

A close-up, slightly blurred background of a reddish-brown track and field surface with white lane markings. The text is centered over this background.

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR ATHLETES

Acknowledgement of Country

We gratefully acknowledge the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which this project originated, this Country known as Australia, where Aboriginal people have lived and practiced their culture for many thousands of years.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

Artwork acknowledgement: *A Guidance Through Time* by [Quandamooka](#) artist, [Casey Coolwell](#) and [Kyra Mancktelow](#).






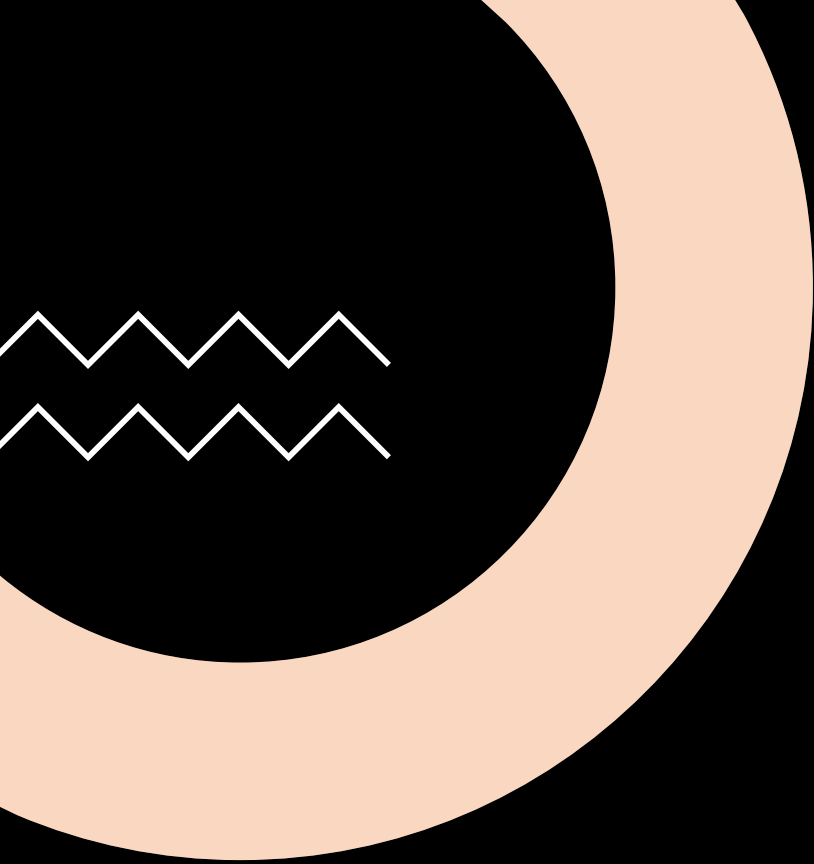
WHO AM I

- Gabrielle
 - Born in Sydney, grew up in Dubai, University in Brisbane
 - Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)
 - Master of Psychology (Sport & Exercise)
 - Provisionally registered Psychologist
 - UQ Psychology Clinic, State School Psychologist, UQ Rugby, UQ Elite Athlete Program
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YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS

- Almost one-fifth of all young people aged 11 to 17 years experience high or very high levels of psychological distress.
- One in seven young people aged 4 to 17 years experience a mental health condition in any given year

- **9.4%** of children aged 3-17 had diagnosed Anxiety in 2016-2019
- Only **31%** of young women and **13%** of young men with mental health problems had sought any professional help
- Increase in prevalence of Anxiety and Depression among children aged 6-17 years from **5.4%** (2003) to **8%** (2007) to **8.4%** (2011-2012)



- Mental health education
- What to look out for
- What you can do
- Referrals
- Scenarios
- Resources

AGENDA

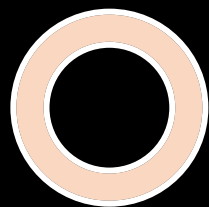




Mental Health Disorders

Risk Factors

Perpetuating Factors



MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS



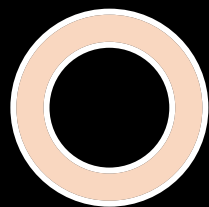
“Characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour

It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning (social, academic, etc)”

Examples

- Anxiety disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Eating disorders
- Mood disorders
- Disruptive behaviour disorders





RISK FACTORS



Individual, family, community factors

Those exposed to adverse circumstances are at higher risk

- Violence
- Trauma
- Socioeconomic difficulties

Risk factors in youth include

- Biology (genetics)
- Discrimination
- Family dysfunction
- Lack of access to quality support





PERPETUATING FACTORS



Lack of education



Unresolved conflicts



Ongoing stressors



Lack of support

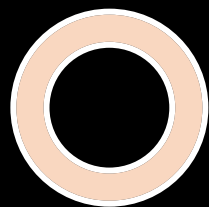




What are they saying?

