

On Self-Awareness

The "self" is comprised of self-awareness, self-concept, and self-esteem (McCornack, 2015). Self-awareness is one's ability to perceive oneself as unique/separate from one's environment and to be able to reflect on one's own thoughts/feelings/behaviors (McCornack, 2015). The self-concept is one's overall perception of oneself based on beliefs, attitudes, and values; self-esteem is "the overall value, positive or negative, that we assign to ourselves" (McCornack, 2015, p. 29). The self is influenced and formed through many sources including interpersonal relationships with family/friends/colleagues, gender, and culture (McCornack, 2015). Engagement with an athlete's sport, team, coach, and social circles influences an athlete's sense of self (impactful on self-identity); the athlete's identity is shaped/reinforced through these interpersonal interactions (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013; McCornack, 2015).

Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (as cited in Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013, p. 144) defined athletic identity (AI) as "the degree to which an athlete identifies with the athlete role". AI may be described as both a cognitive structure (interpreting information, coping, behavior), and social role (Heird & Steinfeldt, 2013). Heird and Steinfeldt (2013) noted that individuals with higher AI might surround themselves with individuals (e.g. other athletes) that promote self-definition centered on athletics.

Heird and Steinfeldt (2013) note that developing an athletic identity is not "bad" in the general sense, but only when it is over-developed at the cost of other aspects of self or self-concept. When an AI is over-developed, any event/situation that separates (or creates a wedge between) an athlete from their sport will likely cause the athlete psychological distress.

References

Heird, E. B., & Steinfeldt, J. A. (2013). An interpersonal psychotherapy approach to counseling student athletes: Clinical implications of athletic identity. *Journal Of College Counseling, 16*(2), 143-157.

McCornack, S. (2015). *Interpersonal communication and you: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.