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Psychological well-being considerations during the Return to Sport process

It's important to remember the psychological well-being of program participants. We can't forget that there are diverse viewpoints on the situation, ranging from impatient and excited to get back to nervous or resistant to return. Here are some tactics to help empathize with and support program participants.

Emotional Phase (Empathy)

- Be prepared to listen, show understanding and compassion
- Offer space and time for everyone to be social and reconnect
- Pay attention to body language
- Prioritize relationships and reconnection over training
- Be adaptable and follow public health guidelines and Return to Training (RTT) protocols
- Share information and USE FACTS – AVOID OPINIONS
- Help athletes visualize the new training environment – be as specific as possible (use examples, videos, visuals to understand changes)
- Move cautiously so as not to overwhelm

Rational Phase (Realism)

- Importance to acknowledge where the athlete is, not where need to be right now
- Revise and set realistic goals together
- Recovery strategies & injury prevention
- Team building, mental skills
- Be creative in implementation of programs
- Talk about WHY

Action Phase (Resilience)

- Be ready and execute your performance training plan

- Trust the process, be patient. There are no shortcuts.
- Control the controllables (effort, recovery, attitude, etc.)
- Use the lessons learned for the “new normal” – don’t fall back into old habits

Remember to be compassionate towards others AND yourself. Solution-focused questions promote confidence rather than fear. Identify barriers/risks, and provide autonomy to individuals to make decisions. Above all, reach out, support one another, and stay connected.

If you have further questions, please don’t hesitate to contact SOBC staff through covid@specialolympics.bc.ca.

Sincere thanks to Special Olympics Alberta for sharing these considerations!