

# Psychological Effects of Injuries on Athletes

Study done by: Rodney Oldham Jr

## Key Takeaways

- Injuries are a major part of the game in many sports.
- Guilt, anger, and sadness are some of the top feelings after an injury.
- After an injury, one can experience a sense of loss being away so long from their sport.
- The responses from injury can increase life stress, a fear of reinjury, and loss of sensation.
- Many athletes resist help and tend to not try/not show up to rehabilitation, but participation increases over time.
- Depression is also a huge side effect and can have long lasting effects that can still remain even after the full recovery.
- A big fear for athletes is the possibility of re-injury, so return to play is normally prolonged.
- A cause for concern is of the long-term impacts of injuries. It is important to disclose of any injuries to an athletic trainer or your primary care provider.

## Return to Play

- Can cause an extended time for rehabilitation because of nervousness and anxiety of re-injury.
- Psychological readiness must be maintained and must make sure they are not pressured into returning.
- Full speed sports-based movements must be achieved for return to action.
- The athlete may not be ready to come back until they are fully recovered and ready to return both mentally and physically.

## What Happens During Injury?

### • Initial Response

- The major emotional responses include anger, sadness, guilt.
- Can put your mind into a negative psychological state.
- A feeling of loneliness and low self-esteem being in a new environment of not playing.
- Many go through shock because of the realization of the injury.

### • Rehabilitation Process

- At first, will seem like a scary place for because it is a new environment.
- Many athletes will be opposed to rehabilitation because depending on the severity of the injury, can take a long time to recover.
- Frustration builds because the athletes do not see improvement immediately.

### • Three Phases of Rehabilitation

- **Beginning Phase:** A large feeling of guilt and depression, lack of participation.
- **Middle Phase:** The beginning of recovery both physically and mentally. Much higher rate of participation.
- **End Phase:** The athlete is fully recovered both physically and mentally.

### • Trauma

- Can impact the recovery process over fears of re-injury
- Can cause uncertainty in their movements, like not trusting yourself to sprint after a leg injury or lift after an arm injury.
- Creates a mental block
- In most people, it leads to a later return to play from sports..



## What Can Now Be Done?

- Rehabilitation specialists must inform the athlete on their injuries and have them understand what they are doing and why.
- Make sure the rehabilitation specialists are constantly motivating the athletes.
- Goal setting. Make sure the athlete strives for clear and attainable goals.
- Influence them to partake in positive self-talk.

## References

- Arvinen-Barrow, M., Clement, D., Fetty, T. (2015). Psychosocial responses during different phases of sport-injury rehabilitation: a qualitative study. 95-104.
- Banham, S. N., Hannon, J. C., Podlog, L., Wadey, R. (2015). Psychological readiness to return to competitive sport following injury: a qualitative study. *The Sport Psychologist*. 29(1), 1-14.
- Canzi, E., Russell, H. C., Tracey, J., Wiese-Bjornstal, D. M. (2017). Physical activity in former competitive athletes: the physical and psychological impact of musculoskeletal injury. 304-320.
- Chan, D. K-C., Hagger, M. S., Spray, C. M. (2011). Treatment motivation for rehabilitation after a sport injury: application of the trans-contextual model. *ScienceDirect*. 12(2), 83-92.
- Christakou, A., Lavallee, D. (2009). Rehabilitation from sports injuries: from theory to practice. *Sage journals*.
- Hamson-Utley, J. J., Martin, S., Walters, J. (2008). Athletic Trainers' and physical therapists' perceptions of the effectiveness of psychological skills within sport injury rehabilitation programs. 43(3), 258-264.
- Ivarsson, A., Johnson, U., Stenling, A., Tranaeus, U. (2017). Negative psychological responses of injury and rehabilitation adherence effects on return to play in competitive athletes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Dove Medical Press*. 8, 27-32
- Levine, B. R., Perna, F. M., Roh, J. L. (2009). Measuring postinjury depression among male and female competitive athletes. North Carolina: *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*. 31(1), 60-76.
- Pietrantoni, L., Santi, G. (2012). Psychology of sport injury rehabilitation: a review of models and interventions. Alicante, Spain: *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*. 8(4), 1029-1044.
- Smith, A. M. (2012). Psychological impact of injuries in athletes. *Sports Med*. 9, 391-405.