



Resilience

Resilience is a vital psychological factor that contributes to the ability to overcome and adapt positively to challenging situations (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). **Resilience in athletes** can be developed by parents, coaches, and sport psychology professionals. It can lead to more positive sport experiences, better goal-oriented outcomes, and enhanced performances (Pedro, 2017). An athlete's ability to overcome and to readjust in stressful situations can be applied to athletic competition (performance), organizational events (cultural), and personal issues (family/home life; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012).

Suggestions for Parents

While you can't protect your youth athlete(s) from the ups and downs inherent in sport (and in life), you can provide them with the tools they need to respond to challenges. As a parent, you can use the following building blocks to help your child learn to be more resilient by helping them reevaluate challenges and adversity. Use the seven "C's" of resilience (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2011) to help your children recognize their abilities and inner resources.

Competence

When we notice what young people do right, and give them opportunities to develop important skills, they feel competent.

Do I help my child focus on their strengths and build on them?

Confidence

Young people need confidence to be able to navigate the world, think outside the box, and recover from challenges.

Do I see the best in my child so they can see the best in themselves?

Connection

Connections with other people offer young people the security that allows them to stand on their own and develop creative solutions.

Do we build a sense of physical and emotional safety within our home?

Character

Young people need a clear sense of right and wrong and a commitment to integrity.

Do I help my child understand how their behaviors affect other people in good and bad ways?

Contribution

Young people who contribute to the well-being of others will learn that contributing feels good and may, therefore, turn to others.

Do I search my child's circle for other adults who might serve as positive role models who contribute to their communities and the world?

Coping

Young people who possess healthy coping strategies will be less likely to turn to dangerous quick fixes when stressed.

Do I guide my child to develop positive, effective coping strategies?

Control

Young people who understand that privileges and respect are earned through demonstrated responsibility will learn to make wise choices and feel a sense of control.

Do I help my child think about the future, but take it one step at a time?

Suggestions for Coaches

In their quest for success, athletes are dealt many challenges, including risk factors and uncontrollable environmental factors that may affect their progress (Johnson, 2015). Coaches have the ability to inspire athletes to improve their performance and overcome adversity. Not only can coaching be complex in its demand of technical, tactical and psychological methods toward building resiliency, it also requires a philosophy or a set of principles that serve as guidelines for training athletes. Coaches can develop a philosophy that aspires to supporting youths' personal development, not just their athletic development. Outside of sport performance, coaches can be viewed as teachers, counselors, and mentors (Lawson, 2007). An example of a multi-faceted figure who helped his players build resilience was John Wooden, a legendary coach who made *The Pyramid of Success* and whose college basketball team achieved a record 88-game winning streak (Abdul-Jabbar, 2017), who once said: "Players with fight never lose a game, they just run out of time."

Suggestions for Sport Psychology Professionals

Sport psychology professionals can help athletes develop mental skills to improve performance and overall well being. One effective strategy is the **Master Resilience Training (MRT) program** (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). This program has four modules that may help athletes develop resilience:

Interventions should be aimed at fostering protective factors and developing mental toughness, character strengths, and social relationships, core competencies related to resilience in social supportive environments. Sport psychology professionals can provide psychoeducation on mental skills such as self-talk, imagery, mindfulness, and emotion regulation, or others. Once athletes have experience with these skills, more in-depth and intensive interventions can be implemented to further develop resilience. Additionally, they can simulate adversity for athletes in a caring environment and work with them to develop and practice adaptive responses, in coordination with coaches.



Where can I learn more about fostering resilience in athletes?

- Abdul-Jabbar, K. (2017). *Coach Wooden and me: Our 50-year friendship on and off the court*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Ginsburg, K. R., & Jablow, M. M. (2011). *Building resilience in children and teens: Giving kids roots and wings*. American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2012). A grounded theory of psychological resilience in Olympic champions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 13, 669e678. [http:// dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.04.007](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2012.04.007).
- Johnson, J. (2015). Participation in Sports and the Development of Resilience in Adolescents.
- Lawson, M.A., Ed.M., Ken (2007). *Successful Coaching & Mentoring*. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
- Pedro, S. (2017). Athletes Engagement, Resilience, and Rate of Perceived Exertion on Portuguese National-and International Level Wrestlers. *International Journal of Wrestling Science*, 6(5), 5-10. DOI: 10.1080/21615667.2016.1166299.
- Reivich, K. J., Seligman, M. E. P., & McBride, S. (2011). Master resilience training in the US Army. *American Psychologist*, 66, 25-34. doi:10.1037/a0021897.

This fact sheet is an initiative of the American Psychological Association Division 47's Cornerstone Committee and has been prepared by Taryn M. Brandt, M.A., CMPC, Pre-Doctoral Psychology Intern, Lehigh University Counseling Center, Doctoral student, Springfield College, Casey Rudzinski, M.S. Sport Management, Mount St. Mary's University (MD), Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Behavior Graduate Student, Dept. of Psychology, Hood College (MD), and Andy Walsh, M.S., M.A., Counseling Psychology Doctoral Student, Sport and Performance Psychology Consultant, University of North Texas. Faculty advisors include Dr. Laura Hayden, Counseling and School Psychology Department, University of Massachusetts Boston and Dr. Kimberlee Bethany Bonura, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Walden University.
