

1. What kinds of things do you think can be done to help an athlete transition from sport to other careers? What kinds of psychological factors need to be taken into consideration for this transition?

Athlete retirement or transitioning away from an athlete's sport is very much similar to "general retirement". It is a major life change involving changes in (but not limited to): activity levels, lifestyle, publicity, social support/circles, change in role among relationships/professionals, financial change, possibility of feeling abandonment or isolation, "pace" of life, possibly changing from "expertise" to "novice" in a new direction, changes in stress, and changes in responsibilities. Because retirement/transition brings along so many uncertainties/adaptations, coping skills and social support are the two most significant factors underlying an athlete's successful career transition away from their sport (Taylor & Lavalley, 2010).

The developmental athletic career model (DACM) described 3 major changes in an athlete's life affecting 4 "layers" or domains (athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and academic/vocational) (Park & Lavalley, 2015). The athletic domain refers to transitions based on the athlete's age/experience/skill-level; the psychological domain refers to the athlete's psychological development; the psychosocial domain refers to the changes/influences of the athlete's social circles; and the academic/vocational domain refers to changes/influences of education/vocation (Park & Lavalley, 2015). The DACM levels/domains are interrelated, not isolated. The formation of the DACM helped to identify key areas in an athlete's life.

Cohen and Wills (as cited in Park & Lavalley, 2015, p. 4) described social support using two models: the main effect and stress buffering models. According to the main effect model, social support are resources that help with coping (cognitive, emotional, behavioral change/adjustments/challenges) related to daily routines via positivity and increasing self-worth (Park & Lavalley, 2015). The stress buffering model describes social support as a buffer (Park & Lavalley, 2015).

Park and Lavalley (2015) defined an athlete's "entourage" as those people most closely associated with the athlete, supporting and promoting the athlete and his/her career. The entourage may include (but not limited to) coaching staff, administration, medical/rehabilitation professionals, managers, trainers, peers, families, and friends (Park & Lavalley, 2015). Park (as cited in Park & Lavalley, 2015, p. 3) noted that athletes who had prepared for their post-sport career and who had their entourage also prepare for the change fared better and were more successful as compared to those athletes without a supportive entourage. Park and Lavalley (2015) recruited 4 Olympic athletes plus 7 of their entourage for interviews to study the effects of social support on career transitioning out of sport to further understand effective types of social support. Park and Lavalley (2015) found that most athletes demonstrated low-readiness for retirement, and that the athletes' entourage was a significant influence and positive support. Park and Lavalley (2015) also found that athletes' proactivity in the academic/vocational domains were more "ready" for exiting their sport and transitioning.

Just as an athlete works within the context of a "team" (players, coaches, trainers, etc.), the athlete's new team is his/her entourage. Both the athlete and his/her entourage need to plan

and prepare for life after sports--it is a joint effort. While an athlete is still active in sports, part of the education and maintenance should include workshops, seminars, or educational opportunities to help an athlete transition into "civilian" life. For example, the athlete may have been "so managed/handled" that he/she may not know how to buy a house, car, deal with financial paperwork, and health insurance. While the athlete is still active, he/she should be exposed to opportunities to use his/her talents in different ways such as volunteering for youth sports. This would enable the athlete to maintain some kind of connection in their post-sport career, and still feel valuable (not left out and not isolated).

Reference

Park, S., & Lavalley, D. (2015). Roles and influences of Olympic athletes' entourages in athletes' preparation for career transition out of sport. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review*, 11(1), 3-19.

Taylor, J., Lavalley, D. (2010). Career transition among athletes: Is there life after sports? In Williams, J. (Ed.), *Applied sport psychology: Personal growth to peak performance* (6th ed., pp. 305-335). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.