

# TAKE A TIMEOUT

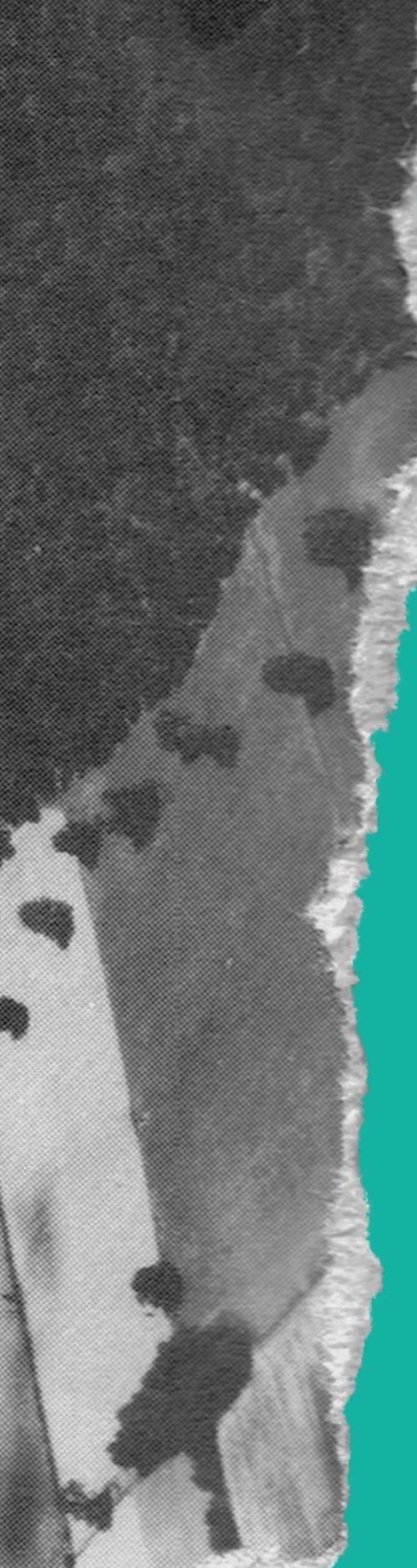


A SKILLS-BASED PODCAST PROGRAM FOR  
COPING WITH MENTAL HEALTH  
CHALLENGES AS A COLLEGIATE ATHLETE

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University of North Carolina at Charlotte



# TODAY'S DISCUSSION

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## Topics to Cover

Background

Significance & Innovation

Phase 1: Online Survey

Phase 2: Focus Groups

Phase 3: Podcast Development

Key Take-Aways

# BACKGROUND

**PROBLEM: MENTAL HEALTH AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IS A GROWING PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN**

**CHALLENGES: STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH REPORTING MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AND UNDERUTILIZED OR LIMITED MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO STUDENT-ATHLETES**

28.1%  
FEMALES  
17.5%  
MALES



**Significance:** Increasing mental health concerns among student-athlete populations demanding a need for accessible resources that fit a student-athlete's lifestyle and schedule

**Innovation:** Podcasts are an affordable, accessible, and discreet resource for health education and promotion around mental health

# COGNITIVE & DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT/DBT)

CBT is a form of psychotherapy that treats problems and boosts happiness by modifying dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and thoughts. Acceptance and validation are added with DBT.

