



WEBINAR

Mental Health + Youth Sports:

A Conversation with Mental Performance Coach, Ruth Brennan Morrey, Ph.D

12/05 @ 1 PM ET



RBM PERFORMANCE COACHING
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THE STATS:

The Evidence is Clear...Time for change

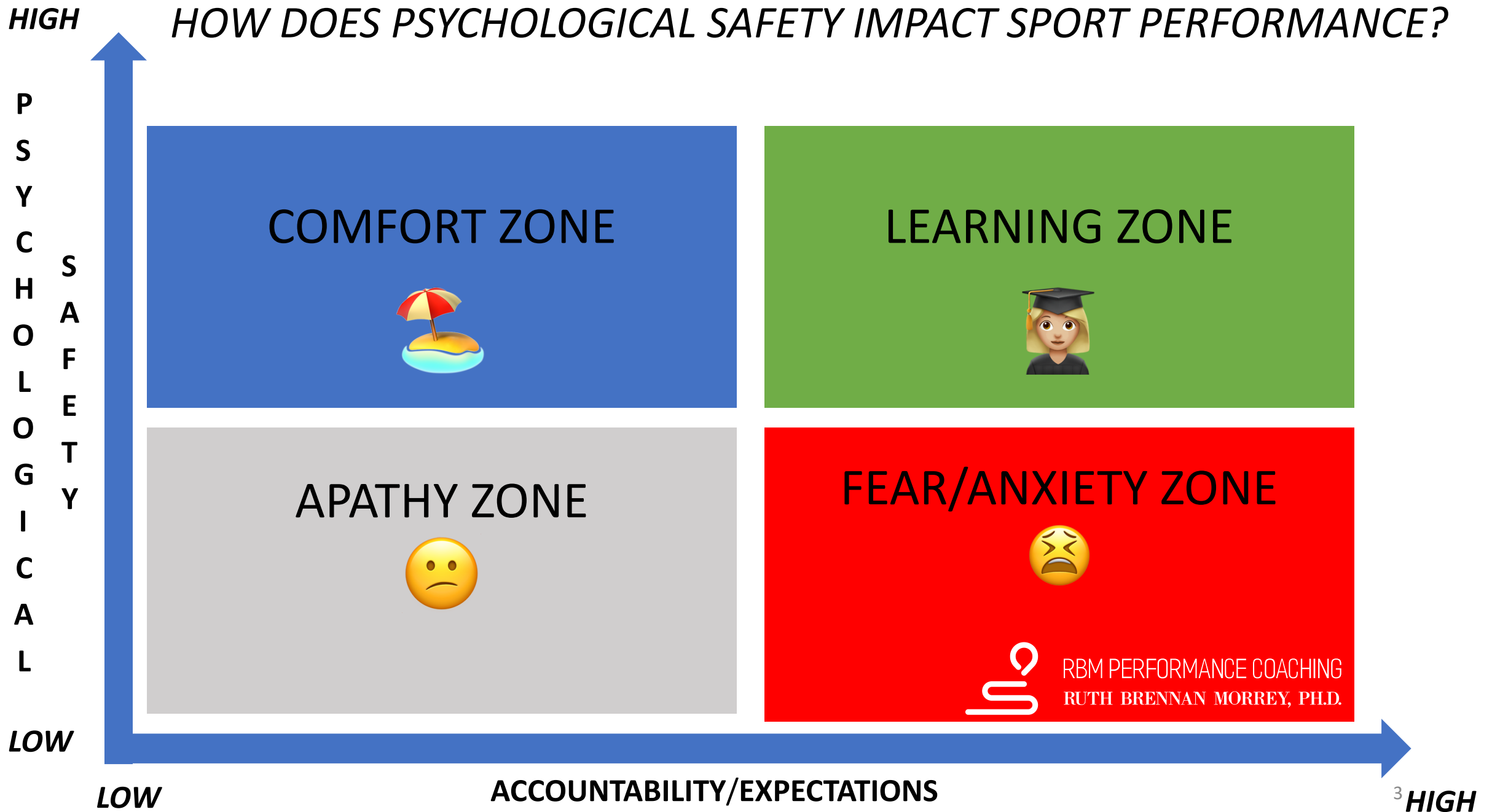
- 1 in 5 young people will experience a mental health crisis each year
- 1/3 of youth do not seek professional help.
- More than 35% of elite athletes suffer from a mental health crisis
- Athletes are 2x likely to experience anxiety than non-athletes
- 56% of girls report playing sports for mental wellness/41% of boys
- ½ of MH concerns onset before 14yo.

Source: American College of Sports Medicine, 2021

There **is** Hope!

- Most coaches want to help and view selves as mentor/educator
- Organized sports are a perfect vehicle to promote mental health.

HOW DOES PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IMPACT SPORT PERFORMANCE?



“Highs” and “Lows” of Sport Participation

HIGHS!

