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○ Coaching
Athletes
With
Hidden
Disabilities

Kimberly Iwanski

Special Education Teacher

Najia Griffin

Student, Spelman College, Psychology Major
Former USA Gymnastics Athlete

Shelba Waldron

Director of Safe Sport Education and Policy,
USA Gymnastics

Objectives

- Gain a better understanding of the unique challenges of athletes with disabilities
- Gain new strategies for working with athletes with hidden disabilities
- Become more comfortable working with and coaching athletes with disabilities
- Learn new strategies on building an inclusive environment

What is a Disability?

Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual, a diagnosis of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

What is a Hidden Disability?

An invisible disability is a physical, mental or neurological condition that is not visible from the outside, yet can limit or challenge a person's movements, senses, or activities.

Bias and Ableism

Bias is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.

A bias is created by social, political, and environmental obstacles that turn impairments into disabilities.

Ableism is discrimination in favor of able-bodied people

Ableism is a prejudice against or disregard for the needs of persons with disabilities

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Implicit Bias

Implicit or unconscious bias is defined as “the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without our conscious awareness.”



Check Your Assumptions

- Disabilities are static conditions and cannot change
 - Disabilities are easy to prove
 - Unfair for someone with a hidden disability to have “special treatment”
 - A person's disability defines their identity as an individual
 - If someone has a disability, they are unable to make their own decisions
 - Learning disabilities usually correspond with a low i.q.
 - Hidden disabilities will fade over time
 - Hidden disabilities are “faked” or “exaggerated” to gain privilege or sympathy
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They said it took me 2x as long to complete filming than other people

They were visibly disappointed

It was very frustrating. I almost cried.

Refused to accommodate me

I asked them several times

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Raven the Science Maven



I definitely felt judged

I was super disappointed by the lack of accommodations

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Inclusive Athletic Environment

All people can fully participate as an athlete, coach, parent or volunteer and feel safe from abuse, harassment or unfair criticism.

The organization takes responsibility for the design of programs that meet the needs of all people instead of just some people.

Hidden Disabilities Most Often Seen In Sport

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ADD/ADHD
- General Anxiety Disorder
- Processing Disorders
- Learning Disability
- Speech and Language Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



By the Numbers

-National Center for Learning Disabilities-

1 in 6 children in the US have a developmental disability

2.3 million public school students have IEP's for LD

7 out of 10 kids with IEP's for LD spend 80% or more of their school day in general education classrooms

1 in 50 students receive accommodations for disabilities called a 504

The most common type of disability for students in prekindergarten through 12th grade involves “specific learning disabilities.”—Pew

By the Numbers

- 7.1% of **children** aged 3-17 years (approximately 4.4 million) **have** diagnosed **anxiety**
- 3.2% of **children** aged 3-17 years (approximately 1.9 million) **have** diagnosed depression
- 1:54 8-year-old children were identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 6.1 million (9.4%) of children have been diagnosed with ADHD/ADD
- Approximately 15% of the entire population has dyslexia



Part 2:
Characteristics and Definition of Individual Disabilities

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) represent a range of brain disorders that are characterized by restricted patterns of behavior and impairments in social communication and interactions.



Michael Brannigan



Cammi Granato

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a disorder marked by an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

Symptoms including disorganization, impulsive behavior, poor time management, difficulty with focusing on tasks, and more.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) display excessive anxiety or worry, most days for at least 6 months, about a number of things such as personal health, work, social interactions, and everyday routine life circumstances.



Dorothy Hamill

Speech and language

- Children with speech and language issues have difficulties with expressive and receptive language. Difficulties with getting the “right” words.



Tiger Woods

Processing Disorders

- Auditory-difficulty understanding speech in noisy environments, following directions, and distinguishing between similar sounds.
- Visual a hindered ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes. This is different from problems involving sight or sharpness of vision.
- Difficulties with visual processing affect how visual information is interpreted or processed by the brain.
- Sensory the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses.



Brandon Knight

Learning Disability

- Difficulty learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols, but that do not affect general intelligence
- Disability in reading, writing, or math
- Dyslexia is the most common learning disability, affecting over 15% of children



Nolan Ryan

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

A disorder in which people have recurring, unwanted thoughts, ideas or sensations (obsessions) that make them feel driven to do something repetitively (compulsions). The repetitive behaviors, such as hand washing, checking on things or cleaning, can significantly interfere with a person's daily activities and social interactions.



David Beckham

The image features a dark grey background with three overlapping purple circles of varying shades. A horizontal white band runs across the center, containing the text. The circles are positioned such that they overlap in the center, creating a Venn diagram-like effect.

Part 3:
The Journey

The Parent's Journey

- At a young age the parent starts to notice that their child is not meeting certain milestones
- There could be many trips to different specialists and/or waiting for a diagnosis
- Children enter early intervention services/therapies
- Decisions need to be made whether to try meds or not
- Reaching some milestones that seem easy for the typical child are huge
- Parents start to feel the separation from play groups/invites to parties
- Parents start to feel overprotective of their child who has faced rejection
- Parents start to look for different ways to make their child feel included and to build on their strengths.



