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## Mental Health & Wellbeing

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Special Olympics Ireland has a duty to promote an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing for athletes.

Everyone has mental health, in the same way that we have physical health. Mental health is our ability to cope with what happens in life, physically, emotionally and socially. For an athlete, their mental health will affect their involvement and performance in sport, at any level. We understand the need to be physically well to participate and achieve certain goals, and we need to be mentally well to cope with our sporting outcomes.

Mental Health Ireland quotes mental health as:

*A balance between all aspects of life - social, spiritual, emotional and physical  
When individuals are coping and in control of their lives  
Ability to meet the demands of life and adapt to change*

Participating in sport can be a positive contribution to a person's mental health and well-being by creating a safe and fun environment with access to support structures. This could include:

- Training staff in basic mental health awareness.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers have a general understanding of the pressures athletes might face as a result of competitive sport.
- Creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone.
- Challenging poor practice that puts any unnecessary pressure on athletes.
- Offering opportunities for athlete voices to be heard.
- Respecting members and their feeling.
- Promoting a healthy competitiveness that embraces personal development.
- Being available to listen if an athlete has a concern.

### **Additional concerns due to coronavirus**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and social distancing measures are placing a number of additional pressures on people's mental health and wellbeing. They may be experiencing increased feelings of anxiety or loneliness and some will need additional support at this time.

### **Need Help or Support?**

If you or someone you know is suffering please visit <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie> for information on support services available