

Positive Psychology for COVID Induced, and Other, Interruptions:

WISDOM FROM HIGH-LEVEL ATHLETES

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PREVIOUS RESEARCH SUGGESTS...

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about an abrupt and dramatic disruption to the lives of individuals all around the world. For athletes in particular, this caused a sudden end to their season and training. Research has found that during this period, athletes experienced an increase in perceived stress and dysfunctional psychobiosocial states (DiFronso et al., 2020). Moreover, that there was a growing concern in athletes over their athletic future (Oliveira et al., 2022).

THE METHOD

- 13 female athletes from a Division I (high-level) university in the United States were interviewed using a semi-structured format
 - 11 tennis players, 2 beach volleyball players
- Interviews were designed to last about 15 minutes, and included a range of questions regarding an athlete's past experience(s) with COVID and other previous interruptions to their training (e.g., injuries)

TOPICS COVERED:

- Attitudes
- Physical/Mental Health
- Training
- Activities



OUR RESEARCH AIMS:

- To shed light on the possible silver linings.
- To explore the ways in which athletes effectively coped and adapted across the pandemic.
- To identify positive strategies that athletes could utilize when faced with other unexpected sport-related breaks.

THE RESULTS

COMMON THEMES



NEWFOUND APPRECIATION

Many of these athletes expressed experiencing burnout prior to the pandemic; therefore, the break allowed them to gain a newfound appreciation for the sport when they returned.

A SHARED EXPERIENCE

Understanding that their teammates were experiencing the same thing helped the athletes deal with the disruption better and took off some pressure of having to return in perfect shape.

NEW HOBBIES & TIME

The pandemic forced athletes to redirect their attention to new activities and hobbies. Moreover, it allowed them to pour into aspects of their life that had been previously neglected.

ADAPTING WORKOUTS

Athletes had to learn how to make do with what was available to them. Many began working out at home and more intuitively, focusing on their mental health rather than on training.

"When I came back, I appreciated my sport a lot more because I realized it is not something that is automatically given, which is how I always thought about it before."

"I began working out more for my mental and physical health, than for training."

"When COVID hit, I was going through a burnt out period with it, so it allowed me time to step away from the sport and do other things that were enjoyable."

"I wasn't the only one going through it, everyone else was too, so it was nice to know where other people were at."

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

• If you cannot practice your physical game, practice your mental game. Watch games, clips, and highlights. Study, analyze, and reflect.

• For every "I currently can't" statement, write an "I now can.." statement (e.g. I now can.. spend more time with my family, try that hobby, focus on my grades, etc).

• Avoid an all or nothing mentality. An adapted workout is better than no workout at all. Your current self needs nurturing; therefore, cater to the current, not previous needs of your mind and body.

• Reach out to at least one person who has dealt with a similar sport-related break. Ask about their experience, struggles, and triumphs.

