

SESSION  
**03**

# LISTENING TO OUR BODIES IN SPORT





To finish the program, athletes will learn the importance of respecting their bodies, by listening and attending to their bodies' needs.

**Athletes will participate in a practical task, where they learn how to identify bodily sensations, and the importance of honoring and responding to these cues.**

# KEY TERMS FOR TODAY

## SENSATIONS

Feelings or sensory experiences associated with your body including warmth, fatigue, perspiration, pain.

## INTUITIVE MOVEMENT

Connecting with your body and its sensations, and using this information to decide what type of movement it needs that day.

# SESSION OVERVIEW

LET'S GO!

Key Terms	03
Session Overview	05
The Game Plan	07
The Knowledge	09
The Skills	13
The Final Score	16

# SESSION OVERVIEW

**Key information you need to know  
before delivering Session Three**

## **Who: Team players**

- ▶ Remember, the same coach should lead all three sessions of the program.
- ▶ Athletes will benefit most from the program if they attend all three sessions!

## **What: Listening to our bodies in sport**

- ▶ In today's session, athletes will learn the importance of respecting their bodies, by listening and attending to their bodies' needs.

## **When: Session length and schedule**

- ▶ Today's session will take approximately 60 minutes.
- ▶ This is the last session of the Body Confident Athletes Program.

## **Where: The Physical Space & Vibe**

- ▶ Today's session will involve group discussions and an individual movement task; you will need a quiet, private space for discussions and an open space for athletes to complete approx. 10 minutes of individual free-play.
- ▶ Athletes will have the opportunity to write their thoughts and reflections about these discussions and activities in their personal workbooks.

## **Why: The learning outcomes**

By participating in today's session, athletes will:

- ▶ Identify the type of sensations our bodies experience and why.
- ▶ Understand the importance of listening and attending to our bodies' needs.
- ▶ Develop strategies that help us to connect with our bodies and attend to its needs.

# SESSION OVERVIEW

How: The structure,  
content and materials

## 01 THE GAME PLAN 5 MINS

## 02 THE KNOWLEDGE 20 MINS

## 03 THE SKILLS 20 MINS

## 04 THE FINAL SCORE 15 MINS

## RESOURCES YOU'LL NEED

### Session materials

- Coaches' guide
- Program slide deck
- Athletes' personal workbooks

### From your sports club or school

- Electronic device to display slide deck
- Whiteboard/recording surface/markers or pens





LET'S GO

# THE GAME PLAN



# THE GAME PLAN

5  
MINS

## Welcome and recap

- ▶ "Welcome to Session Three: Listening to Our Bodies in Sport."
- ▶ "Can someone please hang up the ground rules flyer?"
- ▶ "Who can recall what we learned in the last session on What Our Bodies Do in Sport?"

## COACHES' NOTES

- Inviting the group to repeat back the ground rules established in session one can serve as a reminder as well as reinforce the importance of these group rules.

## Introduce Session 3

- ▶ "Today, we will explore why it is important to listen to our bodies, and what they need when playing sport. You will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills that will help you to be more in tune with your body. We will do this through a mixture of group discussions and an individual movement task."







LET'S GO

THE  
KNOWLEDGE

# THE KNOWLEDGE

## Introducing listening to our bodies in sport

### Group discussion and activity

- ▶ Ask athletes to have their personal workbooks (digital or hardcopy) ready for recording their thoughts/answers.



### What do these sensations tell us about our bodies?

- ▶ *"What might these sensations tell us about our body and what it needs? For example, if I am thirsty or hungry, then my body needs water or food."*
- ▶ Invite another athlete to record the responses.



### What sensations do our bodies experience during sport?

- ▶ *"Let's brainstorm the different sensations our bodies experience when playing sport. For example, muscle tightness/cramp/ache."*
- ▶ Invite an athlete to record the groups' responses on a whiteboard/surface area.

#### DESIRED RESPONSES

##### Answers could include:

- ▶ Sweating, heavy breathing/ breathlessness, racing heart, blood pumping, muscles extending and retracting, muscle tightness/cramp/ache, muscle flexibility/strength, dry mouth, grumbling tummy, discomfort, pain.