What are they doing?

What is going on in their lives?



WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?



Confused or irrational

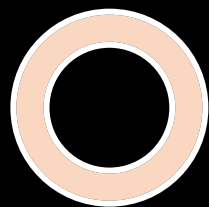
Angry or irritable

Dismissive or defensive

Concerned they are a burden

Excessively worried





WHAT ARE THEY DOING?



Not training or competing at usual standard

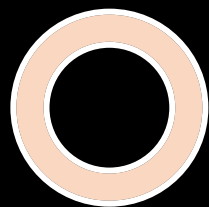
Being disruptive

Withdrawing or less social

Making less effort

Unable to concentrate or disengaged





WHAT IS GOING ON IN THEIR LIVES?



Pressures from school

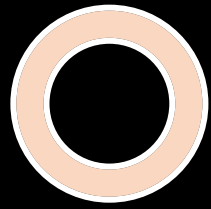
Pressures from home

Difficulties at home

Upcoming competition

Change in life circumstance





WHAT IS
GOING ON IN
THEIR LIVES.

CHANGES

Pressures from school

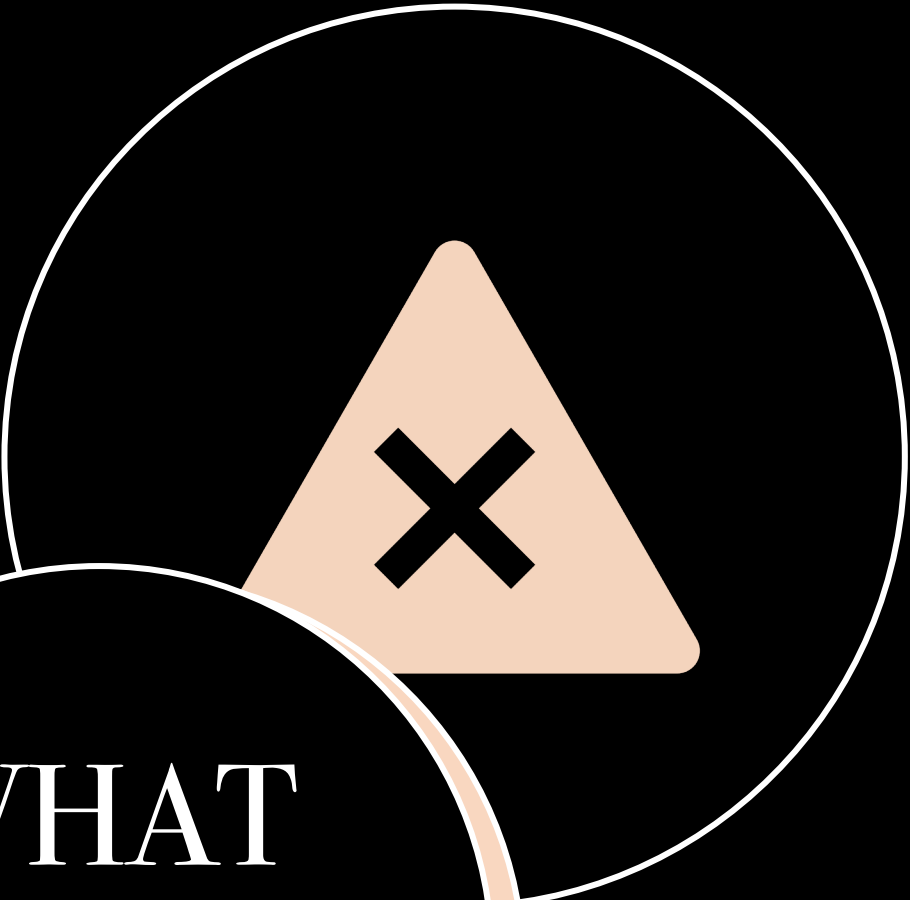
Pressures from home

Difficulties at home

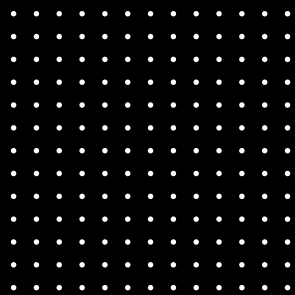
Upcoming competition

Change in life circumstance





