



Activities for Mental Wellbeing

Activity 1: Green Zone, Yellow Zone, Red Zone

HOW

Introduce why emotional awareness and regulation is important to your team. Then, introduce the Green-Yellow-Red Zone concept:

Green is when one feels calm, relaxed, and focused;

Yellow is ok, but a little on edge or stressed;

Red is highly agitated, irritable, and possibly looking for a fight.

Prompt the group to identify what zone they are in at the beginning and throughout practice. Challenge them to take a breather or talk things out if it would help them move from Red to Green.

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WHY

Learning to identify and regulate stress is an important part of navigating life amidst its challenges and childhood trauma, in particular. The Green-Yellow-Red Zone is one tool that youth can use, especially in sports, to regulate their emotions.

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WHEN

This tool can be introduced at any time, but may be best introduced at the beginning of a season so that the group may practice awareness and other activities throughout.

NOTE

You may also want to prompt the group to try to notice the zone their peers are in and if they are ever in the Red zone, to share that with a coach proactively.

Activity 2: Mindful Visualization



HOW

Instruct your team to close their eyes or lower their gaze, then to visualize a place where they feel comfortable and safe. Ask them to ease into these feelings of calmness and to identify one word that can be a reminder of this place. Return to normal and, in the future, prompt the group to use this word when in difficult or stressful situations.

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WHY

Visualizing places and emotions that youth associate with calmness and safety can employ them with a tool that reduces stress in difficult situations.

WHEN

After a 2-minute initial exercise, the visualized word or place can be used as a reminder/cue over time (e.g., before a game).

Activity 3: Deep Breathing (Box Exercise)

HOW

Instruct your team to close their eyes or lower their gaze, then imagine a box. Instruct them to breathe in for 4 seconds going up one side of the box (count out loud), then hold for 4 seconds at the top of the box, then breathe out for 4 seconds as you lower down the other side of the box, then hold for 4 seconds at the bottom of the box. Repeat a few times.

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WHY

Meditation, mindfulness, and deep breathing decrease our stress and help us focus and live in the moment.

WHEN

At the start of practice every day (or a few days per week, e.g., “Mindfulness Monday”) take 2-3 minutes for the deep breathing exercise.

Activity 4: The Five Senses



HOW

Prompt your team to take a breath and then talk through each sense, pausing between each — “What do you see... feel... hear... smell... taste/feel grateful for.” Prompt them to take another breath and remind them to tune into their sensations, especially when they feel stressed...

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WHY

Being grounded in one’s physical senses can help increase calm and focus, in addition to awareness of one’s emotions.

WHEN

Activity takes 2 minutes.
Can be used to open or close practice or game to focus.

Activity 5: Practicing Gratitude

HOW

Prompt your team to take a breath and then talk through each sense, pausing between each — “What do you see... feel... hear... smell... taste/feel grateful for.” Prompt them to take another breath and remind them to tune into their sensations, especially when they feel stressed...

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WHY

Taking time for appreciation has been shown to decrease stress and increase one’s wellbeing. This can benefit youth by providing a sense of purpose and connectedness.

WHEN

Consider closing each week's practices with this Activity.
Activity takes 1-2 minutes.