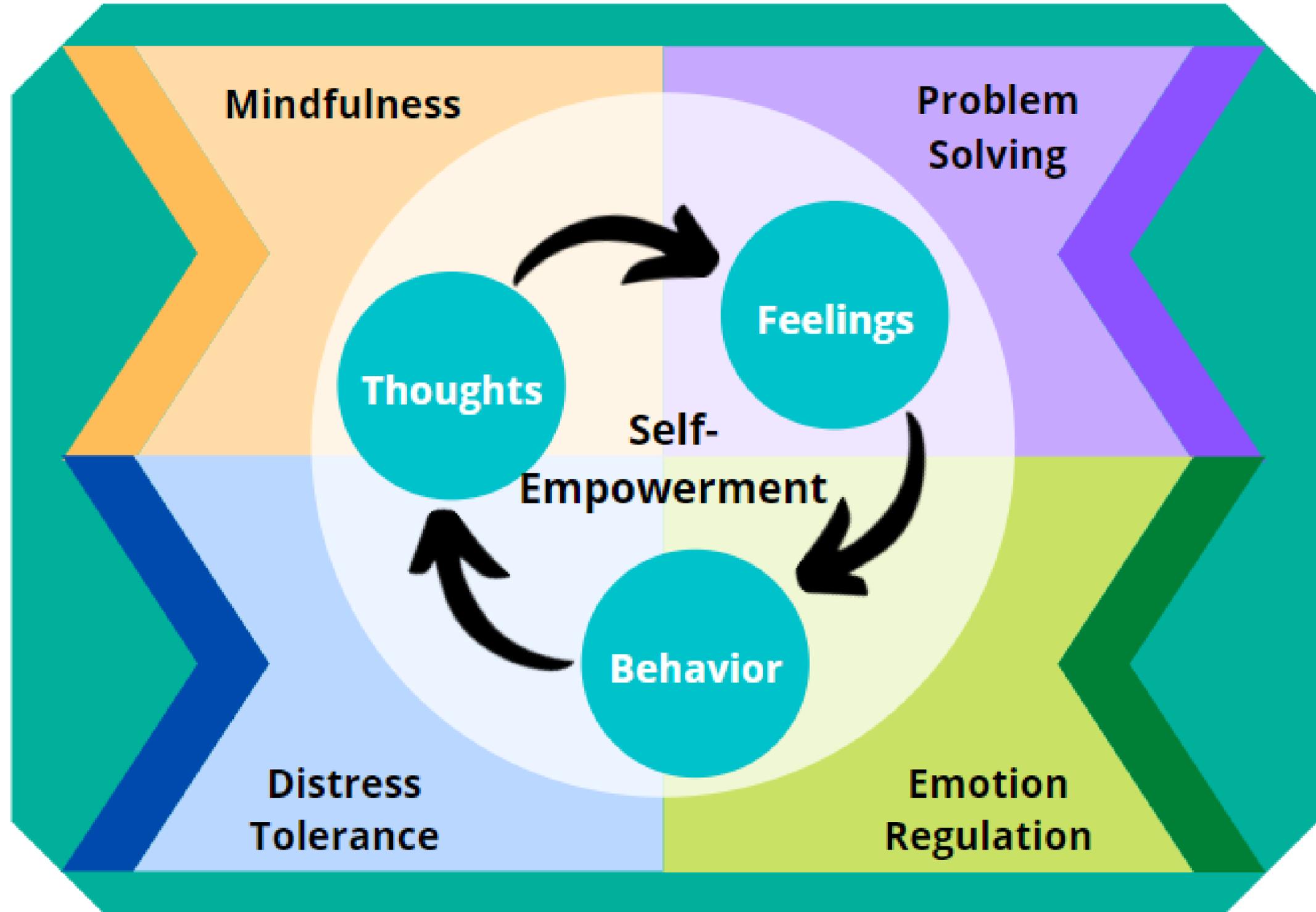


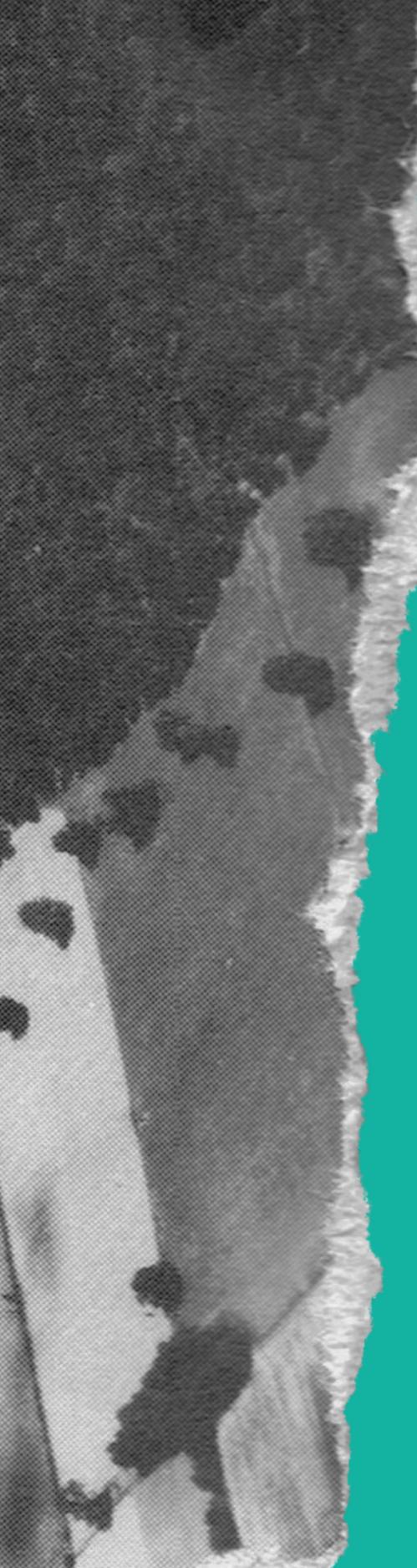
Take a Timeout Study

# CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Informed by Cognitive & Dialectical behavioral therapy (CBT/DBT)

Objective: Students will develop effective responses to stressors by listening to podcasts that use storytelling to model and navigate through common mental health challenges experienced by student-athletes





