



# LANGUAGE AROUND DEPRESSION AND SUICIDAL ATHLETES

## THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN AN ATHLETE IS DEPRESSED/POSSIBLY SUICIDAL

### Change in Mood/Behavior

- Expressed suicidal intent
- Extreme sadness/happiness, the flux between the two
- Easily irritated/rage
- Loss of appetite/trouble sleeping/change in appearance

### Isolation

- Doesn't engage in team talks anymore
- Keeps to themselves outside of practice
- Is not forthcoming with information when before were open to talking
- Bad grades when typically a good student
- Doesn't participate in activities they used to

### Drinking/Drug Abuse/Behavior Abuse

### Saying Goodbye/Giving Things Away

## LANGUAGE TO AVOID AROUND DEPRESSED MOOD/SUICIDAL IDEATION

### Over Promising

- "Everything is going to be ok"
- "I won't tell anyone...I promise"
- "I will be with you every step of the way"
- "This will all get better soon"

### Change in Mood/Behavior

- "It's not that bad"
- "Suck it up!"
- "Don't tell the team Therapist/Psych...they will hold you out the game"

### Change in Mood/Behavior

- "It's not depression"
- "Don't say that"
- "Don't think that way"
- "Just focus on (sport) and school"
- "How could you feel that way? You are the star of the team; everything going for you?"



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## LANGUAGE TO AVOID AROUND DEPRESSED MOOD/SUICIDAL IDEATION

### Ask the Hard Questions

- “Do you or have ever cut yourself? If you feel comfortable, where do you cut yourself?”
- “Do you want to kill yourself right now?” **YOU WILL NOT BE PUTTING THIS IDEA IN THEIR HEAD!! THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS FOR A WHILE!**

### Validate Their Experience

- “That sounds like a lot is on your shoulders”
- “I don’t know what it’s like to go through what you have but I’m here to support you”
- “That must have been really hard to experience”

### Telling the Truth on Next Steps - Don’t Be Sneaky

- “Because you told me you want to hurt yourself/kill yourself I need to get other people involved as this is not my expertise...I can only help so much when it comes to this”
- “We need to tell (Head Coach Name) about what is going on; I can’t keep this information a secret from them”
- “I realize that this is not what you wanted to happen but these are the next steps I need to take to keep you from hurting yourself (or to keep you safe)”

### Thank Them

- “I really appreciate you telling me this information”
- “I know this was really hard to talk about but I appreciate you letting me in this way”
- “I feel privileged that you felt safe enough to tell me what is going on as I know that is not easy, so thank you for letting me in”

## OTHER PHRASES THAT POTENTIAL YELLOW/RED FLAGS THAT MORE IS GOING ON FOR YOUR ATHLETE

- “This week has been really difficult” “I’m spirally out of control”
- “I feel out of control”
- “I haven’t slept in a few days” “Everything sucks right now”
- “I never...” “I always...”
- “I hate myself”
- “I don’t have a place...(in the world/team/family/friends)”
- “I have these invasive/intrusive thoughts”
- “I can push to the edge of the boundary just to see how far I can go”



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## WHAT PHRASES TO USE WHEN HEARING LANGUAGE RED/YELLOW FLAGS

- “What do you mean when you say...”
- “When you say (blank) what does that look like”
- “How long have you been feelings this way” “What do you hate about yourself?”
- “What makes you say...?”
- “What does getting help look like to you”
- “Have you ever talked to a therapist”
- “Do you cut/burn yourself? And where?”
- “Do you want to kill yourself?”

This can be a lot to hear but know that it’s a lot for that other person to experience. Suicide can at times be prevented and sometimes can not. You have done nothing wrong even if you have followed the above. Remember:

- Listen to your Gut: It’s never wrong
- GET HELP FOR YOURSELF/STAFF: This can be a lot to take in and you will have emotions that will need to be talked about; you can’t give from an empty cup!!!

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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