

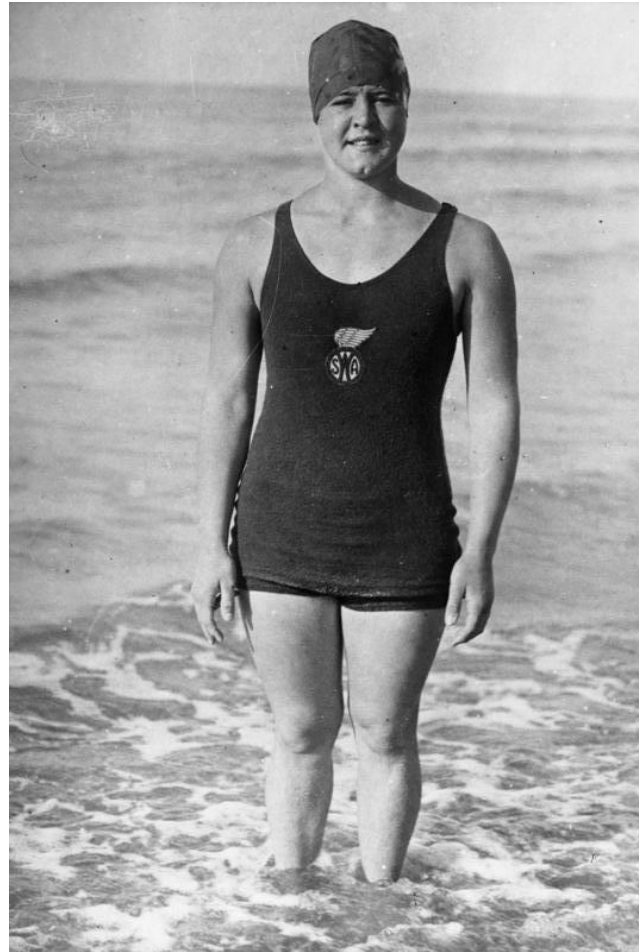
Giving Voice: Reflections from a Recovered Athlete

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Changing point in my career...



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Agenda

- My Story
- Understanding athlete's world
- Getting athlete help & barriers
- Unique treatment considerations for athlete
- Q&A



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My Story



Power of coaches:

How were you influenced by a former coach? What did you learn about yourself from a coach?





Opal staff video:
“What have you learned from
a coach?”

[What's something you have learned from an athletic coach?](#)



Athletes World: Who holds the power?

- Coach as parental figure- role, power, motivation- “family” system
 - How to orient yourself as a clinician within athlete’s system
 - What role do you take in nutrition/weight issues?





Athlete's world: What to know about coaches

- Levels of comfort with F&B issues
- They hold more power than you
- See where you can offer expertise
- Collaborate
- Directly communicate





Athlete's world: How much of a problem is this?

Prevalence of Disordered Eating among Athletes

- Females: 62%
- Males: 57%



Female high school athletes²

- 20% of athletes met the criteria for disordered eating (423 subjects)
- 18.2% met criteria for disordered eating (170 subjects)

1. Beals and Hill 2006 (16)

2. Nichols et al, 2007 (17), Nichols et al, 2006 (18)



Athlete's world: How much of a problem is this?

Elite athletes (male and female)^{1,2}

- 13.5% of athletes met criteria for clinical and subclinical eating disorders; More female than male athletes met criteria for disordered eating (1620 subjects)¹
- 20% of female athletes and 8% of male athletes met criteria for a clinical eating disorder (960 men and 660 women, 60 different sports)²
- 2.5 and 20.1% met criteria for anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa (283 females in 20 different sports)³

1. Sundgot-Borgen and Torstveit, 2004 (20)
2. Sundgot-Borgen et al, 1999 (23)
3. Toro et al, 2005 (21)



Getting Athlete's Help?

