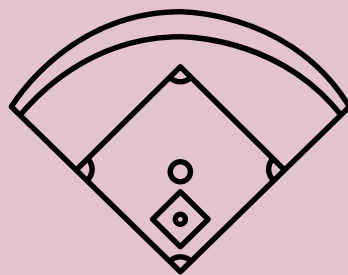
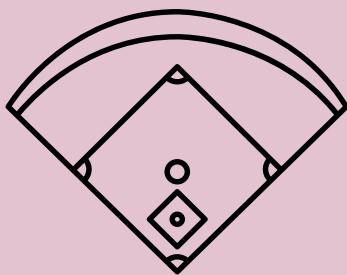
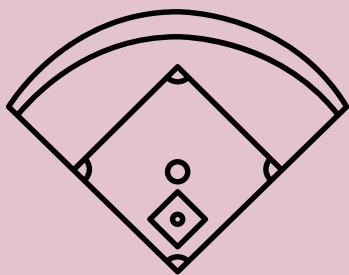




MENTAL HEALTH IN PRO BASEBALL





DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Professional baseball players and support staff are at increased risk of poor mental health and substance abuse due to unique lifestyle factors, including excessive time spent away from home and/or family (Calhoun et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2021; Küttel & Larsen, 2020).

Additionally, stigma, poor mental health literacy, and fear of punishment may prevent help-seeking among athletes and staff, resulting in compounding risks of non-treatment (Gulliver et al., 2012).



ZOOMING OUT: A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

While previous iterations conceptualizing this problem have taken an individual-based approach, a systemic approach better captures the relational risk and protective factors that may contribute to or buffer against anxiety, depressive symptoms, and substance misuse (e.g., Stillman et al., 2019).







Talk therapy can be leveraged to provide an interactive clinical intervention to address mental health and substance misuse.

Ideally, modalities of delivery should include group, couple, and family options, when appropriate, to reduce stigma and increase buy-in.

EXPANDING ON THE PROBLEM: UNTAPPED RELATIONAL RESOURCES

Mental health interventions have more impactful, lasting positive effects when they are inclusive of family-level factors.



Family might include staff or players' partners, parents, children, close friends, or even team colleagues with whom they spend much of their time.

Purcell et al., 2022; Uphill et al., 2016

NOW INTRODUCING: THE STAKEHOLDERS



LEAGUE OFFICIALS – responsible for baseball
operational decisions at the inter-team level

TEAM OWNERS – responsible for funding
team-level initiatives

FRONT OFFICE – responsible for baseball
operational decisions at the team level

FIELD STAFF – responsible for instruction,
training, and day-to-day care of athletes

MENTAL PERFORMANCE – responsible for
cultivating athlete mindset and promoting
psychological wellness

CLINICIANS – responsible for treating
psychological disorders according to
scope of practice and licensure

PLAYERS – responsible for participating in
baseball games and performing at peak ability



FAMILIES/FRIENDS – loved ones of other
stakeholders, usually staff and players'

