

UW La Crosse Student-Athletes

During this unique time we are facing as a UW La Crosse community, we understand you have been additionally impacted by the loss of your seasons. For some of you, this was going to be your first, for others this was your final collegiate season, and for many it was going to be your breakout year. Whatever the case may be, this can be a heartbreaking and unexpected loss, or there can be mixed feelings. Loss of irreplaceable time with teammates, coaches, moments on and off the field/track/course/diamond/court, conquering challenges, setting new records, overcoming obstacles, rehabbing injuries, and simply enjoying the sport you love.

We are in this together

Everyone in the UWL and general sport communities are feeling the impact of COVID-19. Events and competitive seasons at all sport levels are being canceled and training facilities are closed. Athletes, coaches, parents, and sport stakeholders are scrambling to develop contingency plans. With no live events to cover, media sources are focusing on the Coronavirus pandemic, which could be further exacerbating everyone's concerns. Fortunately, mental performance and mental health practitioners and organizations are helping to mitigate the effects of this extremely fluid situation through online support.

The emotional rollercoaster is real

In the midst of the current global crisis, it is normal to feel like you are on an emotional rollercoaster; the constant influx of information, changes to daily routines, uncertainty with personal health and the health of others coupled with rapidly changing reports, is characteristic of the ups and downs of a rollercoaster. All of which is physically and emotionally draining. The first step in managing your experience is to recognize how you feel. COVID-19 is impacting everyone differently, and the impact it is having on you is completely normal and valid.

Some common feelings are fear, anxiety, loss, relief, confusion, disappointment, exhaustion, frustration, devastation, sad, worried, shocked, upset, heartbroken, anger or other emotions not listed here. You may feel mixed, with some relief that comes with additional time for rest, coursework and connecting with those you are close to. There may be a range of emotions you experience and we hope that by reading this, it can help some of you channel, process, or cope with these emotions you are having during this difficult time.

Suffering a loss is never an easy thing to go through in life, and for some of you this may be the first time you have been without your sport. Framing this as a loss to grieve may help you work through some of the emotions and thoughts you are experiencing. In cities and towns across the globe, mandates to stay home and socially distance may cause you to feel physically alone, however, you are not emotionally on an island. Plenty of other people are feeling just like you and it is important to stay virtually connected.

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Acknowledge what you're feeling, identify those emotions, and work on trying to understand and accept them. Anticipate that your emotions will also likely change over time as the Coronavirus pandemic evolves.

Put your basic needs first

As you attempt to manage in light of imposed societal restrictions, start by addressing your basic physiological and safety needs. Take care of needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, sleep, employment, and health as much as possible. We are all finding ourselves in uncharted territory and likely without adequate preparation. For some, basic needs like food, water, and shelter are daily luxuries and scarce during a widespread crisis. If you find yourself in need of food or housing assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a variety of programs and resources available. A few of note in the United States are Volunteers of America, Meals on Wheels, Feeding America, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Salvation Army, and Find Your Local VA Medical Center (for Veterans specifically).

If you are in the La Crosse area:

Hunger Task Force : <http://lacrossehtf.org>

Coulee Cap Expanding food pantry hours in Sparta and Prairie du Chien. Individuals and families impacted by food scarcity are encouraged to visit a Couleecap food pantry. www.couleecap.org/contact-us

SHELTER:

Catholic Charities Warming Center and Coronavirus Protection: <https://cclse.org/la-crosse-warming-center-coronavirus-updates/>

La Crosse Collaborative to End Homelessness <https://endhomelessnesslacrosse.org/>
Contact: 608-519-8009

Independent Living Resources: Housing for disabled homeless individuals: <https://www.ilresources.org> Contact: 608-787-1111

Give yourself an information break

Know that it is okay to take a break and disconnect from the overwhelming amount of information that is available. In other words, take some time during your day to turn off your TV and put down your smartphone in order to mentally and emotionally recover from the stress of this pandemic.

Choose what you water with your attention. Emotions have action potential and feeding them with our attention is only useful when we have an action we can do in the situation. If you have already done all you can do about COVID (shelter in place, nourish our body with whole foods, drink plenty of fluids, wash our hands more often for 20 seconds, sleep at least 8 hours, virtually connect with people who nourish us, get outdoors while still 6 feet away from others, exercise in moderation from home) then it's time to stop watering your anxiety with too much COVID information and start noticing the rest of life. If your mind is worrying, try this exercise to strengthen your ability to choose where to put your attention. When you notice yourself worrying, notice 3 things

that you can first see, then hear, then feel with your body. Bring your attention back to the rest of what is happening right now in your life.
See below for more ideas to cope with distress and worry.

Identify Coping Strategies

It can be helpful to now try and brainstorm other ways to cope. Grab a piece of paper and something to write with.

1. First, start by listing the things you enjoy doing in your free time. This can be something as simple as cooking or reading a book. Not doing our sport can free up time to pursue other meaningful or creative opportunities. Where can you channel the discipline you practiced each day with your team?
2. Next, think of things you have turned to in the past that have helped you cope with difficult times. This can include calling a friend or going for a walk.
3. Next, look over a list of coping skills. As you read through it, write down any idea you would be open to trying.
4. Keep this list somewhere visible or easily accessible. When our emotions are running high, it can be hard to think of what we can do in that moment. Having something tangible you can take out can help you come up with ideas of what to do in this moment and see if it helps distract you from the intense emotion or help you process it.
5. Try one, try another, then try another one! As you experience different emotions at different times, try out the list of skills you came up with to see what works for you and what doesn't.
6. Here is a list of coping skills you can start with. Feel free to google others for more ideas!

