



## COACHES CHAT - VERSION 1

As your coaches, we realize that our role extends past coaching you in (*insert your sport here*). We feel like we have a responsibility to help all of you become a little more aware of emotional challenges you or your teammates may be working through, including mental health disorders or illnesses.

It's important to know that we all have the power within us to help each other become more aware of our mental health. We feel it is important that you learn more from your coaches than just the X's and O's and strategy of our sport. Being a good player and teammate involves more than just the "game".

1. Each and every one of us will have to deal with a mental health issue during our life. Many of us here are currently trying to manage a mental health challenge or illness right now. And guess what—most of it is invisible.
2. Mental health challenges are no different than physical challenges and they often occur together. Physical health challenges you can usually see and mental health challenges you typically cannot. Remember, brains hurt, just as muscles and bones do and brains are treatable and can recover, just as muscles and bones also recover.
3. Mental Health is equally as important as physical health. Superior physical skill does not guarantee that mental health challenges don't exist. Mental health can impact your physical skill. How many of your sports heroes lately have started speaking about their own mental health challenges (see list on website)? Mental illness does not discriminate.
4. Each person is different, has their own way of thinking, and each person here has their own challenges. Don't expect to know what is truly going on in someone else's head and please don't judge someone for acting differently. It may be time to Buddy Check that teammate who is acting differently—perhaps they simply need a little emotional support.
5. You have no idea how much you can help someone who is struggling by just listening, asking how they are doing, and not judging them. Being that person someone talks to is an honour and one I hope you take seriously.
6. If you are struggling, talking with someone you trust can help tremendously. Being heard, knowing you are not being judged or made fun of may be one of the most important steps you take to feel better.

The players on this team are the ones who can make a difference in each other's lives. You are the ones who can have a positive impact on our society. You are the ones who can destigmatize mental health challenges and allow more of us to reach out for help.

Green is the color of "mental health." We have green tape/laces/t-shirts, wrist bands etc (*mention what your team has here*) that shows we support each other and are trying to initiate and amplify positive change. We are more than just the sport we play.

There is a printed card for each of you. Keep it handy. Educate your friends and family about our discussion. Hopefully they can help you or someone you know feel supported and less alone—without judgement, feeling bullied or treated unfairly. Never hesitate to do a "Buddy Check". You may end up making a huge difference in someone's life.