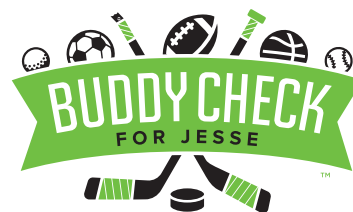


STARTING THE CONVERSATION

2026/27 COACH RESOURCE



Coaches have a unique role in young athletes' lives. You teach skills and strategy, but you also help shape team culture, belonging, confidence, and how athletes learn to support one another.

Buddy Check for Jesse gives you a simple way to make mental health part of that culture. You do not need to be a mental health expert. Your role is to open the door, make it safe to talk, and remind athletes that checking in on each other matters.

What We Ask of Coaches

- **Start the conversation.** A Buddy Check Chat can take just 10 to 15 minutes.
- **Notice your athletes.** Changes in mood, energy, behaviour, attendance, or connection with teammates may be a reason to check in.
- **Listen without trying to fix everything.** Sometimes being heard is the first step.
- **Create belonging.** Make kindness, inclusion, and looking out for one another part of what it means to be on your team.
- **Connect athletes to support.** Coaches are not expected to diagnose, counsel, or manage a mental health concern on their own.

Keep It Real

The best Buddy Check Chats sound like you. Use the templates as a starting point, then speak in your own voice. Share a personal experience if you are comfortable, ask your athletes questions, and give them space to respond. A short, genuine conversation is more powerful than a perfect speech.

Make It Age Appropriate

- **U9 and under:** focus on kindness, inclusion, feelings, being a good teammate, and telling a trusted adult when someone needs help.
- **Age 10+:** talk more directly about mental health, invisible struggles, asking for help, listening, and what to do when you are worried about a teammate. Encourage kindness, compassion, and patience for others.

If an Athlete Opens Up to You

1. Listen and thank them for telling you. Stay calm and take what they say seriously.
2. Do not promise to keep something secret if you are worried about their safety.
3. Bring in the appropriate trusted adult, parent/guardian, or professional support according to your organization's policies.
4. If someone may be in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. If someone is thinking about suicide or you are worried about someone who may be, call or text 9-8-8 in Canada. Youth across Canada can also contact Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

Make the Message Visible

Green is the colour of mental health awareness. Your Buddy Check event kit may include green items such as tape, wristbands, shoelaces, helmet stickers, bag tags, or other team swag. Using green helps turn one team conversation into a visible message that others can notice and ask about.

One Conversation Can Travel

A Buddy Check Chat does not need to solve everything. Its job is to plant a seed: mental health is part of health, asking for help is a strength, and good teammates check in on each other. When coaches repeat that message, athletes carry it into their teams, schools, families, and communities.