

Dealing with the disappointments in netball

Strategies for coaches and athletes

Netball, as with all sport has inevitable disappointment and frustration for athletes, coaches and umpires – injuries, lack of court time and over the past two years cancellations and postponements imposed by COVID restrictions.

Here are several strategies that you can implement to help yourself and your players.

Strategies for Coaches

Remember that it is normal to experience feelings such as frustration and disappointment when events are cancelled or postponed. These feelings are completely normal and will pass. These emotions reflect how important Netball is to you. Make sure you share how you are feeling with others as this will help to lighten the heaviness of these emotions and will help you to move forward and focus on what's next in Netball for you.

Control the Controllables – Focus on the things that are within your control. This could include how you manage yourself during this time (a bit of self-care is needed) and for coaches the way you interact with the players that you are working with. Focus on what you can do right now and how you can have a positive impact on yourself and others. For example, you may choose to focus on other aspects of your life that had been taking a backseat when the Netball season is on.

Create a self-care routine that focuses on your mental well-being. Organise in your daily schedule a time for you that involves activities that you love and that help to relax you. For example, set one hour aside for reading, walking the dog, exercising, seeing family, listening to music, dancing or something that you love to do but do not normally prioritise.

Identify when things are not ok and seek help – If you notice that you have been in a negative mood state for a period of time and feel stuck, seek support from services that are available to you. The services include Beyond Blue, Lifeline, Black Dog Institute, AIS Mental Referral Network, Kids Helpline or go to your GP for help. Don't stay stuck, get some help.

Strategies that Coaches can implement with athlete's

Listen, share and notice – Connect with players and make sure you are providing opportunities for your players to share how they are feeling. Sometimes just sharing and having someone to listen to makes the situation lighter.

Connect with the human in front of you. When speaking with the players ensure that you connect with them on a personal level by encouraging them to tell you about what else is happening in their life as well as netball.

Don't feed beast – If you notice that someone is feeling hard done by try not to add to the hysteria, rather just empathise and be a person that they can share how they are feeling with. Sometimes just communicating is a form of therapy.

Identify when things are not ok and empower the player to seek help – If you notice one of your players have been in a negative mood state for a period of time and is unable to shake these feelings you should encourage them to utilise the services that are available to them. You are not expected to solve problems, rather empower them to seek help. The services that are available include Beyond Blue, Lifeline, Black Dog Institute, AIS Mental Referral Network, Kids Helpline or refer them to their GP for help.

Reflection is especially important. Reflect on what they have achieved and focus on their growth by tracking their gains throughout the time they have spent with you. This is also a great activity for the athletes to do themselves.

Encourage athletes to develop their Netball IQ –When they can't play netball it is a perfect opportunity to develop strategical knowledge of the game. Encourage your athletes to watch video footage and then provide opportunities where they can demonstrate their understanding of the game. Ask "the why" questions. This exercise will help build independent thinking players.

Practice being grateful - Paying attention to the things that you have can be a useful strategy. Encourage your athletes to participate in gratitude practices. This can be as simple as listing the three best moments of their week, identifying what they are most proud of today, or what they learned today. These exercises help to change one's perspective on life and may help to improve one's mood state.