Social Media and Mental Health

A Guide for Student-Athletes

Social media can affect mental health. Knowing its benefits and risks can help you use it in ways that support your well-being and recognize when time online may be having a harmful effect on your mental health.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH

Possible benefits of social media:

- Connect with friends, fans and teammates.
- Create a supportive community.
- Tell your story or speak up for causes you care about.
- Build your brand and honor NIL contracts.

Possible risks of social media:

- Harmful or harassing messages.
- Body image worries or unfavorable comparisons with other people.
- Sleep difficulties that may affect your health or performance.

Harmful effects of social media may be linked to symptoms of depression, anxiety and disordered eating. In extreme cases, they may also contribute to suicidal thoughts or actions.

Spotting the Signs

- **Changes in mood**.
- **Hopelessness, isolation or little motivation**.
- **Shifts in eating or sleep habits**.
- **Reduced confidence or doubts** about your abilities.
- **Repeatedly checking accounts.**

Steps to Take

You are not alone. Help is available.

Ways to manage your social media:

- **Safeguard your accounts:** Filter negative words; limit or disable comments; mute or block harmful accounts; ask a friend to monitor comments.
- **Limit what** you share, prioritize in-person relationships and take regular breaks from social media.
- **After an event, reflect on** your performance before checking your social accounts.

Ways to find support:

- **Know when to raise concerns,** especially about threats, discrimination or harassment that could lead to self-harm or suicidal thoughts. Turn to a friend, relative or trusted adult.
- **Consult a licensed mental health provider** or encourage a teammate to seek that support.
- **Share what you are experiencing.** Your teammates may have had similar experiences.
- **Support a teammate by** listening closely and asking follow-up questions.

In crisis? Call, text or chat 988 for yourself or someone you know.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WELL-BEING



About **20% of student-athletes** say social media use makes falling asleep at night difficult.



Almost 30% of female student-athletes say social media often makes them feel worse about how their bodies look.

For mental health education resources and guidance, see the NCAA Mental Health Best Practices.

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