chronos

life course changes

macros

extended families

Sociocultural attitudes

exo syst

league of

mesosy

industry partners/
wage contracts

neighbors

team ownership

micros

govt. agencies

families

field

clinicians

play

system

environmental shifts

system

socioeconomic
status

societal
ideologies

em

officials

system

community partners/
small contracts

front office
staff

communities

system

staffs

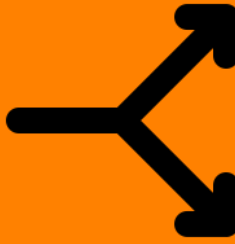
friends

mass
media

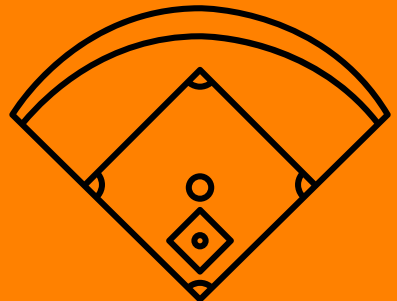
mental
performance
staff

lcs

POINTS OF CONFLICT

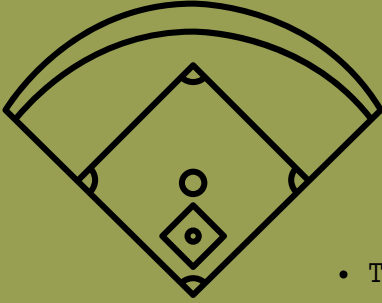


- TEAM LEADERSHIP VS. FAMILY AND FRIENDS:
 - What's best for the organization vs. what's best for the individual
- TEAM LEADERSHIP VS. FIELD STAFF:
 - What's best for the organization vs. what's best for their career
- FIELD STAFF VS. MENTAL PERFORMANCE STAFF:
 - Physical performance vs. psychological performance
- FIELD STAFF VS. PLAYERS:
 - Team performance vs. individual performance
- MENTAL PERFORMANCE STAFF VS. CLINICIANS:
 - Mentality vs. mental health
- FAMILY VS. FRIENDS:
 - Conflicting perspectives on priorities of individuals





POINTS OF CONVERGENCE



- TEAM OWNERSHIP AND FRONT OFFICE:
 - Organizational success
- TEAM LEADERSHIP, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS:
 - Player success/positive performance
- TEAM LEADERSHIP AND FIELD STAFF:
 - Staff success/positive performance
- FIELD STAFF AND MENTAL PERFORMANCE STAFF:
 - Positive team impact
- FIELD STAFF AND PLAYERS:
 - Player peak physicality
- MENTAL PERFORMANCE STAFF AND PLAYERS:
 - Player peak mentality
- CLINICIANS AND PLAYERS:
 - Player peak mental health
- PLAYERS, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS:
 - Quality relationships and emotional wellness





Mental health is a sensitive topic that requires a high level of care to study, regardless of the population, due to the deeply personal nature of the issue and its subsequent impacts.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

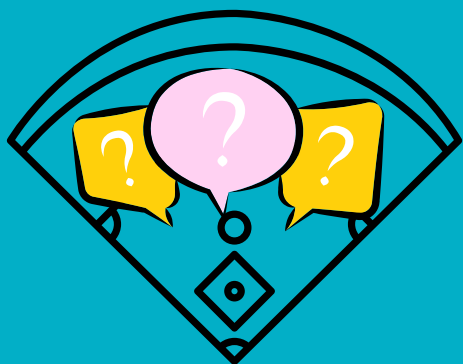
Although both mental performance staff and mental health clinicians address the psychological wellness of baseball players and support staff, only licensed clinicians have an established scope of practice and are legally permitted to treat mental health diagnoses.





REMAINING QUESTIONS

1. What are the best ways to foster collaboration between clinicians and mental performance departments?
2. How can we cultivate caring and resource provision for support staff when their performance is not the primary focus of the organization?
3. How can we implement risk reduction strategies in a culture that benefits, socially and financially, from alcohol and substance consumption?
4. What is the feasibility and acceptability of relational mental health interventions among players and staff members (i.e., couple, family, and group)?



TAKE-AWAYS

Whether the stakeholder motivation is financially or humanistically oriented, a systemic framework for improving team mental health can prove useful.

Relational resources exist both within and outside the organization, and both offer unique benefits for intervention.



Current initiatives are too individually focused, and they neglect the wide range of stakeholders beyond players who are linked to the organization.

We do not exist in a vacuum. Relational context matters. Thus, any mental health intervention that does not account for social supports is incomplete.

See Mannes et al., 2019; McDuff et al., 2016; Purcell et al., 2022; and Uphill et al., 2016.

To lean into a team-oriented culture, organizations should expect to account for the influence of staff needs on player mental health and performance.

In any organization within or outside of sport, mental health promotion programs should integrate relational resources with couple and family therapies.



SO, NOW WHAT?

Social support is one of the strongest protective factors against poor mental health, so we should design initiatives that bolster it, not ignore it.



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

