

UNDERSTANDING COPING AMONG ADOLESCENT ATHLETES

Katherine Tamminen
University of Alberta

WHAT WE DID

- We explored how youth athletes manage and cope with potential stressors such as not having fun, an overemphasis on winning, conflicts with coaches, or parental pressures.
- We conducted a review of the academic research focused on youth sport coping and interviewed athletes, parents, and coaches about the athlete coping process.

WHAT WE FOUND

- Parents and coaches can be both a source of stress and a resource for managing stress among youth athletes. Positive interactions with coaches and parents can help athletes manage stress more effectively.
- Athletes often learn to cope through real-life experiences, where they need to face stress directly and use coping strategies. Having the support of their social networks, including parents, coaches, and teammates, can enhance this process.
- Athletes benefit from instruction about coping but need to be given chances to practice coping strategies in competitive situations.
- The environment that parents create can affect how much athletes turn to them for help with stress, making parent-child communication a key area for future learning.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- To help youth athletes manage and cope with potential stressors, **education** and **communication** focused on coaches and parents are good places to start.
- **Educate parents and coaches about:**
 - Common stressors athletes face
 - Effective strategies for managing stress
 - Differences between helpful and harmful coping strategies
- Create opportunities for parents and coaches to **share their experiences** and **question and remind athletes about possible ways of coping**, offering perspective and opportunities to learn about coping.