

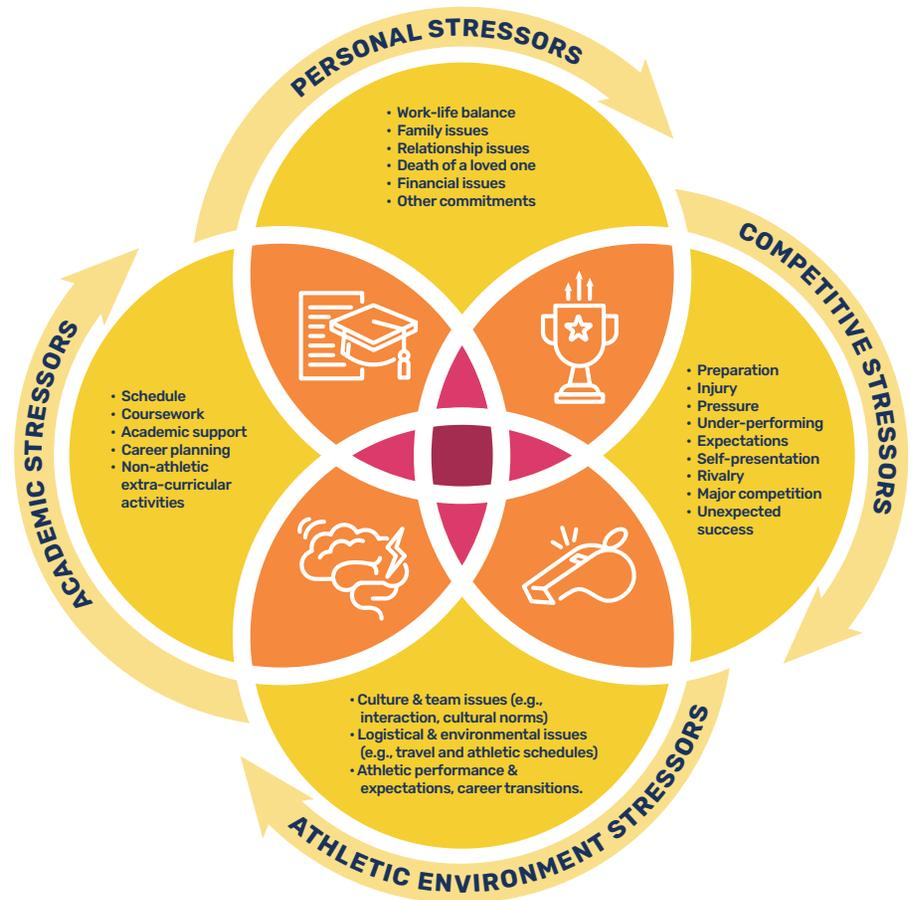


# How to ask for help at your campus: Editable Guide for Athletic Departments

# HOW TO ASK FOR HELP

Being a student-athlete is tough. The pressure of balancing between academic, athletic, competitive, and personal life is real. There may be times that you feel overwhelmed and find it difficult to cope. This period of your life will provide numerous opportunities to work through failure, fear, and even despair.

Success starts with knowing yourself, including your natural strengths and how you respond to stress. The guide below will help direct you to the most appropriate paths to support based on what you are experiencing.



## STRESS

Stress is a survival mechanism; it is our body's reaction to a certain situation or event that we feel may be a threat to us. It is a normal part of academic and athletic life and can help us perform in the face of a new challenge.

Being a student-athlete involves being stretched by new and often competing demands. When you are stressed, you may experience changes in your emotions, bodily sensations, and thinking patterns. You may benefit from support to help identify stress points and learn new skills to effectively manage your stress response.

**Reach out for resources and support:**

## DISTRESS

Distress occurs when you are faced with stress points that you are struggling to cope with. These stress points could relate to a specific life event, but you may also notice distress in the form of ongoing unpleasant feelings. When your normal coping strategies (e.g., rest, exercise, staying positive) are not working, your daily functioning may also be impacted. Examples include

- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, significant changes in appetite
- Not attending class, work, practice
- Difficulty completing normal self-care activities (e.g., preparing meals, showering)
- Increased substance use
- Decreased interest in your usual hobbies or interests
- Thoughts of self-harm

Depending on your level of distress, you may need to talk to a professional who can help you make changes in your life and improve or expand your coping strategies.

**Consider working with a counsellor or doctor:**

## CRISIS

When your level of distress becomes severe and you cannot find any relief from overwhelming and negative feelings, you may experience thoughts of suicide. You may imagine death as an escape from the way you are feeling. You may be struggling to stay safe and have a plan to end your life or do harm to someone else.

When your level of distress becomes severe, and you feel you cannot cope or feel you are not in control, you may need support. The following are signs you need immediate help:

- Having thoughts about ending your life or trying to end your life
- Having thoughts of hurting others
- Making choices that put you or others in serious danger
- Experiencing sensations that are not real and/or beliefs that cannot possibly be true
- Becoming unable to care for yourself, and it is putting you at risk of serious harm

**Take immediate action:**