

How to Develop and Implement Mental Health Literacy Strategies



Paul Gorczynski, PhD, HCPC, CPsychol, AFBPsS: A Senior Lecturer and Chartered and Practitioner Psychologist. Paul has consulted for sporting organizations (e.g., IOC) and governments (e.g., a Women and Equalities Committee, UK Parliament on LGBTQ+ mental health service use and the Colombian Ministry of Sport on mental health literacy).

Paul has also developed and delivered training programmes on mental health for BASES and the IOC Medical and Scientific Committee (see below):

BASES Mental Health in Sport and Exercise units

Global Diversity in the World of Sport and Performance: The Link Between Culture and Mental Health Webinar
IOC Mental Health in Elite Athletes Toolkit
Paul_Gorczyński's contact details and research publications

Mental Health in sport is a topic which over the last decade has become more significant and a big talking point with many elite athletes and coaches openly talking about their personal challenges and struggles. Yet do clubs and organisations take their needs seriously? In some cases, this is arguable. Though, thankfully it is changing for the better.

Today's guest, Dr Paul Gorczyński and I discuss this topic where he talks about his interest in mental health, his research in the development and implementation of mental health literacy strategies. He shares some great advice for decision makers in organisations as well as useful ideas for Sport and Exercise Psychologists who have an interest in mental health and psychological well-being.

Key Learnings

- Mental health literacy refers to the knowledge and understanding of mental health, including the ability to recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness, understand the causes and risk factors, and know how to access appropriate resources and support.
- Mental Health Literacy projects Paul has been involved with include work with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) where he looked at improving diagnosis and treatments for elite athletes and shifting the culture in relation to how mental health was viewed.
- Athletes have a life outside of sport therefore a holistic approach is required.
- As a Sport and Exercise Psychologist it is essential to recognise the limits of what you know and can help someone. Having a clear referral process to more qualified mental health practitioners is essential.
- Helping people in sporting clubs and organisations to engage in open and informed conversations about mental health and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and well-being is a large part of mental health literacy policies.
- Having mental health literacy is important for individuals to take care of their own mental health.
- Mental health literacy can support athletes or coaches who may be struggling with mental health issues. It can also help by increasing awareness and understanding, promoting early intervention and treatment, and improving overall mental health outcomes.

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Best Wishes

David Charlton

Global Sports Psychologist who is located near Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK and willing to travel Internationally. David also uses online video conferencing software (Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp) on a regular basis and has clients who he has supported in USA, Canada, South America, UAE, Australian and New Zealand.

Managing Director – Inspiring Sporting Excellence and Founder of The Sports Psychology Hub. With over 10 years experience supporting athletes, coaches, parents and teams to achieve their goals, quickly.

T: +44 7734 697769

E: info@sport-excellence.co.uk