WHEN TRAUMA IMPACTS THE ATHLETE
A Coach's Guide to Recognize & Respond

The information below is not exhaustive. For more information and a better understanding of this complex topic, please visit www.nctsn.org.

BE TRAUMA AWARE
Any event in which a gymnast has been physically or emotionally harmed, seriously injured, or dies can be traumatic to other gymnasts even if they don’t know each other. Witnessing, reading about, or watching these critical incidents in the news or on social media may cause gymnasts to recognize their own susceptibility to injury or death while participating in the sport they love.

RECOGNIZE BEHAVIOR CHANGES
- Heightened fear or anxiety
- Regression or loss of skill
- Patterns of avoidance
- Emotional changes
- Appears distracted or distant
- Frequent stomach aches/head aches

VALIDATE their experience, feelings, and be supportive.

RESPOND WITH EMPATHY
It is paramount to provide support and empathy towards the athlete and always respond to each situation with patience, sincerity and composure when dealing with emotional health.

EXPLORE behavior changes in a safe, NON-JUDGMENTAL way.

ACCEPT. UNDERSTAND. VALIDATE.

“I noticed that you are hesitant to _____. Can you help me understand what you are thinking or feeling about ____?”

“I understand why you would feel _____.

“It can be scary to think about _____.

“What do you need from me to feel safe and supported?”

Thanks to Gail Santamaria, LCSW, LLC, Certified Trauma Competent Professional for preparing this information. • gailsantamarialcsw@gmail.com

When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it’s our job to share our calm, not join their chaos.

L. R. Knost