- Increased self-esteem
- Increased well-being
- Social relationships & skills
- Greater Self-Esteem
- Improved Resilience
- Good Work Ethic Habit & Commitment
- Managing adversity
- Communication
- Leadership development

LOWS!

- Perceived Pressures
- Pre-performance anxiety, Fear of Failure
- Identity threat/foreclosure
- Response to injury
- Time management stress
- Perceived Expectations
- College Recruitment Navigation
- Bio Stress Markers (e.g. cortisol)
- Burnout (depression, guilt, anxiety)
- Body Dysmorphia/Eating Disorders
- Perfectionism

Prevention Approach, Create the Culture

- Start Early, Talk often.
 - Mental health is just like physical health
 - Kids require *****connection*****, value, and belonging (3 levels)
 - Coach-Parent Relationship Building
 - Words and Tone Matter
 - Praise Character & Positive Behaviors
 - Define 'Success' as Actionable Markers
 - Plan non-sport fun activities, service projects
- Athletes Choose Team Values & Reinforce!
 - Integrate Mental Skills from early age
 - Small Group Team Check-In's, Build Trust
 - Fun and Laughter at Every Single Practice!
 - Mastery Through Mistake Making
 - Normalize Difficulties, Be authentic, Apologize if needed.
 - Provide athletes with MH resource card.
 - Rest and Recover

Mental 'Toughness' vs Mental 'Durability'



Keep struggles to yourself
Trash talk competitors
Pretend everything is ok
Distracted, but illusion of focus.
Superhuman
Dichotomy: Tough or Not
Forget about Mistakes
React and make excuses
Outcome focused



Honest about mishaps
Powerful positive self-talk
Calm, fully present on task
Intentional focus & re-focus
Quick "True" Reset
Human, self-compassion
Extract growth from Mistakes
Respond, take responsibility
Process focused

Continuum of Mental Wellness and Psychopathology



Flourishing/
Thriving
No MH Sx
Resilient

Periodic
Distress,
stress, Worry,
Mild Sx

Moderate
Emotion
Dysregulation,
Anxiety, mod Sx

Severe Emotion
Dysregulation,
Anxiety, suicidal
severe Sx

Risk Reduction & Performance Enhancing Strategies

Journaling, Mindfulness, Breath work, Train attention, Positive Mistake Making Culture, Confidence Building, Self-talk, Affirmations, Best Self Visualization, Mistake Resetting, Performance Cueing, Body Readiness, Coach-Player Connection, Relationship Building, Daily Gratitude

Professional Referral

Adapted from Keyes (2002)

Mental Health Literacy

- Definition: “Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid the recognition, management, or prevention of mental health concerns.” (Jorm, 2012)
 - A) Athletes, b) Coaches, and c) Parents
 - Coaches are “first responders” in a perfect role well suited to promote mental health within sport systems due to their trusted relationships with athletes.
 - Greater understanding and confidence boost willingness to support athlete with MH concern.
 - Interventions that target MH Literacy have been promising!

Signs to watch out for...

- Symptoms Persist more than 2 weeks:
 - Sadness, feelings of hopelessness, anxiety
 - Disturbed sleep
 - Irritability
 - Appetite changes
 - Dramatic shifts in emotions
 - Decline in personal self-care
 - Isolation, loss of motivation in previously enjoyable activities
- Interference with the athlete's functioning at sporting events, in school, with family, or within social life (i.e. multiple life areas).
- Contemplation of self-harm or suicide

Reasons why athletes may not seek treatment

1 Reason: Stigma

- Fear of losing status or playing time on the team
- Being perceived as weak (Superhuman stance)
- Unsure where to seek help
- Afraid to ask for help
- Privacy concerns or Embarrassed
- Lack of accessibility (resources, transportation, etc.)
- Deny their mental health issue (“It’ll go away”)
- Student-athletes can feel ashamed that they cannot deal with life events on their own.



Top 4 Sport Mental 'Durability' Interventions to promote wellness.

- **Journaling (dedicated, daily, post practice ritual)**
 - 3 Good Things Exercise (Martin Seligman, positive psychology intervention)
 - Step 1: What are 3 good things that happened today?
 - Step 2: **How did you influence each good thing?*
 - Daily E.S.P.'s: Dr. Nate Zinsser (Effort, Success, Progress) Book: *The Confident Mind*
 - Document daily skill improvement AND "When was I brilliant today or What was I proud of today?"
 - Gratitude (TAGG; The Athlete Gratitude Group), multi-session program.
- **Regular Sport Mindfulness Meditation**
 - Improves Attention, Acceptance of Present moment, Nonjudgmental Awareness.
 - DoSo Sport Mindfulness App (Stuart Singer, Developer)
 - Breath awareness 6-1-7 breathing, or 3 minute thought watching and acceptance
- **'Best Self' Visualization** (high definition detail, engage all 5 senses).
- **Combine Visualization w/ Specific Affirmations and Self-Talk** (say it, see it, feel it deeply)