

THE ADOLESCENT FIRST: REDISCOVERING YOURSELF AS A PERSON

SELF-AWARENESS

Adolescence is a key period for identity exploration and development. This process involves revisiting beliefs formed during childhood and allowing space for exploration—of interests, goals, values, and abilities. This exploration requires a certain trial-and-error process to deepen self-awareness and develop one's own identity.

For student-athletes, whose daily lives have revolved around sport for years, there may be fewer opportunities to engage in the questioning and exploration typical of adolescence, and to discover their values, what they enjoy, and who they are beyond the expectations tied to their sport.

Valuing sport while also allowing space for exploration and balance across other areas of life (social, academic, relational, cultural, etc.) helps young people better discover the person they want to become.

Student-athletes' experiences: insights from the field

- **Decentering from sport:** Young people often live for performance and results, to the point of forgetting who they are outside of their role as athletes.
- **Personal exploration:** Identifying one's emotions, passions, values, and limits helps reconnect with oneself and with what makes each individual unique.
- **Autonomy and meaning:** Being recognized and heard in one's uniqueness strengthens self-confidence and supports making conscious choices, independent of sports-related pressure.



CONCRETE ACTION

Create a personal “off-ice profile.”

- Each young person takes 15–20 minutes to write down:
 - 3 passions or activities that make them feel important and happy outside of sport;
 - 3 personal values they consider important;
 - 3 strengths or qualities they recognize in themselves.
- In small groups or pairs, invite them to share one element they noted. No judgment or comparison—just recognition.
- Identify how these strengths, passions, and values can inspire or enrich their sports practice, without reducing their identity to the role of athlete.
- Create this profile at the beginning of the season and revisit it monthly to track personal growth and keep the adolescent at the center of their decisions and experience.