#### DESIRED RESPONSES

##### Answers could include:

- ▶ My body is using energy; I have a stitch and need to catch my breath; My body is strong; This uniform isn't right for me, I need to change it; I'm feeling nervous/anxious; I'm feeling happy/excited/proud; My body feels relaxed; I'm injured and need to stop.

# THE KNOWLEDGE

## Introducing listening to our bodies in sport

### Who can stop us from listening to these important sensations and why?



- ▶ *"Who might stop or discourage us from listening to our bodies, and why might this be the case? For example, I might not listen to my body, because I don't want to let the team down."*
- ▶ Invite another athlete to record the responses.

### DESIRED RESPONSES

#### Answers could include:

- ▶ **Who** – myself, my teammates, my coaches, my parents, my sports club or school or society (e.g., the media).
- ▶ **Why** – I might ignore my body's needs because I don't want to...stop playing; miss or lose a game; look 'weak' to other people; Others might discourage me to ignore my body's needs because they...want to win (e.g., teammates; coaches); assume I can push myself (e.g., parents; coaches); think they know best (e.g., parents; coaches); want me to strive for the appearance or athletic ideal (e.g., social media)

### What happens if we do/don't listen to our bodies?

- ▶ *"What happens if we don't listen to our bodies. For example, if we don't listen to our bodies, we might become injured or sick."*
- ▶ Invite another athlete to record the responses.
- ▶ *"What happens if we do listen to our bodies. For example, if we listen to our bodies, we might prevent an injury or speed up recovery."*
- ▶ If you have access to a digital device, show Slides 16 to 19 of the presentation deck; this provides girls with examples of athletes who have advocated for themselves, and listened and attended to their bodies' needs (e.g., Simone Biles; Becca Meyers; Norwegian Beach Handball Team)

DESIRED RESPONSES



# THE KNOWLEDGE

Introducing listening to  
our bodies in sport

## DESIRED RESPONSES

### Answers could include:

- ▶ **Don't listen** – We can't perform to the best of our ability; Our mental health worsens (e.g., burnout, anxiety, depression); We start to dislike the sports we play; We stop playing; We do poorly in other aspects of our lives (e.g., spend less time with friends, do poorly at school).
- ▶ **Do listen** – We normalize the importance of listening to our bodies; We are able to fully participate and enjoy the sport we love; We prevent the above consequences to our mental and physical health.

## COACHES' NOTES

- When recording responses, try and match the meaning to the sensation (e.g., dry mouth = dehydrated).
- In some cases, one meaning may explain multiple sensations (e.g., dry mouth/muscle cramp = dehydration) and vice versa (e.g., racing heart = using energy/anxiousness).
- Reinforce to girls that the more we practice listening to our bodies, the easier it can be to identify what it's experiencing and how we can meet its needs.
- Coaches can use the examples provided in the slide deck (Slides 16 and 17), as well as source their own examples if more culturally relevant and appropriate.







LET'S GO

THE SKILLS



# THE SKILLS

How to connect our mind  
and bodies in sport

## Individual movement task



### Overview and individual movement task | 15 mins

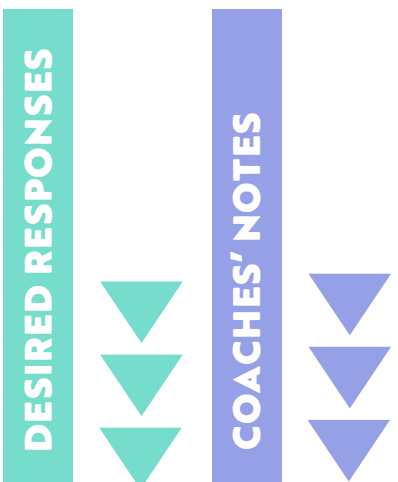
- ▶ "In last week's session you learned about focusing on what the body can do and experience, and why this is more helpful than focusing on what your body looks like."
- ▶ "In that session you wrote about your body functionality when playing sport."
- ▶ "Take a moment to reflect on what you wrote in your workbook – you can look back on it if you need."
- ▶ "In today's skill session, you're going to extend on this idea by focusing on and listening to your body while playing sport."
- ▶ "You will have 10 minutes of free-play by yourself. You can choose any movement or skill that you like. For example, you might choose to, shoot on goal or practice tricks."
- ▶ "While you're playing, you are going to focus on what your body is doing, the sensations it's experiencing and what you might need."

