

ASKING FOR HELP: IDENTIFYING SUPPORT RESOURCES

ASKING FOR HELP

Knowing how to ask for help is an essential skill. However, it is also a significant challenge, as it relies on several abilities that are still developing during adolescence: identifying and processing complex emotions, expressing them to a trusted person, and overcoming important barriers such as fear of judgment, fear of being misunderstood, and lack of awareness of available resources.

To feel confident asking for help, adolescents need help-seeking to be facilitated, encouraged, and normalized in their everyday environment. It is also important to note that confidentiality is a key factor for young people when it comes to support resources.

Student-athletes' experiences: insights from the field

- **Help-seeking vs. autonomy:** A desire for independence or lack of confidence may lead adolescents to believe their difficulties are no one else's concern, that they must handle everything alone, or that their problems are not worth sharing.
- **Fear of judgment:** They may hesitate to talk about their needs and challenges, fearing their vulnerability will be seen as weakness or that they will disappoint coaches or parents.
- **Withdrawal:** This reluctance to open up prevents young people from seeking support, which can increase stress, loneliness, and negatively impact well-being and performance.



CONCRETE ACTION

This activity allows the coach to remind players that they are available for support, while also sharing information about other resources (school staff, Tel-jeunes, etc.). It also helps young people identify their trusted support network.

Plan a specific moment: Set aside 5–10 minutes at the end of a practice, about twice a year or when needed, to talk about support and present available resources.

Possible activities:

■ Present available resources, for example:

→ “I’m here if you need to talk.”

→ “You can also reach out to support staff at school: [name and contact].”

→ “Tel-jeunes is available 7 days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to midnight, at 1-800-263-2266. It’s a confidential service for young people where you can talk about any challenges you’re facing. You can contact them by phone, text, or chat.”

→ (Optional) The coach can organize a short meeting between players and a school support worker. This allows the professional to explain their role and confidentiality, helping reduce discomfort around asking for help.



CONCRETE ACTION

▮ Mini-activities:

1. “My support people” exercise

- Each player lists 2–3 trusted people (friend, parent, mentor, coach).
- The coach shares a personal example to show that even adults ask for help.
- Players may voluntarily share one trusted person to normalize help-seeking.

2. “If my friend...” exercise

- Reflection: What would you say to a friend who is afraid to ask for help while going through a difficult situation?
- Voluntary sharing: Some players share their advice aloud.
- Reflection: Do you apply that same advice to yourself? Why or why not?

3. The impact of asking for help

Scenario: Two new players struggle with defensive positioning.

- One says nothing out of discomfort.
- The other asks for help and seeks advice.
- Question to the group: “Which player will improve faster? Why?”

▮ **Key message:** The best players are those who keep learning. Asking for help means recognizing you can improve—it shows motivation and strength. This applies not only to skills on the ice, but also to managing stress, emotions, focus, communication, and relationships.

(Optional) The coach can acknowledge that asking for help may feel uncomfortable, but overcoming that discomfort leads to growth

