



Understanding My Strong Mind: Promoting Mental Health Literacy of Special Olympics Athletes and Coaches

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) experience more mental health challenges compared to individuals without ID. Individuals with ID need to be able to recognize the signs of importance of mental health concerns to be able to receive proper care. However, it is often difficult to identify psychological symptoms in individuals with ID due to difficulties with communication, daily living skills, and other physical conditions.

The research team, along with Special Olympics athletes, caregivers, and coaches, worked together to create a mental health literacy tool called Understanding My Strong Mind. The purpose of this tool is to help identify mental health concerns among individuals with ID.

To develop the tool, the research team used some content from a tool already created in the United Kingdom, called Know Your Normal. After creating the first and second versions, the research team held focus groups with Special Olympics athletes and caregivers to receive feedback on how to make the tool easier to understand and on the length of the tool. The tool covers the following topics: Communication, Relationships, Staying healthy, Looking after myself, How I feel, The best parts about me.

The research team also learned that people prefer different ways of learning, so a written instruction sheet and a video were both created to explain how to use the tool. The instructions explain the purpose of the tool and how it can help athletes communicate about their mental health in a way that feels right for them. The video was co-developed with Spectrum Productions, and features athlete voices and animations designed to be engaging and easy to understand.

Conclusion

This tool provides us with a resource to use with Special Olympics athletes to help them identify their own mental health concerns, and communicate how they are feeling to their coaches, caregivers, and friends through an accessible way.

KEY MESSAGES

Importance of mental health literacy: We need to provide support and resources to educate individuals with IDD to identify and understand their own mental health concerns.

Individualized resources: We need to provide tools that meet the individual needs of individuals with IDD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

A video describing the purpose of the tool and how to use the tool can be found here:

https://youtu.be/8BuVup_nMpo?si=sCWkSXz7E-sVVe7B

Attached are the short and long versions of the Understanding My Strong Mind resources.