# PHASE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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## Objective

To understand the mental health needs of collegiate student-athletes and preferred content and delivery mode of health promotion materials



## PHASE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

# Methods

### Eligibility criteria:

- 18 years old, eligible student-athlete during 2018-2020 seasons

**Recruitment:** through NCAA SAAC reps plus snowball sampling and social media posts

### Qualtrics online survey:

- 72 items total: demographics, mental health history, recent mental health status, use of mental health services, impact of COVID-19 on mental health, & the needs and preferences around resources

# Results

Sample: N=62 (60 completed, 97%)

- 80.3% women's sports, 19.7% men's sports
- Race/Ethnicity
  - White (n=54, 87.1%)
  - Black or African American (n=6, 9.7%)
  - Asian (n=2, 3.2%)
- Sexual Orientation/Identity
  - 91.7% heterosexual or straight
  - 8.3% LGBT+
- 5 (8%) first-generation college students
- 10 (16.%) transfer students



PHASE 1: NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT

# Results

Prior medical diagnosis of mental health conditions  
(n=23, 37.1%)

Diagnoses included:

- Anxiety (17.5%)
- Depression (16.3%)
- Eating Disorders (8.8%)
- Bipolar Disorder (3.8%)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (2.5%)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (1.3%)

Only 2 students were ever hospitalized for their disorder



**PHASE 1: NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT**

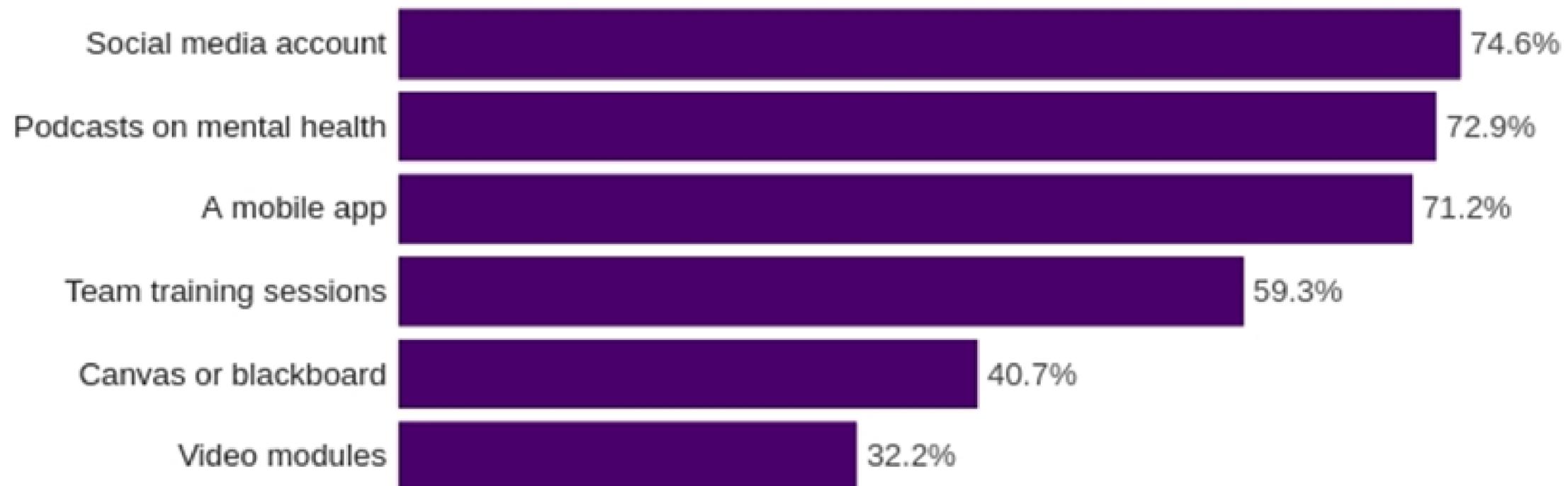
# Results

Figure 1. Distribution of responses to, “What mental health topics do you feel need to be addressed for student-athletes?”