What Parent's would like coaches to know

- Parents have intimate knowledge of their child's strengths and weaknesses
- Want to work with you/They aren't your enemy
- Want to be heard
- They know the tipping point for the meltdown
- They are concerned about confidentiality
- They have spent their entire child's life advocating for them
- They are cautious
- Fear bullying by other teammates or coaches

The Child's Journey

- Are aware of rejection
- Have often been punished for their behavior
- Realize when they are not included
- Struggled with certain milestones
- Often taunted by peers
- Misdiagnosed
- Frequently adjusting to meds
- Frequently told they aren't putting in effort or aren't try hard enough.
- Prejudice and discrimination

What Coaches Want Parents to Know

- They don't have expertise in working with children with disabilities. This may be their first interaction.
- Time, class size and competitive pressures make it difficult to individualize training
- Have patience as they ask questions and find the best methods to coach your child
- Follow protocol on communication (there's a time and place for every conversation)
- Push pause before sending abrupt emails and making terse statements



Part 4
Getting the Most Out of Athletes with Disabilities

Breaking it Down

Anxiety-

- Speak calmly to child. Validate the worry. Offer to help guide the child and then do it if they agree. Break tasks down. Give positive praise often.

Autism-

- Be direct. Limit visual and auditory stimuli. Give clear, simple directions. No sarcasm. Give praise often.

Auditory Processing-

- Use visuals. Physically show the child what you want them to do. Give one direction at a time. Simplify and repeat directions often. Have athlete stand near you.

Visual Processing-

- Give verbal directions. May need help guiding their body through tasks.

Breaking it Down

Sensory Processing-

- Give one direction at a time
- Limit auditory and visual stimuli

ADD/ADHD-

- Frequent check-ins
- Keep them busy and moving
- Ask them to repeat the directions.
- Give one direction at a time.
- Offer fidgets
- Have student near you

Breaking it Down

Speech and language-

- Simplify directions
- Use visuals
- Give wait times to respond
- Repeat directions often
- Have student near you

Learning Disability-

- Give verbal directions
- May need to give directions one step at a time.
- Use visuals
- Pair with a buddy
- Teach routines in varying ways

Building an Inclusive Environment

- Encourage all athletes to set physical and emotional boundaries
- Set expectations about the treatment of each other
- Offer different levels of participation
- Create a low stimulus area for calming areas
- Eliminate reward programs that aren't measurable such Most Improved, Best Performer, or Best Leader
- Set measurable, attainable goals that are individualized for each athlete

Building an Inclusive Environment

It's our job as the coach to set
the standard of inclusivity for
the athletes

- Give everyone opportunities to lead
- Don't make the child on the outside do the work
- Teach all team members to work together to help each other on their weaknesses, while cheering on their strengths.
- Differentiate instruction/building in modifications and accommodations
- Get to know your athletes and build standards and/or boundaries around their comfort levels/goals

Getting the Most out of Athletes

- Be positive
- Get to know your athlete
- Set consistent boundaries
- Remain calm when speaking
- Maintain routines
- Validate their concern
- Use their strengths to help build upon their weaknesses

A white starburst graphic with a jagged, multi-pointed border, containing the text "You're making so much progress!".

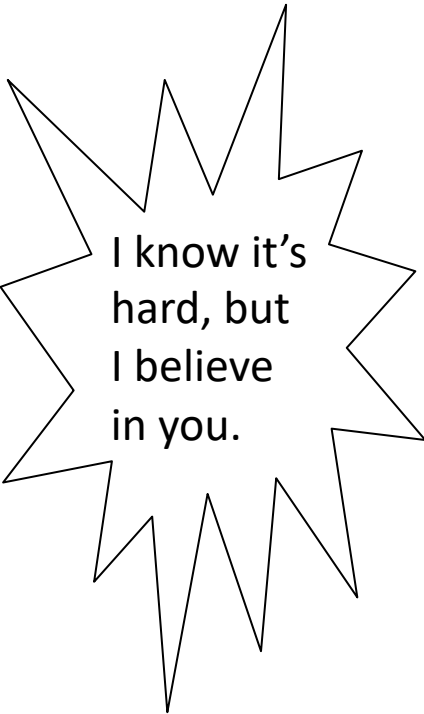
You're
making so
much
progress!

Building Self-Worth

A white starburst graphic with a jagged, multi-pointed border, containing the text "You've got this!".

You've got this!

- Focus on what they do well, while building up their weaknesses
- Work with the athlete and the parent to set realistic goals
- Do not compare to other athlete's personalities and behaviors
- Encourage cheering on teammates
- Offer chances to lead
- Use phrases of support

A white starburst graphic with a jagged, multi-pointed border, containing the text "I know it's hard, but I believe in you."

I know it's
hard, but
I believe
in you.

Suggestions for Clubs and Coaches

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Put strong anti-bullying policies in place

2

Set yearly or consistent meetings with all parents and athletes

3

Be fair with consequences

4

Practice “equal attention”

5

Create a low sensory spaces

Working Together with Mom and Dad

Open communication
is the key

- Set yearly meetings, bi-annual meetings or frequent meetings
- Get everyone on the same page (Coach, Parent, and Child all need to communicate together. Child needs to learn to advocate for themselves.)
- Tell the parent something good about their child
- Talk to each other even when things are going well. It doesn't always have to be negative.
- Compliment each other
- Set measurable goals with the child's input
- Be realistic



Thank you!

For more information or to schedule a customized training please contact:

Shelba Waldron

Director of Safe Sport Education and Policy

Swaldron@usagym.org