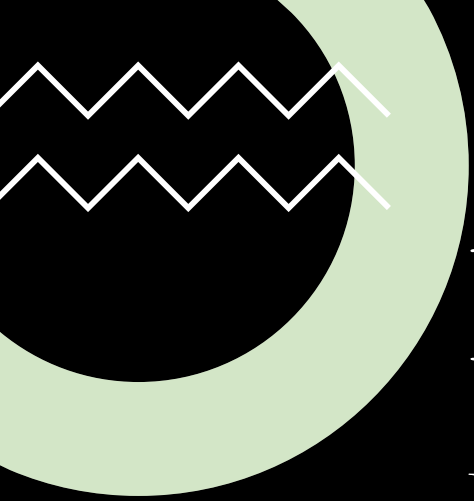
WHAT
YOU CAN
DO



Primary

Secondary

Tertiary



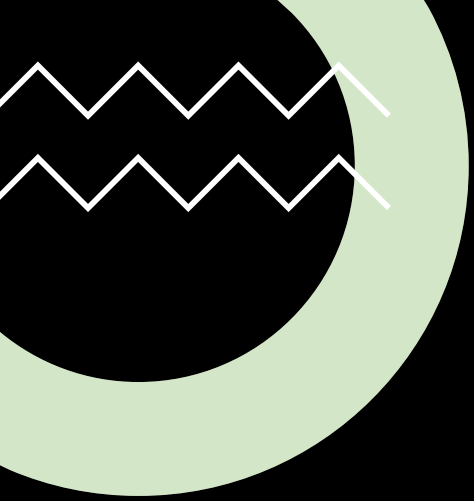
PRIMARY

Reducing exposure to risk factors

Education is key

All about the TEAM CULTURE



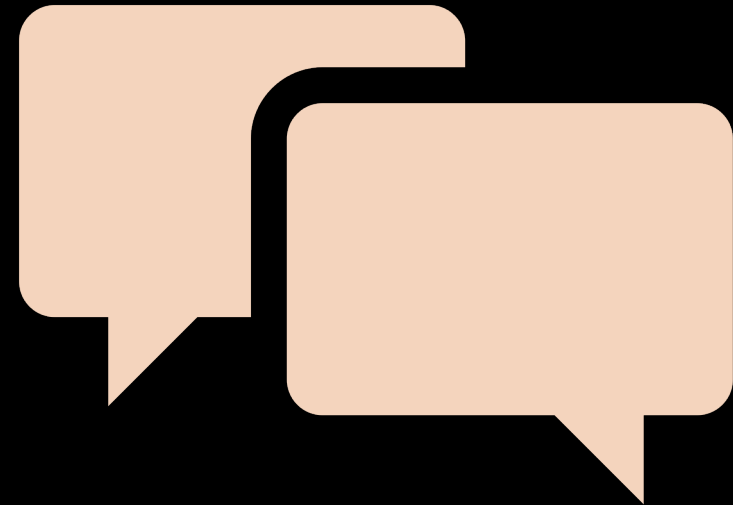


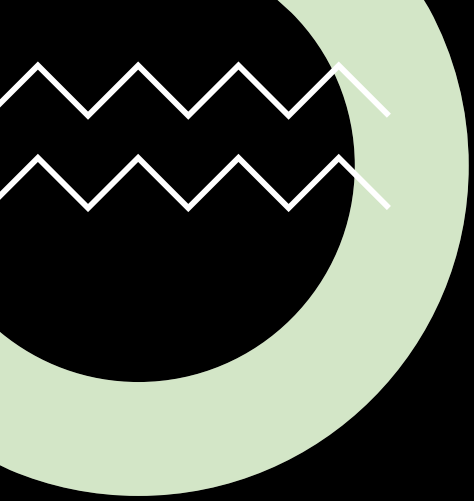
SECONDARY

Detection

Treatment / intervention

All about a CONVERSATION





TERTIARY

Lessen the impact

Support systems

All about ENCOURAGEMENT
AND ONGOING SUPPORT





INTERVENTION STAGES

Team Culture

Conversation

Encouragement And Ongoing
Support





**TEAM
CULTURE**

**Normalize and
destigmatize**

Define values

**Emphasize process
outcomes**



HAVING A CONVERSATION

Ask questions

Listen with an open mind

Encourage action



ASK QUESTIONS



Open ended questions

Explore rather than problem solve

Ask what they need from you

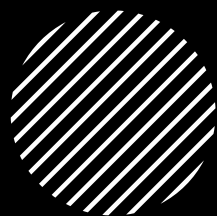


“What has been going on for you recently?”

