

## Mental Health Powers Recovery

We understand that processes administered by the **Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner ("OSIC")** can feel overwhelming and uncertain. While navigating these processes, it is important to prioritize both your physical AND mental health needs, as recovery from experiences of maltreatment and trauma involves a critical mind-body connection. Check out the tips below to see how you can care for yourself during this process.

### THE MENTAL TRIAD: MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL PERFORMANCE

Mental health literacy is the proficiency with which one understands how mental health and mental illness can be improved, how stigma can be decreased, and how help-seeking and self-management capabilities can be enhanced. An important component of this is understanding the *mental triad* – mental health, mental illness, and mental performance. These three constructs influence one another and impact one's performance, wellness, and recovery.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is a **state** of psychological, social, and emotional well-being enabling individuals to cope with stress, learn well and work well, realize their potential, and contribute to society. (World Health Organization, 2022).

#### MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness is a health **condition** characterized by alterations in individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, leading them to experience significant distress and impaired functioning in their personal and professional activities. (Mood Disorders Society of Canada, 2019; World Health Organization, 2010).

#### MENTAL PERFORMANCE

Mental performance is the **capability** to use cognitive processes and mental/self-regulation competencies to perform in one's changing environment. (Durand-Bush et al., 2022).

## Mental Health Tips & Strategies

### FOCUS

While navigating OSIC processes, you may experience intense emotions and/or persistent thoughts about the past or future, which can disrupt your nervous system, and impact your ability to concentrate, make decisions, and solve problems.

#### What Can I Do?

**Focus and Connect to the Present Moment:** Recovery can be strengthened by focusing on the present moment. Engaging in daily mindfulness and grounding activities that consider your physical *and* mental well-being can develop your mind-body awareness, enhance your ability to identify and regulate your thoughts and emotions, and facilitate clarity and focus.

### TIPS & STRATEGIES

#### 4-7-8 Breathing



Use the 4-7-8 breathing technique to promote physical and mental recovery. Breathe in using your diaphragm, and on the inhale, count slowly to 4. Once you reach 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds. Then slowly empty your lungs for a count of 8. Repeat 3-4 times, or as many cycles as you feel is needed.

#### Write it Down



Keep a record and track your thoughts and feelings. Writing it down can help you observe yourself without judgement. By freeing up cognitive space, it can improve your overall focus and connection to the present moment.

#### Body Scan



Completing a mindful body scan can promote relaxation, regulate your nervous system, and connect you to your sensory experiences. Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take notice of any sensations, tension, or pain in your body. Remember to simply observe your sensations without resistance or judgement.

#### Plug In



Create a list of phrases or key words that you can think about or say to bring yourself into the present moment. "Plugging in" can help when you're feeling distracted or overwhelmed, to optimize your awareness, focus, and task performance.

**REMEMBER:** Developing and expanding your sense of safety and control are critical to recovery. Be mindful of times when you feel comfortable focusing on and connecting with your mind and body versus moments when you need to take a step back. It is an individual process that takes time and should feel safe.

### RECOGNIZE

While going through OSIC processes, it is common to experience fluctuating states of mental health and functioning, impacting how you think, feel, and act.

#### What Can I Do?

**Recognize Signs & Symptoms:** Self-awareness is the foundation of mental health maintenance and recovery. Recognizing stressors as well as early signs and symptoms of compromised mental health, mental illness, and mental performance can protect your well-being and prevent the development of mental illness symptoms.

### TIPS & STRATEGIES

#### Continuum



Use the *Continuum of Mental Health Indicators and Practitioners* as a roadmap. The *Continuum* is a comprehensive tool that outlines 4 distinct "zones" from healthy to ill and provides important signs and symptoms at each stage.

#### My FAST



The signs and symptoms that you experience in each zone will be unique to you. Think FAST (feelings, actions, sensations, and thoughts) to build awareness. Take time to reflect on what your FAST is for each of the 4 zones. You can then use these indicators to gauge your mental state and respond to emerging challenges in a timely manner.

#### Rule of 2 Minutes



Checking in with yourself helps to build self-knowledge that is key for establishing healthy habits. Follow the rule of 2 minutes and intentionally commit to completing a two-minute assessment of your mental health state on a daily basis, especially during periods of high stress and vulnerability.

**REMEMBER:** Keep in mind that mental health is universal, dynamic, and can be managed. More importantly, understand that in some situations, symptoms of mental illness may be episodic, and can be overcome with appropriate treatment and support.

### ELEVATE

During OSIC processes, you will be interacting with people, situations, environments, and timelines that may produce or aggravate stress, uncertainty, and powerlessness, which could contribute to diminished mental health or experiences of burnout.

#### What Can I Do?

**Elevate your Wellness & Coping Strategies:** Self-care acts as an important protective buffer when faced with stress, as it can increase your ability to meet complex demands by elevating your personal resources and ability to cope. Developing and implementing intentional and consistent wellness strategies may also increase feelings of autonomy, competence, and control, which are critical during the process of recovery.

### TIPS & STRATEGIES

#### Fuel Yourself



During periods of persistent stress, adapt your lifestyle to promote resilience and sustainable mental health. Prioritizing your wellness through healthy habits can make any situation feel manageable. Consider the following tips:

1. Prioritize **sleep** and **sleep hygiene**
2. Maintain a healthy relationship with **food**
3. Engage in frequent **physical activity** or **movement**
4. Monitor **substance use** and be aware of limits and boundaries
5. Limit **technology** and audit the quality of **social media** interactions
6. Optimize your **living** and **work environment** by focusing on safe and healthy interactions

#### Create Structure



Daily structured routines that reflect your strengths and interests can enhance feelings of personal agency and safety. Remind yourself that supporting recovery means recognizing the power of personal choice. Remain flexible and adapt your plans based on what you need *in the moment*.

**REMEMBER:** Trauma responses may become more pronounced or suppressed. To cope with these responses, consider engaging in activities that allow you to practice creative expression (e.g., writing, drawing, painting, movement). This form of self-care can promote alternative methods of processing, managing, and releasing mental and physical stress.

### EXPLORE RESOURCES

It is common and okay to feel alone and isolated while navigating OSIC processes. Depending on the challenges you are facing, you may be inclined to lack trust and distance yourself from others, which can eventually take a toll on your mental health.

#### What Can I Do?

**Explore Resources & Support:** An important part of coping is knowing who and where to turn to for support. Identifying and connecting with trusted contacts can act as a *daily* protective factor, as you can develop consistent and reliable anchors to support and maintain your mental health. Depending on your zone, it may also be helpful or necessary to connect with qualified practitioners who can provide professional and comprehensive care.

### TIPS & STRATEGIES

#### Prioritize Connection



Challenge yourself to connect with trusted contacts who demonstrate care, compassion, and curiosity. Identify 3-5 people to whom you can turn for support and set a goal to reach out to at least one person per week.

#### Sport-Informed Care



Contact the Abuse-Free Sport Helpline at 1-866- 83SPORT (77678) or consult <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/mental-health> for more information about the OSIC Mental Health Support Program.

**REMEMBER:** As a participant involved in sport, you should evaluate your mental performance competencies as they have been shown to protect and enhance mental health.