. This evolves from coordination of care.

- * Treatment providers must be sensitive to the prevailing sport milieu. For example, similar injuries to a Little Leaguer and to a big league baseball player typically have different meanings as problems and merit different approaches to treatment.

- * Risk taking is an inherent part of sport. It is often an important motive for participation, and is a fundamental right and responsibility of the athlete; this is nowhere more evident than in the face of injury.

- * Treatment providers need to balance their typically cautious conservative approaches with the athlete's desires. Thus treatment providers must understand the cost to the athlete of being withheld from competition.

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5K Rat Race - 8:00 A.M.
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