

## MENTAL SKILLS TO IMPROVE RECOVERY

*The most important step in training the mind is to accept that it can – like the body – be vastly improved.*

You are not playing, **EXPECT A COMPLEX RANGE OF EMOTIONS**

- o Rationale: Mourning the loss of competing is part of the recovery process. The different/unsettling emotions are telling you something. Listen and accept them as part of the healing process.
- o Action: Set time aside each day to record your mind and body's reactions (positive or negative). It can be used to track progress over time and build greater self-awareness.

**SETTING GOALS**: Think small and repeat

- o Rationale: A key skill is to redefine what success looks like. Setting smaller goals (e.g., increase range of motion or slight increase in weight) builds positive emotions, confidence, and motivation.
- o Action: Work with your recovery team to set daily and weekly goals. Bring intentionality every day to your physical therapy and celebrate the small wins!

**THIS HURTS, AND**

- o Rationale: Hiding or lying about the pain and struggle does not solve any problems, it can actually make it worse. Developing the courage to lean into the struggle is how to promote the power of healing.
- o Action: When someone asks how you are doing, have the strength to say, "Yes I am hurting right now AND I got my support team and trusting the process that I will come back stronger."

**MINDSET MATTERS!**

- o Rationale: The daily story you feed yourself about your recovery impacts the speed and mood of your recovery. Stress is a natural ongoing part of life and this injury just happens to be the challenge/stress that is in front of you now.
- o Action: Use visual cues to remind you of the story you want to feed yourself.

From	To
<i>This is the worst thing that could have happened.</i>	<i>Yes this sucks, but this roadblock gives me the opportunity to show how I respond to adversity</i>
<i>I feel weak. This is just not getting better.</i>	<i>I am stronger than I was yesterday. Stay the course.</i>
<i>I am so far away from returning.</i>	<i>All I have to do is meet today's goals. Win today.</i>

**GET YOUR MENTAL REPS IN**: Rehab is not time to take a break or take it easy

- o Rationale: Practicing mental skills (e.g., visualization, relaxation, concentration) allows you to continue to strengthen your technical and tactical abilities without physically competing.
- o Action: Visualize past best performances. Visualize a strong future self. Visualize completing drills. Visualize your injured area growing stronger. Establish or continue your meditation or breath work.

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### FIND WHAT IS IN YOUR CONTROL

- o **Rationale:** The recovery process is a game of uncertainty. You will work harder, feel less anxious, and exhibit more optimism when you bring your focus back to what you control (e.g., effort, attitude, expectations).
- o **Action:** Create a list, control on one side and uncontrollable on the other and fill in accordingly. View it daily. If you are at 50% energy for the day, work to get 100% of that 50%.

### STAY INVOLVED

- o **Rationale:** Making every effort to attend as many team activities and practices as you can. It keeps you connected and buffers against the isolating feeling of being injured. It is important to be around people and show up rather than hide.
- o **Action:** At practice find a role that gets you involved. Reach out to friends/teammates to hang out. Utilize practice to see the game from a different perspective.

### YOU ARE MORE THAN JUST AN ATHLETE

- o **Rationale:** As a student-athlete finding time for personal growth outside of academics and athletics is a luxury. Engaging in outside hobbies or further developing additional identities provides stress relief (i.e., distracting you from thinking about the injury or sport) and new excitement.
- o **Action:** Make every effort to engage in activities that does not pertain to sport. Identify what you value outside of sport. Reflect on how you have grown because of your sport career and how it will translate to your future.

### TRUST THE PROCESS

- o **Rationale:** Injury recovery is all about putting one foot in front of the other and showing up when you do not feel like it. Most injuries are temporary and your recovery team has the expertise to get you through. Setbacks and intense frustration are a commonplace for injuries due to lack of tangible or immediate progress. Put your focus toward showing up and trusting in the recovery process.
- o **Action:** Read, listen, and/or watch content about injury recovery success stories. Create visual cues to monitor and track your progress. Listen and actively work with your recovery team.