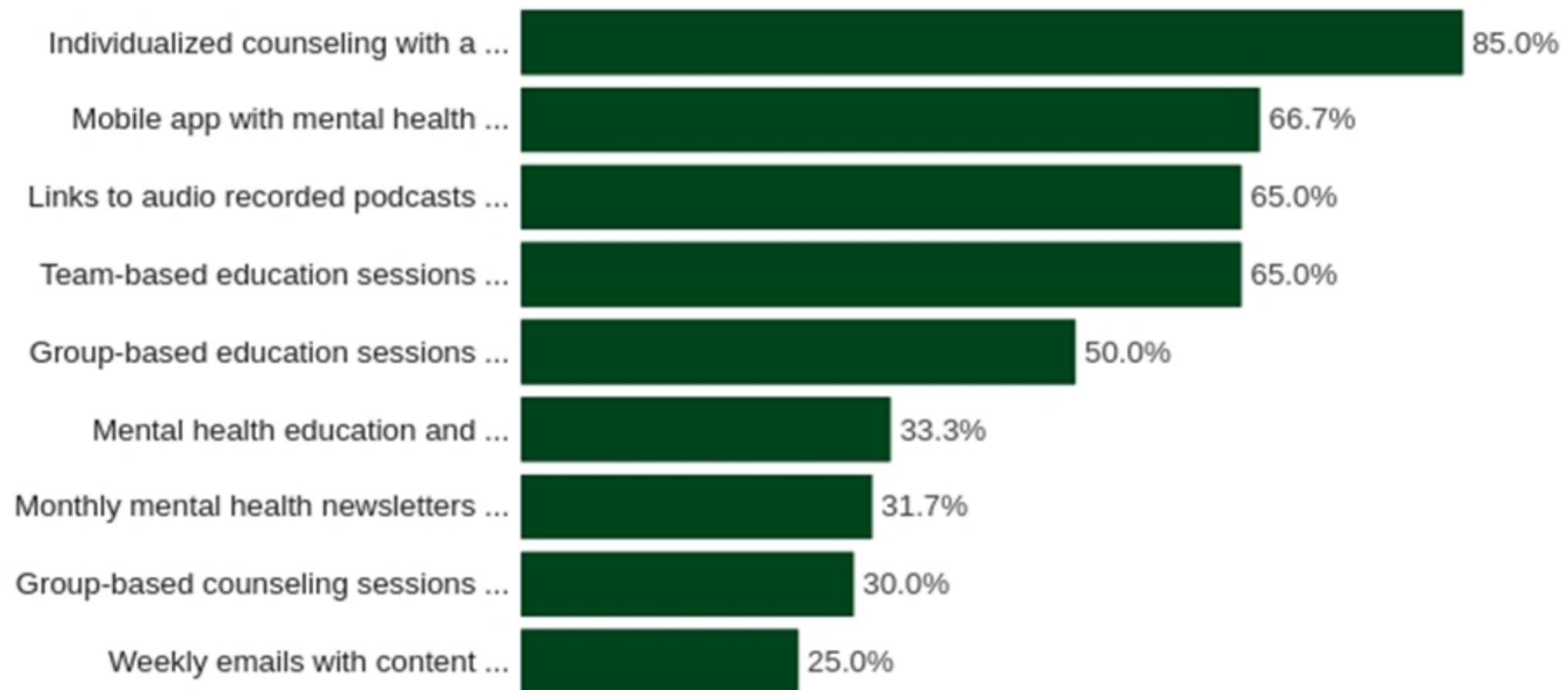
# Results

Figure 2. Preference for tools/resources for accessing mental health information



# Results

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to, “What method would be best for communicating mental health information to student-athletes?”