Specifically:

- ▶ "Focus on what your body is doing."
- ▶ "Focus on what your body is feeling."
- ▶ "Focus on what your body might need."
- ▶ "After 10 minutes we will come back and share our experience with the main group."
- ▶ "Now, find a space for yourself, where you aren't distracted by others."

### Overview of group discussion | 5 mins

- ▶ "Who would like to share their experience? For example, 'what felt good about focusing on what your body is doing, feeling, and needing, rather than on how it looked, or what was surprising?'"



# THE SKILLS

How to connect our mind  
and bodies in sport

## DESIRED RESPONSES

Below is an example of what it might look and sounds like when your checking in with your body:

- ▶ I want to shoot on goal.
- ▶ Do I feel warm enough to play? No – I'm going to do some star jumps and high knees to warm up.
- ▶ I can feel my heart pounding in my chest and my body feels warmer. Now, I'm ready to shoot on goal!
- ▶ I need to take a deep breath and concentrate on my technique.
- ▶ Are my legs bent and balanced? Yes, my legs feel strong and bouncy.
- ▶ Are my shoulders square to the basket? Yes – but my shoulders feel a little tight. I need to roll them back and take a deep breath.
- ▶ I notice that I'm smiling and I feel full of energy.
- ▶ I'm sweating and my mouth is dry. I'll grab some water.

Please note that coaches can adapt the above example to meet the description of their sport.

## COACHES' NOTES

Athletes may need help remembering the prompts or re-directing their attention back to themselves (e.g., comparison making may have started). Therefore, feel free to move around and prompt them on the below:

- ▶ "Remember this exercise is about you and your body."
- ▶ "It's OK if you become distracted by another teammate. Acknowledge that and bring your attention back to your body and what you're doing."
- ▶ "Remember:  
Focus on what your body is doing.  
Focus on what your body is feeling.  
Focus on what your body needs."
- ▶ "Don't underestimate the power of self-talk! Evidence shows it can improve confidence and performance. It works best when you focus on what you can and will do, rather than on what you cannot or will not."





LET'S GO

# THE FINAL SCORE

# THE FINAL SCORE

15  
MINS

## What have we learned today?

- ▶ "Can someone briefly describe what we learned today?"

## Practice body functionality during movement

- ▶ "Over the next week, practice checking-in with your body and using this self-talk when you're playing sport."



## Finish with the 'Three-Step Sense Check'

- ▶ If you have access to a digital device, show Slide 20 & 21 of the presentation deck; this provides an infographic of how to use the Three-Step Sense Check.
- ▶ "Remember that the Three-Step Sense Check can be used anywhere, anytime."
- ▶ "It's designed to be a simple way for athletes to check-in with what their body needs."
- ▶ "Has anyone used the Three-Step Sense Check since the last session and how did it go?"
- ▶ "Let's take a quiet moment and practice the Three-Step Sense Check."

## 01. SLOW DOWN

- ▶ "Pause and take three deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth."
- ▶ "If you feel comfortable, close your eyes."

## 02. CHECK-IN

- ▶ "Scan your body, from top to bottom. Pay attention to what your body is feeling. What sensations are you noticing? For example, are you cold? Are you hungry?"
- ▶ "Does your body need something? For example, do you have tension in your shoulders? Do you need to get a snack?"

## 03. MOVE-FORWARD

- ▶ "Now that you've checked in with your body, act in a way that meets your body's needs. For example, stretch parts of your body that feel tension. Go and get a quick snack."
- ▶ "You can use this exercise anytime, anywhere. For example, before you start practice, or while you're traveling to your game!"
- ▶ "This is a brief act of self-care that helps you to connect with your body."

## That's the end of the session!

- ▶ "Now we're going to practice quietly on our own."
- ▶ "Over the next week, practice the sense check before, during or after a practice or game."



# THE FINAL SCORE

15  
MINS

## COACHES' NOTES

- Athletes are more likely to engage in the sense check if they are prompted and encouraged. Create a space where sense checks are normalized, encouraged and modelled by people in influential positions (e.g., coaches, team captains).
- Creating visual prompts in sporting environments (e.g., locker rooms) is a valuable strategy for embedding the sense check into athletes' routine.
- Coaches can use the infographic provided in the slide deck (Slide 21), to guide athletes through the three steps.



# SESSION COMPLETE!