Wellbeing Conversations in Sport & Life

Win Well 2032

Change is a constant in life, and it can be a source of both excitement and stress. As your child grows and develops, they will encounter new experiences and challenges that may impact their thoughts, feelings and wellbeing.

No matter their age, they will always be your child, and you will always want to protect them. Here are 5 tips on how to provide support:

1 Recognise

It is normal for your child to experience emotional responses to change, particularly if it is sudden, unexpected or unwanted. As a parent it is helpful to recognise the early signs that your child may be struggling. Look out for noticeable changes in their demeanour and behaviour like:

- Persistent periods of low motivation or low energy
- Difficulty 'switching off' or relaxing
- Changes in sleeping, training, or eating patterns
- Avoidance and social withdrawal
- Mood swings
- Unexpected performance decline (sport, school, work)
- Expressions of overwhelm, heightened stress, or worry
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities they used to enjoy

2 Reach Out

Time & Place: consider an appropriate time and place to chat with your child. Ideally somewhere private, where you will both feel safe and comfortable to talk.

How to Start: mention the changes you have noticed and ask an open-ended question:

- *"Hey, I have noticed you have been doing more/doing less [observations/signs]... how are you feeling/travelling/coping?"*
- *"Hey, I have noticed you don't seem like yourself lately. What's heavy on your mind at the moment?"*

Validate Feelings: explain that how they are feeling is understandable and reasonable, given the circumstances. This is not the time to judge their experience or fix the problem. It is time to listen.

- *"That sounds really tough. Now I understand."*
- *"I can imagine how frustrating that would be"*

Ask: ask them what they feel they need right now and how you can be supportive.

- *"You are important to me. What can I do to help/support you?"*

3 Refer

Humans are generally quite resilient and may not need to be referred to professional support, however it is often helpful to remind your child of the people in their circle of trust who can provide support:

- *"You have many people who care about you like your [insert relevant people like - Wellbeing Manager/Coaches/Pathway Manager/School guidance officer/Teacher etc], would it be helpful to chat with any of these people?"*

If your athlete is experiencing persistent signs or symptoms of poor mental health and their usual coping is not helpful, they may benefit from engaging with additional support. Assist them to make an appointment with a General Practitioner, the AIS Mental Health Referral Network, other Psychologists or School wellbeing support services.

If you are concerned about your child's immediate welfare because they are saying they want to harm themselves or someone else, please call 000. Ensure they are not left alone until support has arrived.

If your athlete doesn't want help, find out why, listen and remain supportive.

4 Remain Supportive

Regularly check-in with your child to remind them you're invested in supporting them. Simply say: *"Hey, just wanted to check-in and see how you're doing?"*

Try to engage them in daily routine e.g., get out of bed, connect with people, places and things that provide a sense of connection and safety.

Offer both emotional (e.g. a listening ear) and practical support (e.g. lifts to sport/school) when needed and appropriate.

Remember to be patient and have realistic expectations.

5 Restore Yourself

Taking care of your health and wellbeing means you will be a better support for your child.

Seek support from other family members, parents and friends.

Consult with the Wellbeing Manager or Coach of your loved one's Sport to determine how you can all work together to best support them.

2032+ AUSTRALIA'S HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT STRATEGY

This resource was developed through a HP 2032+ collaboration to support parents, grandparents, carers and significant others to best support their child/young person into, through and beyond high performance sport.

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Below are some key free, confidential and reputable resources to support you and whom you are caring for – please note the information and resources on their websites.

Please consider your Sport's AW&E Manager / Performance & Lifestyle Advisor / Wellbeing Manager as a first point of contact. In cases of Emergency dial 000.

AIS Mental Health Referral Network

Mental health support for eligible athletes, coaches, and support staff members.

02 6214 1130
ais.gov.au/mhrn
mentalhealth@ausport.gov.au

Kids Helpline

24/7 free telephone and online counselling for children and young people (5-25 years).

1800 551 800 24
kidshelpline.com.au

AIS Career Practitioner Referral Network

Professional career advice and guidance for services for Australia's elite athletes.

ais.gov.au/career-and-education/cprn
careerandeducation@ausport.gov.au

Parentline

Telephone and online support for Parents.

1300 30 1300
parentline.com.au

13 YARN

24/7 free, confidential, and professional yarning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with Lifeline trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crises supporters.

13 92 76
13yarn.org.au

Raising Children's Network

Parenting information, resources, and advice developed by professionals.

raisingchildren.net.au

Lifeline

24/7 free crisis counselling and online suicide prevention support.

13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Qlife

Free telephone and online support services for people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and those supporting them.

1800 184 527 (all week, 3pm – 12am)
qlife.org.au

Butterfly Foundation National Helpline

Free and confidential support for anyone concerned about eating disorders or body images issues.

1800 33 4673 (8am-midnight, 7 days)
butterfly.org.au/get-support/helpline

MyCompass

Fun, interactive, and scientifically backed web-based mental health self-help program.

mycompass.org.au