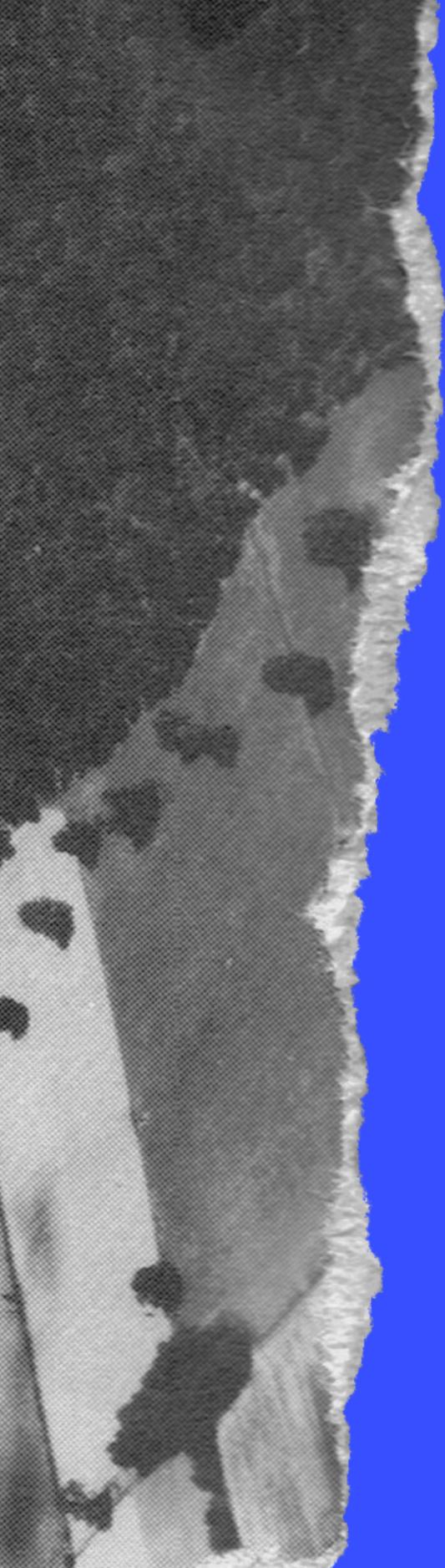
# Conclusion

The findings of our needs assessment confirmed:

- 1) student-athletes need accessible mental health resources
- 2) a podcast delivery method would be acceptable by this population when a sports psychologist is not available or an option
- 3) coverage of a range of mental health topics is important to make podcast content relatable among the target population



**PHASE 1: NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT**



# PHASE 2: FOCUS GROUPS

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## Objective

To contextualize the needs assessment survey data with the lived experiences of current and recent student-athletes



## PHASE 2: FOCUS GROUPS

# Methods

### Eligibility criteria:

- Prior participant in the needs assessment survey with availability to Zoom during our scheduled sessions

### Logistics:

- Held online via Zoom (names edited to ID #)
- Audio recorded for transcription & analysis
- 2 coders reviewed each transcript
- Team met every other week to discuss code application and discrepancies

### Focus Group Guide:

- 12 Semi-Structured Focus Group Questions

# Results

Sample: N=13 (41 survey participants were invited)

- 84.6% women's sports, 15.4% men's sports
- None of the students attended the same institution

Mental health challenges experienced & frequently mentioned:

- Depression (35.3%)
- Eating disorders (33.3%)
- Anxiety (31.4%)
- Sexual assault was an emergent topic in 3 of the 4 female-only focus groups



PHASE 2: FOCUS  
GROUPS

# Results

## Coping mechanisms mentioned in the focus groups:

- reliance on social support (33.6%)
- journaling (18.6%)
- using distractions (15.0%)
- substance use (10.6%)

Additional coping mechanisms discussed by women but not men in the focus groups included alone time (15.0%) and meditation (5.3%).



