



Social Media and Mental Health

What Staff Should Know

Social media can impact student-athlete mental health. Understanding the risks and benefits of social media use can help you recognize and support student-athletes who may be experiencing negative impacts.

HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH?

Social media platforms can help student-athletes:

- Connect with friends, fans and teammates.
- Build a supportive community.
- Share their story or advocate for causes they care about.
- Build their brand and fulfill NIL contracts.

Social media platforms can also be a place where student-athletes:

- Receive harmful and harassing messages.
- Develop body image concerns or negatively compare themselves to others.
- Experience sleep problems that can affect health, safety and performance.

Negative impacts of social media use may be associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, disordered eating, and in extreme circumstances, be a contributing factor in suicidal thoughts or actions.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WELL-BEING



About 20% of student-athletes say social media engagement makes it hard to get to sleep at night.

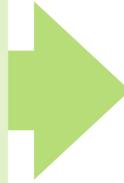


Nearly 30% of female student-athletes say social media frequently makes them feel worse about the way their bodies look.

Recognizing the Signs

A student-athlete might be experiencing negative effects of using social media if you notice them exhibiting:

- **Mood changes.**
- Feelings of **hopelessness, isolation or low motivation.**
- Changes in **eating or sleeping habits.**
- **Loss of confidence or self-doubt** about their abilities.
- **Constantly checking social media accounts.**
- **Changes in engagement** with teammates or coaches.



What To Do

It's important to talk about finding balance in social media use, including setting boundaries, engaging purposefully, making real-life connections and taking breaks when needed.

When you suspect a student-athlete may be experiencing negative mental health impacts from social media use, you can offer support by:

1. Engaging in an open conversation.

- Acknowledging what you've seen or heard that is causing your concern.
- Letting them know that they're not alone and be an empathetic listener. Suggest they speak with a licensed mental health provider and offer to facilitate that connection.

2. Discussing strategies for social media use.

- Hiding or reporting harmful comments and report any troublesome accounts. Have them ask a friend to monitor comments.
- Adjusting settings on social media accounts to filter out or mute negative words or phrases, and limit comments to only the people they follow. They can even turn off comments.
- Waiting to check their social media accounts following a performance or event until they have spent time reflecting on their performance.

3. Knowing when to report and/or refer.

- Ensuring you understand when to elevate concerns, especially if an athlete receives threats, discriminatory messages or other harassment that could lead to self-harm or suicidal thoughts.
- Providing resources for licensed mental health providers on campus.
- Making sure resources for help are posted in locker rooms, coaching offices and throughout athletic facilities, and encourage student-athletes to seek help when needed.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call, text or chat 988.

For resources and guidance on mental health education, check out the [NCAA Mental Health Best Practices](#).



Make the correlation between social media and mental health something you talk to your team about at the start of and throughout the season. Let them know the precautions they can take to protect their accounts.

