

Athletes and Mental Health: The Hidden Opponent | Victoria Garrick | TEDxUSC



The issue of mental health in college students, specifically college student-athletes, is stigmatized and neglected. According to a 2011 study by the National College Athletic Association, 30% of about 200,000 student-athletes reported feeling depressed. 50% also claimed to have experienced overwhelming anxiety, and this information is six years out of date. Student-athletes are typically praised as celebrities on campus, considered strong and brave. When we walk by and people cheer, “Great win last night,” they can’t see that we are struggling with issues incurable by their praise and affirmation. We minimize the effects of our depression, anxiety, or eating disorder, because society does not encourage us to come forward. Student-athletes endure five hours of team commitment daily, 18 hours of class weekly, and the pressure to physically perform no matter what the circumstance. You can’t see mental health issues like you can see an ankle sprain.

From Atherton, California, Victoria Garrick is a rising Junior libero for the USC Women’s Indoor Volleyball team. Both freshman and sophomore year, Victoria started and played in every match for the Women of Troy, who won the Pac-12 Championship in 2015. During a difficult freshman year, learning how to be a Division I athlete as well a Dean’s List student, she dealt with situational depression, anxiety, and a binge-eating disorder. By seeing a sports psychologist at USC every week, Victoria was able to learn how to manage her mental health issues, as well as regain normal eating habits. However, she is very concerned about other athletes like her who do not have the confidence to seek help or learn how to manage their chaotic lives. One of Victoria’s missions in her final two years of college is to help others by sharing her experience