**PHASE 2: FOCUS  
GROUPS**

INJURY AND  
MENTAL HEALTH



IDENTITY CRISIS



# Podcast content suggestions



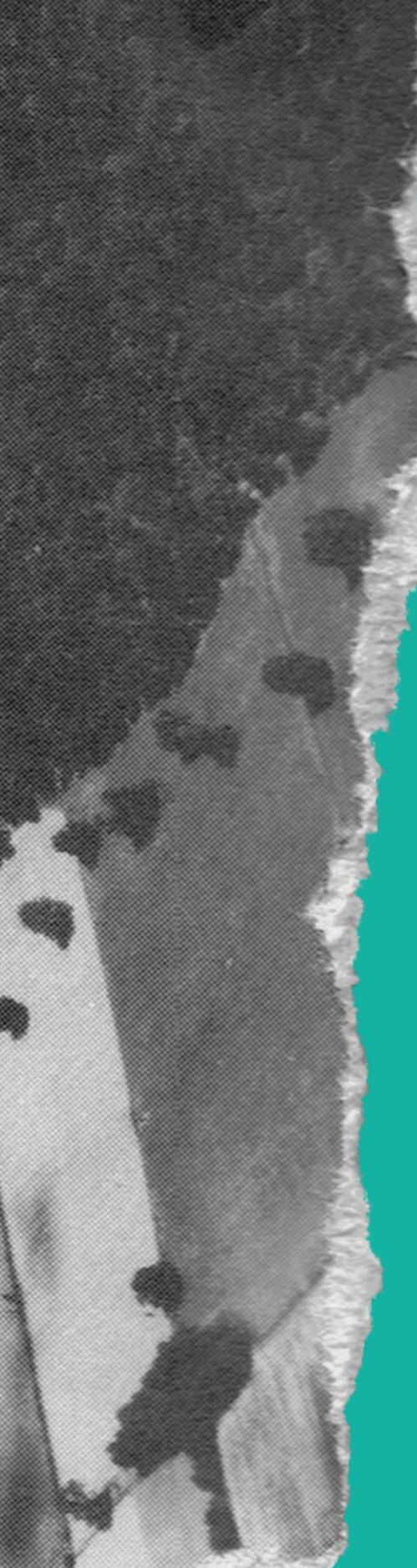
TAKE A TIMEOUT STUDY

MAKE THE STORIES RELATABLE

BREAK DOWN THE SITUATIONS WITH INSIDER  
PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE CHARACTER'S  
THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

FOCUS ON MINOR MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES  
RATHER THAN ONLY TRAGIC OR MONUMENTAL  
EVENTS

SCRIPT THE SETTINGS TO BE FAMILIAR (E.G.,  
LOCKER ROOMS, DORM ROOMS, FIELD PRACTICE)



# PHASE 3: PODCAST DEVELOPMENT & DISSEMINATION

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## Objective

To develop and disseminate 26 scripted storytelling podcasts applying CBT & DBT strategies housed on a study website

