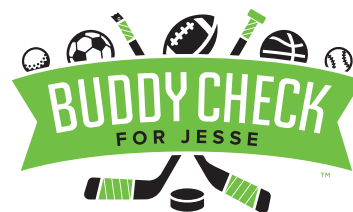


## COACHES CHAT



### Hey Team,

Today we're doing something a little different. This is called a Buddy Check for Jesse chat. It's a program started by a dad in Victoria, BC, after his son Jesse faced mental health challenges. The goal is simple: to remind all of us that mental health matters—and that we can all play a role in supporting one another.

### Why This Matters

As your coaches, we believe our role goes beyond teaching the skills and strategy of our sport. Being a good player and teammate isn't just about the game—it's also about how we treat each other and how we look after ourselves.

Every single one of us will face a mental health challenge at some point in life. Many of us already have. The important thing to remember is that mental health challenges are no different than physical ones.

- You can see a sprained ankle; you can't always see anxiety or depression.
- Both need care, support, and time to heal.
- Just like you might go to a physiotherapist for an injury, talking to a counsellor is a way to build skills and recover when your mental health is challenged.

### Mental Health is Health

Mental health affects everything: how we feel, play, focus, and connect. Superior physical skill doesn't mean someone isn't struggling. In fact, many top athletes—people we admire—have spoken out about their own challenges. Mental illness doesn't discriminate.

### What We Can Do

- **Be kind.** Everyone has their own struggles, and many are invisible.
- **Use your words wisely.** Words can build people up or tear them down. Don't judge, bully, or ignore differences.
- **Listen.** Sometimes just asking "Are you okay?" or "How can I help?" is the most powerful thing you can do.
- **Speak up.** If you're worried about yourself or a teammate, talk to a coach, parent, or another trusted adult. Support can change a life.

Remember: you wouldn't tell someone with a broken leg to "just get over it." It's the same with mental health. You don't just "snap out of it."

### Team Impact

This team has the power to make a real difference. By supporting each other, we help create a kinder, more compassionate community—one where people feel safe to ask for help.

Green is the color of mental health. That's why you'll see green [insert your green swag item here - tape, shoelaces, wristbands, t-shirts, bagtags etc]—it shows we support each other and stand up for mental health awareness.

You'll each get a Buddy Check card or bagtag. Keep it with you. Share what you've learned today with your friends and family. The more we talk about this, the less alone people will feel.

### Final Thought

Never hesitate to do a Buddy Check. A small act of kindness—a pat on the back, a simple question, or a listening ear—can make an enormous difference in someone's life.

We are more than the sport we play. We are teammates, and we are here for each other.