99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.)
2. Put on fake tattoos
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal)
4. Scribble/doodle on paper
5. Be with other people
6. Watch a favorite TV show
7. Post on web boards and answer others' posts
8. Go see a movie
9. Do a word-search or crossword
10. Do schoolwork
11. Play a musical instrument
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair
13. Sing
14. Study the sky
15. Punch a punching bag
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut
17. Let yourself cry
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired)
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath
20. Play with a pet
21. Go shopping
22. Clean something
23. Knit or sew
24. Read a good book
25. Listen to music
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray)
27. Meditate
28. Go somewhere very public
29. Bake cookies
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/Books
31. Paint or draw
32. Rip paper into itty bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball
34. Write a letter or send an email
35. Plan your dream room (colors/furniture)
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal
37. Hyper-focus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance
39. Make hot chocolate, a milkshake or a smoothie
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Doh
41. Build a pillow fort
42. Go for a nice long drive
43. Complete something you've been putting off
44. Draw on yourself with a marker
45. Take up a new hobby
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal
47. Look at pretty things like flowers or art
48. Create or build something
49. Pray
50. Make a list of blessings in your life
51. Read the Bible
52. Go to a friend's house
53. Jump on a trampoline
54. Watch an old happy movie
55. Contact a hotline/your therapist
If you want, you can call us
1-800-448-3000
56. Talk to someone close to you
57. Ride a bicycle
58. Feed the ducks, birds or squirrels
59. Color
60. Memorize a poem, play or song
61. Stretch
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything)
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe
65. Watch fish
66. Make a CD/play-list of your favorite songs
67. Play the "15 Minute Game" (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event
69. Plant some seeds
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible
72. Sort through/edit your pictures
73. Play with a balloon
74. Give yourself a facial
75. Play with a favorite childhood toy
76. Start collecting something
77. Play a video/computer game
78. Clean up trash at your local park
79. Look at yourlifeyourvoice.org
80. Text or call an old friend
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter
82. Look up new words and use them
83. Rearrange furniture
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send
85. Smile at five people
86. Play with your little brother/sister/niece/nephew
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend)
88. Put a puzzle together
89. Clean your room/closet
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels or backbends
91. Yoga
92. Teach your pet a new trick
93. Learn a new language
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot
95. Get together with friends to play frisbee, soccer or basketball
96. Hug a friend or family member
97. Search on-line for new songs/artists
98. Make a list of goals for the week/month/year/5 years
99. Perform a random act of kindness

YOUR Life YOUR Voice
www.yourlifeyourvoice.org



Potential Exercises

Other things you can try to help process this unexpected loss are

1. Writing a letter you will never send – this can be a great way to get out a lot of the anger or frustration you may feel during your anger stage of grieving. Write this letter to the college, the NCAA, your coach, etc. **You will never give them this letter, this is an exercise just for you.** Write down all the things you are grateful, appreciative, or happy about during this time **and** the things you are angry, frustrated, hurt, or sad about. Right now, it is not about only being allowed to feel one thing – there can be space to hold **both** your positive and challenging emotions. Another option is to write a letter from that person or organization to you, imagining what they would say.
2. Journaling – sometimes our thoughts seem really intense when they are spinning around in our head. Writing them down on paper or typing them out can give them a place to go. It can help provide some release of these emotions or thoughts by putting them somewhere physical that is outside of your mind.
3. Try the following writing prompts suggested by Dr. Hillary McBride: “I am hoping someone will ask me about...” “I am trying to forget...” “Being in my body is like...” Try writing these down and practice self-compassion. Whatever you write is valid because it is your experience.
4. From Premier Sport Psychology, “Understandably our gut instinct is to want to ignore and avoid our painful emotions. However, fighting your emotions is a losing battle. In fact, it can cause more distress in the long term. The best approach is to acknowledge how you are feeling and remind yourself that these feelings are normal. Being aware of our feelings allows us to learn more about ourselves as well as become more in tune with our emotional experiences.”
5. *From the AASP. “Remember your “why”:* Even with no competition on the horizon, reflecting, remembering, and recommitting to your “why” or reason for training and competing in your sport, can help you to remain positive and motivated while adapting to current restrictions.”
6. Find creative ways to get some physical release or stimulation. You may not be able to play, practice, or train with your teammates right now – in person, and how can you continue to engage the active part of your identity? The UWL Rec Sports is offering free online workouts through <https://www.facebook.com/UWLRecSports/>, many fitness instructors are offering online classes, create a routine of simple exercises you can do a set of every hour and set timers, get creative with ways you can create your own “home gym” to incorporate body weight exercises.
7. Try to stay connected to your teammates through setting up video chat lunches or dinners, doing workouts together, or using the Google Chrome Extension “[Netflix Party](#)” to watch something on Netflix together.
8. Before bed focus on 3 positive things that happened that day and how they came about. Another possibility is to think of 3 things you are grateful for before you go to bed.

Reach out to the UWL Counseling Center

Although CTC Staff cannot provide in-person counseling at this time, a counselor can schedule a phone consultation with you to help you identify ideas for coping and/or resources local to where you are staying. To be in touch, call 608-785-8073 and a counselor will contact you. Also see our website for additional self-help resources: <https://www.uwlax.edu/counseling-testing/self-help/>

Adapted from Association for Applied Sports

Psychology <https://appliedsportpsych.org/blog/2020/03/the-covid-19-pandemic-tips-for-athletes-coaches-parents-and-the-sport-community/> and the Babson College Student Athletes COVID document.