THE OPTIMAL ATHLETE
HEALTH COURSE

A WELLNESS GUIDE FOR GYMNASTS,
COACHES AND PARENTS
FOCUS OF THE COURSE

Nutrition and Healthy Body Image
-Shannon Bowles Doleac
-Christina Crowder

Healthy Training and Injury Prevention
-Dr. Bree Simmons

Mental Skills and Healthy Minds
-Dr. Alison Arnold

Interpersonal Skills and Healthy Communication
-Traci Sommer Stanard
The problem with focusing only on the athlete...

- If the primary focus is athletic accomplishment without implementing the necessary support to maintain the individual’s health, the individual will likely become overwhelmed. This can lead to malnourishment, overtraining, injury and poor self-worth.
Healthy Individual = Healthy and Strong Athlete

- Nutrition and Healthy Body Image
- Healthy Training and Injury Prevention
- Mental Skills and Healthy Minds
- Interpersonal Skills and Healthy Communication
Nutrition & Healthy Body Image

Shannon Doleac and Christina Crowder
Why is Nutrition Important for an Athlete?

• Nutrient-rich foods NOURISH the body, mind and spirit of an athlete.

• A focus on real, whole foods (from the earth) provide such nutrients, as well as the medium to encourage healthful choices.

• Food can taste good AND support the demands of an athlete.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health benefits:</th>
<th>Performance Benefits:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased energy</td>
<td>• Decreased inflammation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Better sleep</td>
<td>• Faster recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Better focus</td>
<td>• Improved mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Healthy body composition</td>
<td>• Strength gains</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Better nutrient absorption</td>
<td>• Decreased soreness</td>
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<td>• Improved immunity</td>
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YOU CAN!

Foods can make a significant difference in health and performance.
What Makes up Our Food?

Protein: An essential nutrient
  • Building, maintaining and repairing tissues
  • Immune health
  • Enzyme and hormone function

Fat: An essential nutrient
  • Slow burning energy
  • Cell structure
  • Absorption of vitamins and minerals
  • Hormone function
  • Organ protection and temperature regulation
  • Satiety

Carbohydrate: (sugars, starch, fiber)
  • Important for fueling muscles and organs (energy)
Create A Winning Plate

- **STEP 1:** Pick your protein.
  - ~1 palm size portion.

- **STEP 2:** Fill your plate with vegetables.
  - Color and variety!

- **STEP 3:** Top with natural fat.
  - ~1 thumb size for oil/butter.
  - ~1 cupped hand for solid foods.

- **STEP 4:** Add a source of complex carbohydrate

- **STEP 5:** Super foods
Body Image

- Historical progression of gymnastics bodies and demands of the sport
- Physical performance vs Aesthetics
- Judge subjectivity and body shape/size
Healthy Training

- Dr. Bree Simmons
Healthy Training

- Injury Prevention
- What is an injury?
  - Acute
  - Chronic/overuse
Healthy Training: Overtraining Prevention

- Periodization
  - Microcycles
  - Mesocycles
  - Macrocycles
- Load Monitoring
MENTAL SKILLS
AND HEALTHY MINDS
MENTAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY MINDS

The Importance of Mental Skills Training. What can training the mind do for your athletes?

- Increase confidence
- Teach emotional control
- Discipline thinking
- Increase coping skills
- Facilitate interpersonal relationships/communication
- Cultivate life skills
- Embed positive neural pathways and prune negative pathways
Neuroplasticity:

Pathways are always embedding or pruning. Use mental tools to embed the ones you want and prune the ones you don’t!
MENTAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY MINDS
Types of mental skills training for your athletes

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

Fixed Mindset: In a **fixed mindset**, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. They're wrong.

Growth Mindset: In a **growth mindset**, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities.
MENTAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY MINDS
Types of mental skills training for your athletes

Process/purpose of the sports journey

Remember the big picture. Here are some possible purpose driven reasons.

1. Increase self-esteem in athletes.
2. Teach resilience and pushing through obstacles.
3. Leadership development
4. Gracious winning and losing.

Why do YOU coach?
MENTAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY MINDS

The “Deeper” issues

Transition from sport

Interventions:

• Help them recognize transferable skills.
• Help them see their value as a person.
• Help them explore outside interests.
• Help normalize grief and confusion.
• Continue to give them a role in the gym if it appears helpful.
MENTAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY MINDS
Warning signs for when to seek outside help

Eating Disorders

- Intense perfectionism, or self criticism.
- Intense fear of weight gain, obsession with weight and persistent behavior to prevent weight gain.
- Self-esteem overly related to body image.
- Inability to appreciate the severity of the situation.
- **Binge-Eating/Purging Type** involves binge eating and/or purging behaviors during the last three months.
- **Restricting Type** does not involve binge eating or purging.
- Withdrawal from friends or teammates.
- Changes in mood.
Never forget:
Train the mind just as you train the body.
Day in, day out.
It will pay off not just in terms of who they are as athletes, but who they are as people.

And that’s what’s most important!
Interpersonal Relationships and Communication in Sport

Traci Sommer Stanard
Interpersonal Relationships
Social Support Systems

Primary social support systems in sport
• Family/caretaker
• Coach
• Teammates/friends

“Aim to build a person, while training an athlete.”
Interpersonal Relationships
Coach Parent Roles and communication

- Coach communicates the importance of positive family support.

- Caretaker
  - Family understands a calm positive household will greatly benefit the athlete.

- Athlete
  - Athlete learns, understands appropriate outlook, perspective, and coping strategies to help them focus on the right elements.
Fostering a healthy training environment
Coach created gym support systems

TOGETHER
Generate a feeling of working together daily; mentally physically and morally

EVERYONE
Create a system for everyone to feel part of the group

ACHIEVES
Have athletes create and commit to group goals they want to achieve

MORE
Reward specific tasks to encourage setting new team group commitments

“Make sure that team members know they are working with you, not for you.”
– John Wooden
Coach-athlete communication
S.T.O.P. and visualize

Stop
Take a breath
Observe the skill/correction
Proceed with simple & clear instruction
Recognizing abuse and seeking help

“Speak up and speak out for safety.”
Key Points

• The tools from this course serve BOTH athletic development and personal development
• Remember that each athlete is a unique individual
• Keep the big picture in mind
• Enjoyment and gratitude are important!
Contacts

Cheryl Jarrett
USA Gymnastics Vice President of Member Services
jarrett@usagym.org

Justin Wolford
USA Gymnastics Director of Educational Services
jwolford@usagym.org