

MENTALLY HEALTHY

Supplemental Resource

PRACTICAL WAYS TO CARE FOR YOUR WHOLE SELF

Mental health is not built overnight—it's formed through intentional rhythms that strengthen resilience, restore balance, and anchor identity.

“Strong mental health isn’t simply the absence of struggle. It’s the presence of stability, purpose, and the ability to navigate pressure well.”

God has given us bodies and minds to steward and glorify Him with. The four areas below are not just wellness tips—they are acts of faithful stewardship. As you build these rhythms, give yourself grace. Small, intentional changes compound over time into a noticeably different way of living.

“Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.”

— 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

SLEEP — Rest Is Not Weakness

In a culture that values hustle and constant output, sleep is often the first thing sacrificed. But lack of rest doesn't just slow down the body—it impacts mood, decision-making, emotional regulation, and the ability to handle stress under pressure. Sleep is where the mind resets.

God designed rhythms of work and rest from the very beginning (Genesis 2:2–3). Ignoring rest isn't strength—it's unsustainable. Competitors and coaches who protect their sleep protect their mental edge.

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Keep a consistent sleep schedule—even on weekends and off-days
- Put away screens at least an hour before bed
- Build a wind-down routine: low lights, quiet, prayer, and reading Scripture

- Avoid caffeine in the hours leading up to sleep
- Use your bedroom for rest—not film study, social media, or competition planning

SCRIPTURE TO HOLD:

“I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety.” — Psalm 4:8



EXERCISE — Movement That Restores

For competitors and coaches, exercise is usually tied to performance. But movement does something else entirely for the mind. Regular physical activity is one of the most evidence-supported ways to reduce anxiety, improve mood, and build mental resilience—not because of what it produces, but because of what it releases.

Even in seasons where formal training is reduced—off-season, recovery, transition—intentional movement keeps the mind stable and the spirit grounded.

✓ Reduces stress hormones	✓ Improves mood and outlook
✓ Builds mental resilience	✓ Sharpens focus and clarity
✓ Improves sleep quality	✓ Reduces symptoms of anxiety

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Find a form of movement you actually enjoy—it doesn’t have to be intense
- Take a walk when anxiety spikes—even 10 minutes helps
- In recovery seasons, trade performance training for restorative movement (stretching, yoga, walking)
- Build movement into your daily rhythm, not just practice or game schedules

SCRIPTURE TO HOLD:

“For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” — 1 Timothy 4:8



RELATIONSHIPS — You Were Not Made to Go It Alone

Sport culture can quietly normalize isolation. “Toughen up.” “Handle it yourself.” “Don’t let them see you struggle.” But Scripture tells a different story: we were designed for community. Isolation intensifies anxiety and discouragement. Meaningful connection provides support, perspective, and strength.

Being truly known—not just present, but honest—grounds us when our thoughts feel overwhelming. The people around you can speak truth into you when you’ve lost the ability to see it clearly yourself.

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Stay close to trusted people—name 2–3 people you can be fully honest with
- Be honest, not just present. Showing up is not the same as being known
- Don’t withdraw when things get hard—that’s exactly when community matters most
- Invest in relationships outside of your sport or role—people who know you, not just your performance
- As a leader, create team culture where vulnerability is safe, not punished

SCRIPTURE TO HOLD:

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.” — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10



NUTRITION — Fuel the Whole Person

Many competitors don’t realize how closely their eating habits are tied to mental and emotional well-being. The foods you regularly consume—or neglect—can significantly influence your mood, energy levels, sleep quality, and how clearly you think under pressure.

Diets high in processed foods and sugar often leave you feeling drained, foggy, and emotionally unsettled. Nourishing your body with balance, whole foods can lead to greater energy, improved rest, and a more stable mood. No two people respond identically, paying attention to how your body responds is part of the process.

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Reduce foods that regularly drain your energy, cloud your thinking, or affect your mood
- Replace with whole foods that support brain health and sustained energy
- Drink plenty of water—dehydration affects focus and emotional regulation
- Don't skip meals, especially in high-demand seasons—your mind needs fuel too
- Pay attention: notice how different foods make you feel mentally, not just physically

SCRIPTURE TO HOLD:

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” — 1 Corinthians 10:31

FROM THE FIELD

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We can adopt all the coping mechanisms out there, and they may be helpful at times. But we have to be willing to ask ourselves if we are actively coming to Jesus or if we are running from and hiding from the One who ultimately can shepherd us through this life with tenderness, compassion and comfort (see Psalm 23).

— Adam Clapp, Lancaster County Representative (Penn.)

VOICE FROM THE FIELD: MARLA BUTTERWORTH

Marla Butterworth has walked with hundreds of people in over 20 years of ministry—with collegiate athletes in Atlanta, coaches and athletes at the Air Force Academy, and military servicemen and women. She has seen mental health challenges in sports fall into two broad categories:

“Performance optimization is ‘How can I be mentally strong as I compete?’ And then there is where there is an actual issue and someone is in a bad spot.”

Her perspective on wholeness speaks directly to the shalom framework in the Bible study:

“We are whole people: physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual. If we are doing less than well in one area, it’s going to impact all the others as well. Likewise, if we can improve one area, it will have a positive impact on the others. Can we take a whole-person approach?”

“There’s a word in the Hebrew Scriptures—Shalom—that means wholeness. Peace is part of that. But shalom is about wholeness. It’s what God designed for us. When I understand my identity, performance optimization all the way to ‘am I okay in my mind, heart, and being’—it’s all impacted by that foundation.”

BUILD YOUR OWN RHYTHM

Use this space to identify one step in each area you will commit to this week. Small, consistent steps build lasting change.

AREA	ONE STEP I WILL TAKE THIS WEEK
Sleep	
Exercise	
Relationships	
Nutrition	

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, this is your true worship.”

— Romans 12:1