



RESEARCH BRIEF

ATHLETE PERSPECTIVES ON PERCEIVED CONTROL WHEN THINKING ABOUT SPORT SETBACKS

During the Fall semester of 2021, eight competitive postsecondary athletes in Alberta participated in focus groups/interviews to investigate perceived control beliefs used when facing setbacks. Dr. Parker and the ACME team would like to thank all the participants who took the time to talk to us and thank SSHRCC for supporting this project! Some preliminary findings and themes are summarized below.

The most common setbacks experienced by athletes included:



Injury Setbacks

- Chronic and short-term injuries
- Long recovery times from surgeries

Pandemic Setbacks

- Unable to compete
- Restrictions on practices and training

Mental Health Setbacks

- Bereavement
- Performance anxiety
- Amotivation and withdrawal from sport

Athlete perceptions were categorized as 1) primary control beliefs or strategies, or 2) secondary control beliefs or strategies.

Primary Control Beliefs

- Focus on goals
- Belief in persisting
- Belief one can enact change

"you still have goals that you haven't achieved yet"



"You can hit the ground running when things open"



"I can get better even if there is a setback"



"just focus on what's possible to change and make your own improvements"



Primary Control Strategies

- Prioritize goals
- Seek coach advice
- Modify your routine
- Work hard
- Find different ways to compete
- Increase productivity
- Work on what you can control



“that was more I think, primary... the practicing bit, but I'm trying to control the environment”



“a lot of workout videos on YouTube and at home workouts”

“let's find another way...to still improve or participate in any way that I can...”



“...meal prep and [maintain] a good healthy diet... not fall off that”



Secondary Control Beliefs

- Cognitive reappraisal
- Acceptance
- Positive thinking
- Devaluing the outcome



“everybody just needs to take a rest now... I just kind of thought of it that way”



“reframing your mindset into, like, the areas you can see tangible change”



“there wasn't much of an option, I had to kind of adapt based on the circumstances”



“...this really isn't all there is”

Secondary Control Strategies

- Trying something new
- Focus on hobbies
- Support from family, friends, and coaches
- Focus on other parts of life



“zoom or over Google meets... get people to connect, just so that you felt a little bit more cohesiveness”



“spend more time with my family and focused on communicating with them “

“you have the sports bit... the academic bit, and you put your energy equally into both”

“picked up a lot of different hobbies... playing guitar... volunteer in different places”



All athletes managed their setbacks differently, but here are some common emotions used in describing their experiences :

sad frustrated disappointment hopeless Stress
Relief happy Disheartening unmotivated confusion
Uncertainty Gaining back confidence

Please check our website [here](#) as more information on this project becomes available.

Report prepared by Sierra Tulloch (February 2022)