

Total Athlete Development Excerpt 2

Eight Steps to Deal with Injuries

- 1) **Be Sad.** Allow yourself to mourn and feel whatever loss you are experiencing. Being "macho", "strong" or "brave" will interfere with you effectively coping and recovering.
- 2) **Deal with What Is.** Injured athletes have a tendency to focus on the "could 'a beens", "should 'a beens" and the "way it was" Yes it sucks that you got injured. Yes, it's thrown a monkey wrench into all your plans and dreams. Unfortunately, this is your reality right now and you have to allow yourself to deal with where you are, right NOW!
- 3) **Set New, More Realistic Goals.** As you begin the recovery process, you may very well have to learn to measure your successes very differently than ever before, perhaps in millimeters now instead of meters the way it was before your injury. It may mean that you also have to start all over again back at "square one" to build up arm or leg strength and endurance. Keep focused on your NEW goals and leave the old ones in the PAST for now where they belong. Once you've come all the way back from your injury you can start entertaining your old goals.
- 4) **Maintain a Positive Attitude, No Matter What.** When positive, your attitude can speed up the healing process and lessen the emotional pain that you have to go through. However, when you're negative you'll slow the rehab process down to a screeching halt and make yourself miserable in the process. Negativity will only bring you and everyone else around you down.
- 5) **Stick with the Doctors/Trainers Plan.** Be conscientious about your physical therapy. Follow the doctor's advice closely. Don't cut corners. Work as hard with your rehab as you did in your training. In addition, practice using healing imagery on a daily basis. If you're recovering from a broken bone or separated shoulder, spend 5-10 minutes imagining that bone or shoulder beginning to heal. "See" in your mind's eye a healthy supply of red blood cells surrounding that area and facilitating the mending process. These attitudinal changes in themselves will speed up your healing.
- 6) **Continue to "Practice" and "Work Out".** If your injury allows you to still continue any part of your training, do so! If not, "practice" mentally. Use mental rehearsal on a daily basis (5 -10 minutes at a time) to see, hear

and feel yourself performing in your sport, executing flawlessly with perfect timing. Take this time to also mentally work on your weaknesses. You might even want to show up for some of the regular practices and mentally rehearse what the team is doing while they're working out. Regular mental rehearsal of your skills will keep the neuromuscular connections activated so that when you are able to actually begin physical practice, you will not have lost as much.

7) Seek Out Teammate Support. Participate in team functions. **FIGHT** the urge to isolate yourself. You may feel worthless and suddenly different, but chances are good that you're probably the **ONLY** one on the team that shares that opinion. The worst thing for you to do when you're in a vulnerable state is to separate yourself from your group. Make a serious effort to reach out rather than pull in!

8) Be Patient. If your injury is temporary, allow yourself enough time to heal properly. If you're over anxious to get back to the court, field, course or pool and rush the healing process, then you may set yourself up for another, more serious injury which may cost you even more time.

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