10 actionable tips

Support youth mental health through sports



Calling all coaches, parents, and implementers of youth sports programs! Sports are a great tool to support the mental, emotional, and social health of our nation's youth. Follow these tips from the **National Youth Sports Strategy** to create an environment that helps them thrive.

Focus on fun!

Creating a positive learning environment helps youth get the most out of their sports experience — and teaches them healthy ways to compete.



Know the signs of mental, emotional, and social health needs.

Be alert and connect youth with resources for support if necessary.

Increase access to programs, equipment, and play spaces.

Create safe, accessible options for physical activity for all youth in the community — no matter their individual abilities.



Emphasize social connections.

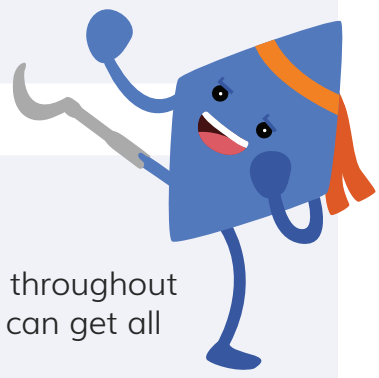
Strengthen opportunities for youth to connect with their peers and build nurturing relationships with others in the community.

Work with others.

We're strongest together! Connect with parents, teachers, and others in youth-centered environments to support youth.

Train coaches on trauma-informed practices and positive youth development principles.

Help coaches recognize and respond to the effects of trauma, and teach them strategies to create supportive environments.



Maximize play time.

Keep youth active and engaged throughout games and practices — so they can get all the benefits of physical activity.

Empower youth to get involved.

Include youth when you make decisions about programs in their communities whenever you can.



Teach coping skills.

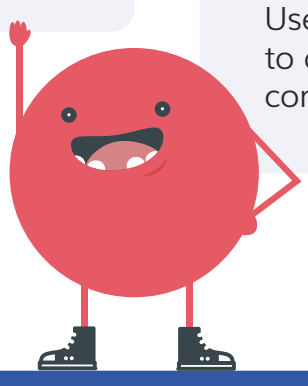
Show youth how to use strategies to cope with stress and difficult emotions. This will help them grow on the playing field — and in life.

Create healing spaces for the whole community.

Use sporting events as a chance for people to connect, have fun together, and boost community spirit.

Want to learn more?

Explore the **National Youth Sports Strategy** and related resources on odphp.health.gov.



OASH | Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health