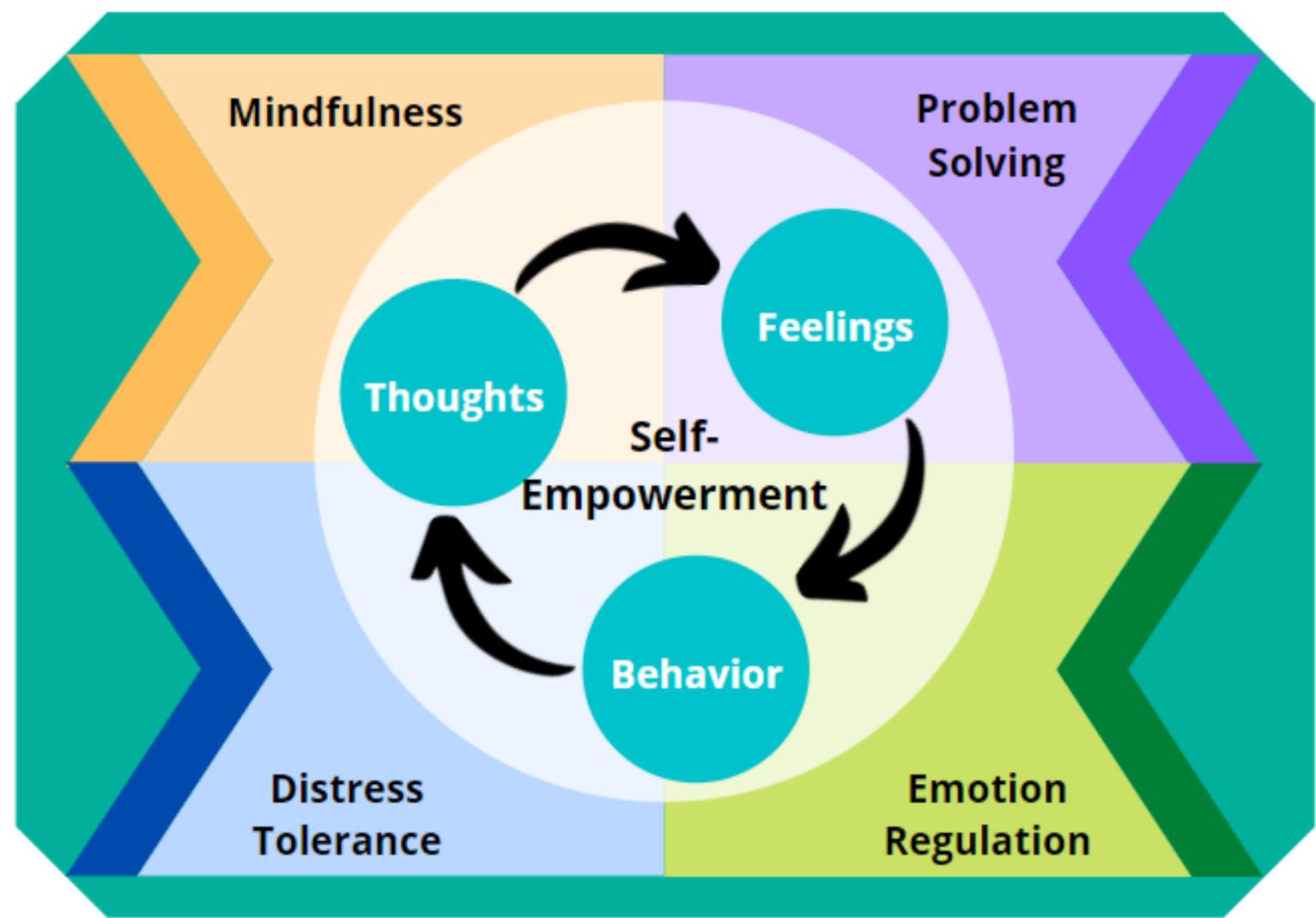


## PHASE 3: PODCAST DEVELOPMENT

# Methods

- 26 podcasts were scripted and recorded, with 13 male-focused episodes and 13 female-focused episodes applying CBT/DBT principles
- Podcast length varied from 7-17 minutes, depending on the complexity of the CBT/DBT skills demonstrated
- Voice actors were hired and podcast recording and editing was completed at UNC Charlotte
- A study website was developed by the research team to house the podcasts and track listener data

Topic	Skill	Explanation
1. Mindfulness	Observe	Attending to events or emotions without trying to stop them
	Describe	Applying verbal labels to behavioral and environmental events
	Participate	Engaging with emotional experience without self-consciousness
2. Problem Solving	Identify and Overcome: Low risk	Recognizing stressful situations or emotions and formulating a series of options to overcome
	Identify and Overcome: High risk	Recognizing stressful situations or emotions and formulating a series of options to overcome
3. Emotion Regulation	Identify and Label Emotions	Utilizing mindfulness skills to further describe emotional experience
	Increase Positive Emotional Events	Increasing the number of pleasurable events in one's life
	Take Opposite Action	Acting in a way that is opposite to the current emotional experience
4. Distress Tolerance	Crisis Survival	Distracting, or self-soothing, to improve the moment, pros/cons
	Acceptance Skills	Radical acceptance of situation and turning of the mind toward acceptance
	Willingness vs Willfulness	Willingness is opposition to destructive behaviors, while willfulness is reflective of the negative emotion
5. Self-Empowerment	Acceptance	Understanding self and ability to overcome mental health challenges
	Service Utilization	Connecting students with mental health services on campus





# Take A Timeout

A skills-based podcast program for coping with mental health challenges as a collegiate athlete

