

GETTING OUT OF A SLUMP

WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE...

Our shot feels off, our touch on the ball isn't there, we're not connecting on our swing, or the pacing of a run feels way harder than usual. When performance dips, it's easy to slide into a continuous loop.

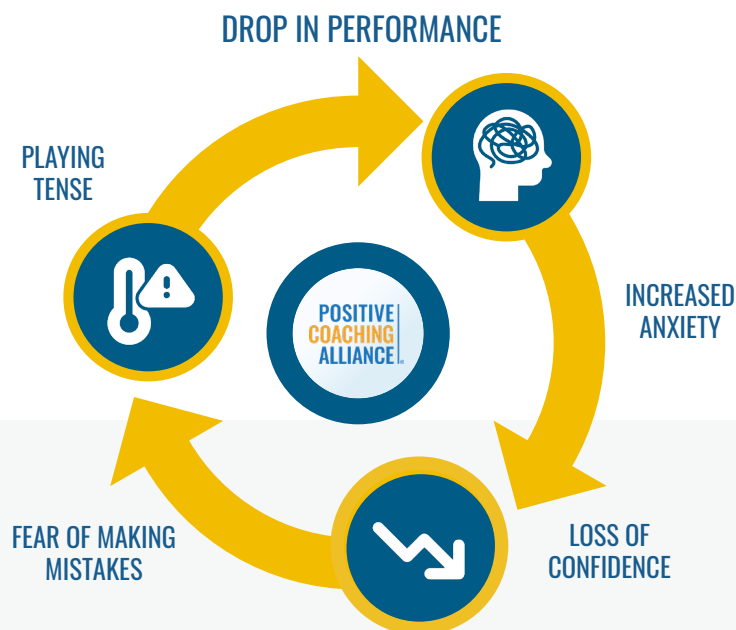
UNDERSTANDING SLUMPS

Performance slumps happen to every athlete at some point. Common causes include:

- **Physical factors:** Fatigue, overtraining, or minor lingering injuries.
- **Psychological factors:** Self-doubt, overthinking mechanics, unrealistic expectations, or loss of joy in the game.
- **Behavioral shifts:** Changing your pregame routines, skipping warm-ups, or negative self-talk
- **Relational dynamics:** Tension, pressure, lack of connection or belonging, exclusion, or unfair treatment from coaches, teammates, family, or others in an athlete's environment.

BREAKING THE SLUMP

How do you break the slump? The following techniques on the next page can help you identify and address the specifics of your own slump.



SOURCES

1. Stead, J., Poolton, J., & Alder, D. (2022). Performance slumps in sport: A systematic review. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 61, Article 102136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2022.102136>
2. Stoddard, D. W. (n.d.). Sports psychology 101: How to break out of a slump. SEMI Sports & Exercise Medicine Institute. <https://www.semisportmed.com/sports-psychology-101-how-to-break-out-of-a-slump/>
3. McCarthy, P. (n.d.). How to get out of a slump: An athlete's guide to falling back in love with your sport. Dr. Paul McCarthy. <https://www.drpaulmccarthy.com/post/how-to-get-out-of-a-slump-an-athlete-s-guide-to-falling-back-in-love-with-your-sport>

GETTING OUT OF A SLUMP

➤ REFLECT AND IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS

Rather than viewing a slump as something that is wrong with you, explore what may be contributing to it. Look for emotional triggers that may be making you feel uneasy, such as a fear of making mistakes or feeling pressure from adults or teammates. Look for behavioral patterns like altering your pregame routine, overthinking mechanics, skipping warm-ups, comparing yourself to others, or negative self-talk. By identifying what is within your control and taking ownership of your response, you can regain your sense of agency and power, build resilience, open up pathways for growth, and chart a path forward.

➤ REFRAKE YOUR THINKING (PROCESS OVER OUTCOME)

Shift your focus away from the scoreboard or stat sheet and lock in on what you can control: your effort and how you learn from mistakes. Celebrate small wins and incremental improvements to rebuild your confidence step-by-step.

➤ CONNECT WITH A TRUSTED SUPPORT SYSTEM

Talk to a trusted teammate, family member, mentor, counselor, coach, or other supportive adult with whom you feel safe sharing what you are experiencing and feeling. A trusted support system reminds you that your value as a person is not tied to your performance as an athlete, offering the perspective and encouragement you may need to move forward.

➤ PRACTICE MINDFULNESS AND POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Remind yourself of past successes and picture yourself executing your skills smoothly to rebuild trust in your abilities. Replace harsh, negative internal dialogue with instructional, encouraging self-talk. For example: "This is difficult for me right now. I know I can do this. What can I focus on right now?"

➤ GIVE YOURSELF SPACE TO PHYSICALLY RESET

If fatigue, physical burnout, or a minor injury is fueling the slump, adjust your training load. Ensure you are getting proper rest, sleep, and appropriate medical or rehabilitation support when available. Taking a brief, deliberate step back gives your body and mind time to break the cycle of frustration.

➤ RECONNECT TO THE JOY OF THE GAME

Sports are meant to be fun! Remind yourself why you fell in love with the game in the first place. Participate in unstructured, low-pressure play sessions outside of formal training to rediscover the thrill of playing freely.

A NOTE ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

If your struggles extend beyond the game, affect your daily well-being, or stem from concerns about safety, discrimination, unfair treatment, your relationships with others, or toxic environments, consider reaching out to a trusted adult, school counselor, or qualified professional.