“How can I help you feel better?”



LISTEN WITH AN OPEN MIND



Emphasize that you are there to listen

Encourage them to explain

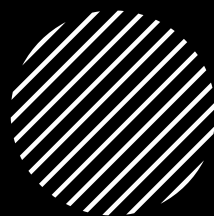
Don't interrupt, be patient

“Sometimes you need
to talk to an adult
about your feelings.
I'm here to listen”

“Can you explain
to me what you are
feeling?”



ENCOURAGE ACTION



Speak to someone else

Seeking treatment and additional support

Give them referral options



“Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?”

“Would you like some additional support with what you are struggling with”



Is this question appropriate?

- Open ended?
- Explorative?
- Encouraging explanation?

If appropriate, why?

- What could you add?

If not appropriate, why?

- What could you change?

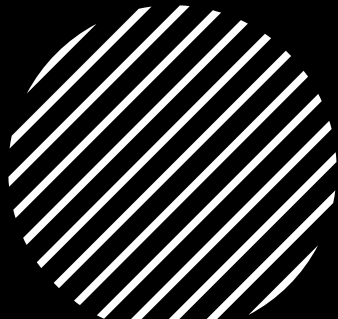


Can you tell me more about what is happening?

Your performance in training hasn't been great recently, you should talk to a professional and fix your mindset

What can I do to best support you right now?

You don't look like you are doing okay, are things at home bad again?





ENCOURAGEMENT
AND ONGOING
SUPPORT

Check-in

Encourage treatment
adherence

Stay engaged with team



ROLE PLAY

- In partners 1 person is an athlete and 1 person is a staff member
- **ATHLETE:** you have been struggling lately with excessive worry – you are experiencing pressures from home – pressures from school – pressures from the upcoming competition
- **STAFF:** you have noticed that the athlete is not performing at their usual standard, they are more distracted during training and they are less social
- **SITUATION:** you are at training and you want to have a conversation with the athlete about what you have noticed
- 5 minutes and then change roles



IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO FIX THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

You are not a mental health
practitioner or a psychologist

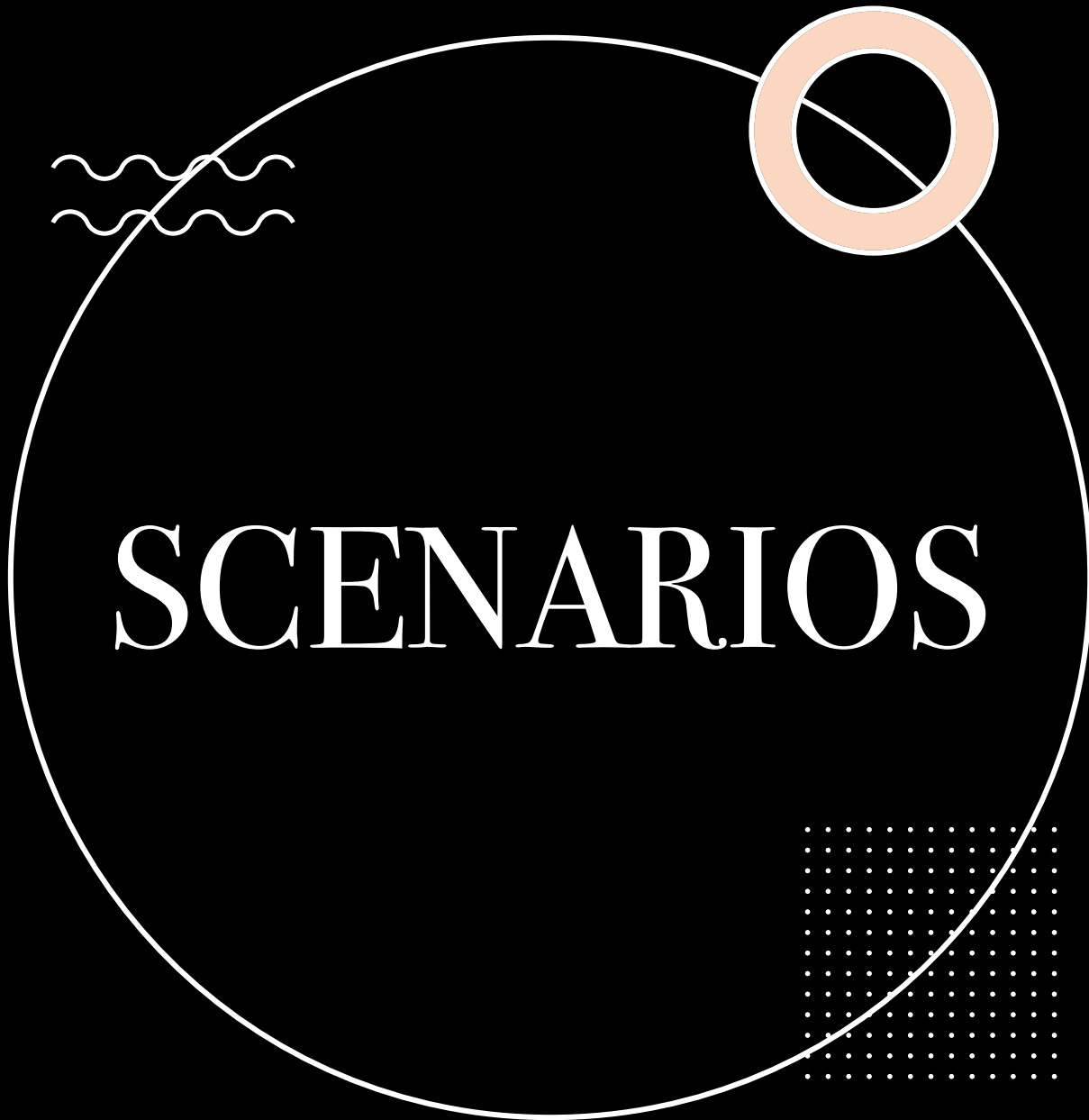
You can help and support, but it is
not your responsibility to fix