Barriers

- Higher stigma, especially with males
- Coach/parental resistance
- Difficult to detect
- Fear of performance decline
- Fear of career ending, sport taken away
- Sport-specific pressures- normalization of bx
- Provider “not getting it”- trust



Barriers: Difficult to detect

“Good Athlete”

Mental toughness
Commitment to training
Pursuit of excellence
Coachability
Unselfishness
Performance despite pain

Anorexia

Asceticism
Excessive Exercise
Perfectionism
Over-compliance
Selflessness
Denial of discomfort



Barriers: Difficult to detect

<https://vimeo.com/106777370>





Barriers:

Fear of performance decline

- Initial TEMPORARY increase in performance
 - Stress hormones mask fatigue
 - Feelings of euphoria
 - Short term increase in oxygen uptake
 - Feel lighter/thinner





Barriers:

Sport-specific pressures

Weight & Aesthetic

Demand Sports:

Gymnastics

Distance Running

Dancing

Crew

Ice skating

Swimming/diving

Wrestling

Martial Arts





Barriers:

Provider “not getting it”

- Elitism in athletes- “special”
- Confusion navigating mixed messages from the different “teams”
- Don’t trust you understand the importance of performance- priority
- Core identity as athlete





Getting Athlete help: what leads them into treatment?

- Injury
- Retirement
- Firm boundary from sport
- Hitting “rock bottom”- not worth it anymore
- Losing the “love” or “joy” of sport
- Peer influence
- Concern from others





Athlete in Treatment

- **Clinician/client relationship**
- Psychoeducation- Performance issues
- Promoting Insight/self awareness
- Embodiment- behavior change





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Athlete in Treatment: Clinician/client relationship

- What if you don't have a sport background?
 - Trust
 - Performance dynamics
 - Curiosity- client as teacher (gymnastics blog)
 - Language use
 - Denial
 - Clinician's "story"





Athlete in Treatment: Clinician/client relationship

Denial

- The Obligatory Exercise Questionnaire

J.K. Thompson and L. Pasman (The Exercise Balance, R. Thompson)

- What Does Normal Look Like?

www.runningtimes.com

- Curiosity and reflection of discrepancies



Athlete in Treatment: Clinician/client relationship

Clinician's "story":

– Understanding your own biases/beliefs

- What is your experience of athletics?
- When you see a sporting event, what are assumptions you hold towards the athletes?
- What do you believe about weight and performance?
- Do you see a pattern in beliefs you hold when working with clients who are athletes?
- Do you hold certain beliefs about what an athlete should look like?

** Exercise



Athlete in Treatment

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Athlete in Treatment:

Psychoed: Unique symptoms for athletes

- Training more than coach recommends
- Training in dangerous situations
- Avoiding food related social activities
- Strange eating behaviors
- Inability to complete workouts
- High level of anxiety when unable to practice
- Avoiding dressing in front of teammates
- Social withdrawal from teammates
- Wearing sweats during workouts



Athlete in Treatment:

Psychoed: Unique triggers from sport world

- Increased pressure and drive for performance and competition
- Belief that lower weight = better performance
- Teammate influence
- Sudden changes to training schedule
- Injuries – feeling overwhelmed, out of control
- New coach or team
- What about the other way around...?
 - Specific sports attracting those already at increased risk?



Athlete in Treatment: Psychoed: Performance

REALITY

- Long term, body breaks down and performance declines
- Muscle weakness, decrease in coordination, speed & endurance
- Longer recovery times needed
- Overuse injuries
- Increased risk of illness and infection





Athlete in Treatment: Psychoed- nutrition

- Attuned + mechanical- Jesse Thomas
- Athletes “wisdom”
- Find positive role models for athletes
- Look out for teammate influences- contagion effect





Athlete in Treatment

- Clinician/client relationship
- Psychoeducation- Performance issues
- **Promoting Insight/self awareness**
- Embodiment- behavior change





Athlete in Treatment: Self-Awareness

Through recovery process, client has the ability to develop a stronger sense of self, psychological flexibility, and confidence that will serve them well beyond their sport. That's exciting news!!!



Athlete in Treatment: Self-awareness

Needs

Values

Temperament

Motives

Identity





Athlete in Treatment: Self-Awareness

Identity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDb-7DY3CjU>





Athlete in Treatment

- Clinician/client relationship
- Psychoeducation- Performance issues
- Promoting Insight/self awareness
- **Embodiment- behavior change**





Athlete in Treatment: Behavior change

- Art of exercise boundaries/prescriptions
- Using goals/structure
- Power of experimentation/exposure work



Athlete in Treatment

Case Example





Thank you for your time!

Any Questions??