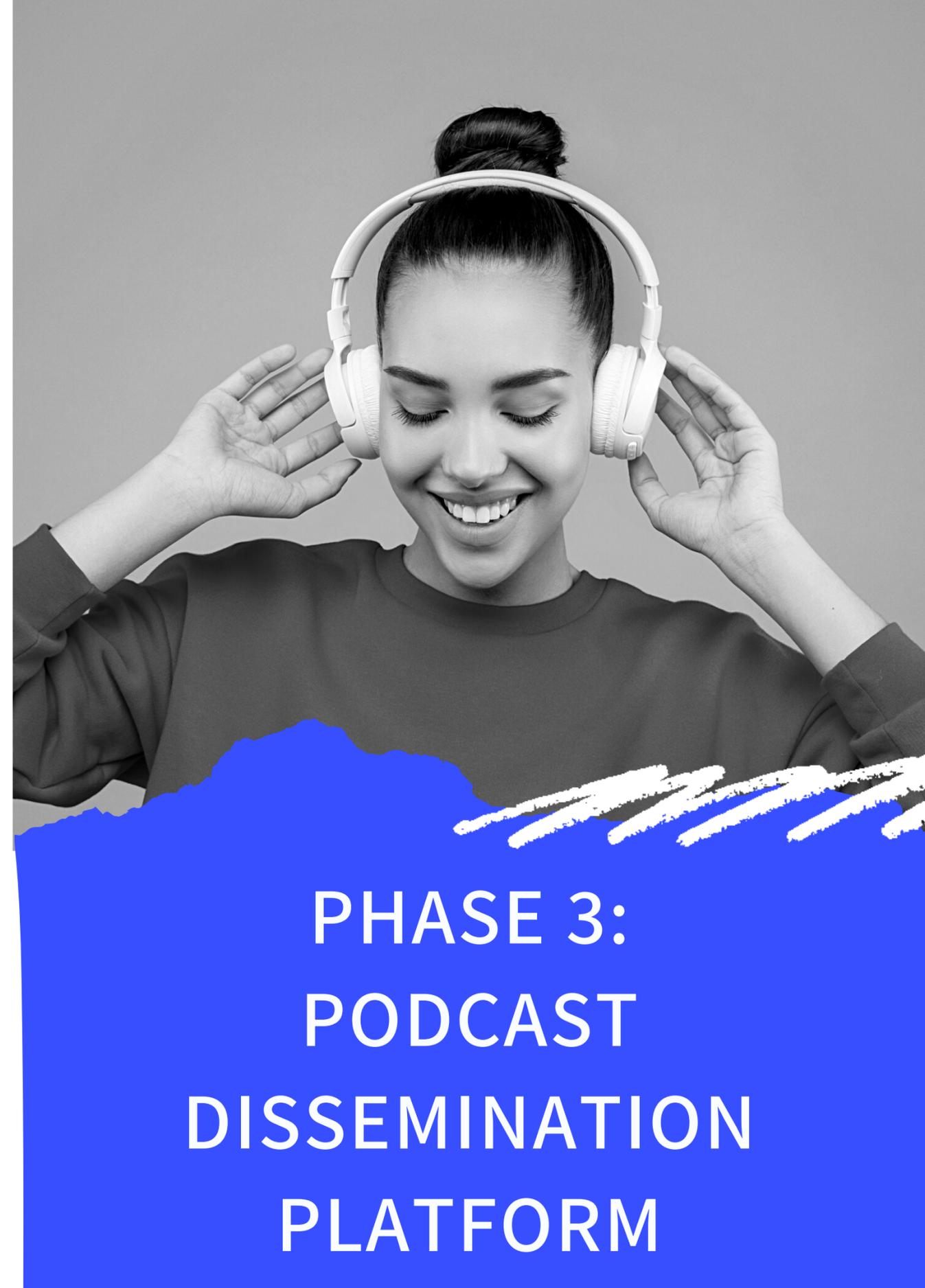
Access Women's Sport Podcasts

Access Men's Sport Podcasts

Welcome to "Take A Timeout", a podcast series aimed to help student-athletes learn strategies on how to cope with mental health challenges and raise their mental wellness using evidence-based practices.

Rooted in Cognitive and Dialectical Behavior Therapies (CBT/DBT), these podcasts are geared towards issues involving: problem-solving, mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and self-empowerment.

Through these scripted podcasts informed by true stories, we hope athletes will learn and engage with the content to help improve skills for coping with mental health challenges within and beyond the sport.



PHASE 3:  
PODCAST  
DISSEMINATION  
PLATFORM



# IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMPUS PROGRAMMING

## 1. STUDENT-ATHLETES NEED EFFECTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Study finding: high favorability and acceptability around tools that are readily accessible through mobile devices

## 2. HEALTH PROMOTION MATERIALS NEED TO BE RELATABLE TO THE STUDENT- ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

Study finding: resources should reflect real experiences, rather than idealistic or overly fabricated content

## 3. SOCIAL SUPPORT IS A CRITICAL STRUCTURE FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

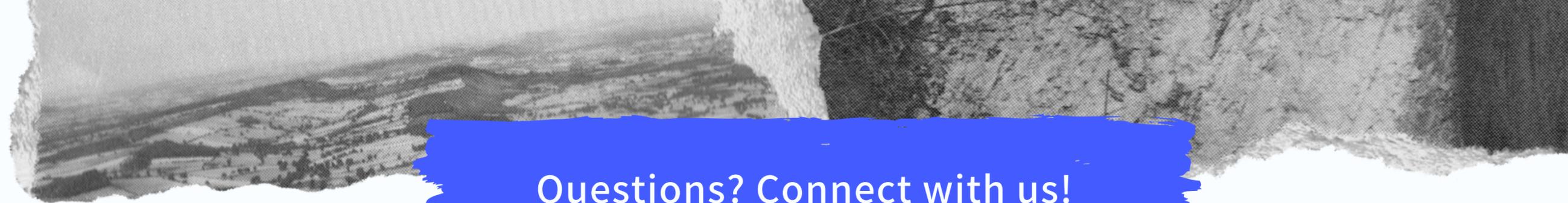
Study finding: transfer students struggle with establishing strong social relationships

## 4. IDENTITY CRISIS STEMMING FROM SPORT DISRUPTION NEEDS CRITICAL ATTENTION AS A PRECURSOR TO MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Study finding: injury & COVID-19 disruptions were markers for downward patterns of thoughts, feelings, behaviors

## 5. PODCASTS ARE A COST AND TIME-EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR REACHING STUDENT- ATHLETES

Study finding: students supported the use of podcasts for sport-related trainings over video modules to allow greater flexibility to complete



Questions? [Connect with us!](#)

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