**WHERE TO
REFER**

- Psychologist
- Kids Helpline 24/7 (emergency)
 - 1800 55 1800
- Beyond Blue 24/7
 - 1300 224 636
 - beyondblue.org.au
- Headspace
 - headspace.org.au



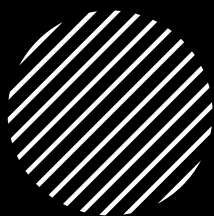
10 minute discussion in groups

Think about

- What are/might be the signs?
- What might be contributing?
- How could you approach the situation?
- What are some questions?
- What could you do afterwards?



JOHNNY



Johnny is a 12-year-old tennis player who is known to goof around during training, be quite loud and always be having a chat. Over the past 2 weeks, Johnny has been keeping more to himself; he is not really interacting with the other athletes, he isn't talking as much and between drills he won't help pick up balls. There have been whispers amongst the other athletes that there might be something going on at Johnny's home.



What are/might be the signs?

What might be contributing?

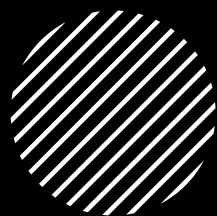
How could you approach the situation?

What are some questions?

What could you do afterwards?



IMOGEN

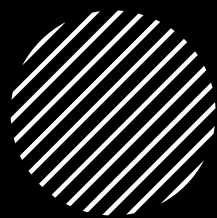


- What are/might be the signs?
- What might be contributing?
- How could you approach the situation?
- What are some questions?
- What could you do afterwards?

Imogen is an 8-year-old gymnast who has a big competition coming up in the next month. Imogen's parents are divorced so her and her younger sister spend alternating weeks with them. Imogen is quite reserved; she doesn't really speak to anyone at training and doesn't seem to have many friends. She is very critical of herself and whenever she messes up a drill she always profusely apologizes. During a training session, a group of other gymnasts in Imogen's class are looking over at her and laughing amongst themselves.



HUGH



- What are/might be the signs?
- What might be contributing?
- How could you approach the situation?
- What are some questions?
- What could you do afterwards?

Hugh recently competed in the 100m sprint at Nationals in the U18 category. He ended up losing the race in the last 20m to his biggest rival, despite being picked as the favourite to win. During training the following week, Hugh did not follow instructions, questioned everything the coach said and was dismissive of any assistance during drills. Hugh is going into exam season, and in wanting to attain an ATAR of at least 97, he has been spending more time away from training so he can study.



R U Okay (ruok.org.au/sport)

- Practical Tool for Coaches
- Conversation Guide for Coaches

IOC Mental Health Tool Kit

AASP Mental Wellness Resource Centre

Delphi study by Bissett et al., (2020)

- Role of sport coaches in promoting athlete mental health



QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
CONCERNS?



IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER
QUESTIONS PLEASE FEEL
FREE TO CONTACT ME

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