



Athlete Mental Health Research Fellows

2026–2027 Cohort Advancing Research, Advocacy, and Athlete Wellbeing



www.athletesforhope.org
contact@athletesforhope.org





About Athletes for Hope (AFH)

Athletes for Hope is a national nonprofit dedicated to empowering athletes to make a meaningful impact in their communities through service and advocacy. Our [**Wellbeing Program**](#) addresses the unique mental health needs of athletes at every level — from youth to elite professionals — through education, research, and partnerships.



Position Summary

The Athlete Mental Health Research Fellow will support and expand AFH's mission by contributing to cutting-edge research in sports psychiatry and athlete mental health. This fellowship is ideal for graduate students, early-career clinicians, or researchers passionate about athlete well-being and mental health equity. Fellows will engage in literature reviews, data analysis, grant writing, and the development of evidence-based toolkits and content to shape AFH programming and national initiatives.

Key Responsibilities

- Conduct literature reviews on athlete mental health trends, including depression, anxiety, trauma, and performance-related stress.
- Assist in the design and analysis of research studies evaluating AFH programming impact.
- Collaborate with AFH's Chief Wellbeing Officer and external partners to produce white papers, op-eds, and peer-reviewed publications.
- Develop athlete-facing mental health toolkits and resources grounded in research and best practices.
- Support data collection and reporting for grants and stakeholder communications.
- Stay abreast of emerging research in sports psychiatry, performance psychology, and mental health interventions for athletes.
- Present research findings in webinars, conferences, or educational settings when applicable.

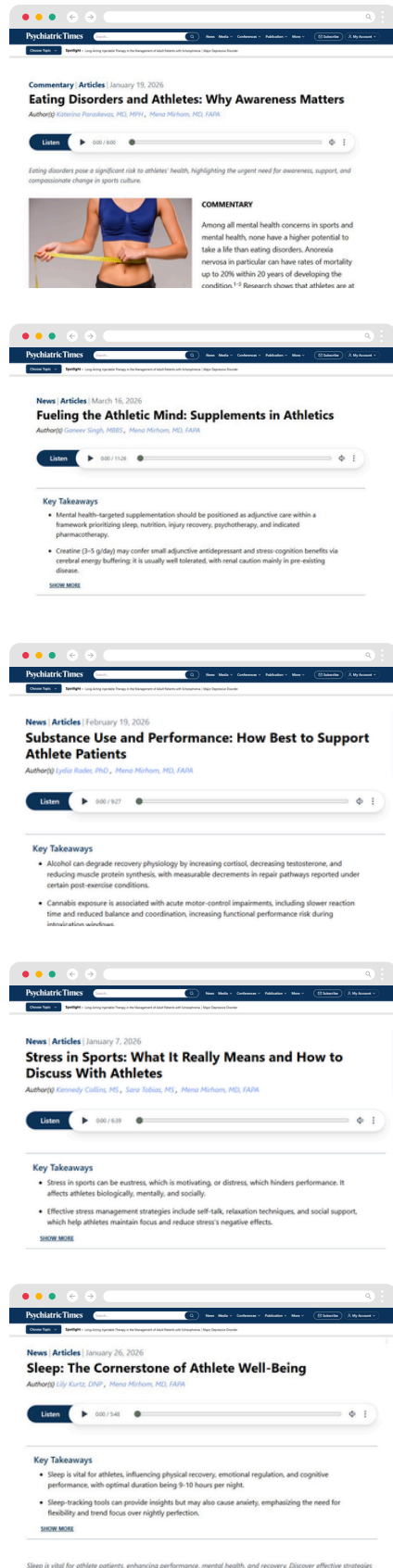
Qualifications

- Graduate student, resident, or early-career professional in psychology, psychiatry, public health, social work, sports science, or a related field.
- Demonstrated interest in athlete mental health, performance psychology, or sports psychiatry.
- Strong writing and analytical skills with experience in academic or professional research.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively across teams.
- Experience working with athlete populations is preferred but not required.

Fellowship Benefits

- Mentorship from leading experts in psychiatry, public health, and athlete mental health.
- National platform to contribute to meaningful, high-impact advocacy and research.
- Access to AFH's network of athletes, researchers, and mental health professionals.
- Stipend provided (amount commensurate with experience and availability).

Research & Publications



Eating Disorders and Athletes: Why Awareness Matters

Author(s) Katerina Paraskevas, MD, MPH, Mena Mirhom, MD, FAPA

[Read Article](#)

Fueling the Athletic Mind: Supplements in Athletics

Written by Author(s) Ganeev Singh, MBBS, Mena Mirhom, MD, FAPA

[Read Article](#)

Substance Use and Performance: How Best to Support Athlete Patients

Author(s) Lydia Rader, PhD, Mena Mirhom, MD, FAPA

[Read Article](#)

Stress in Sports: What It Really Means and How to Discuss With Athletes

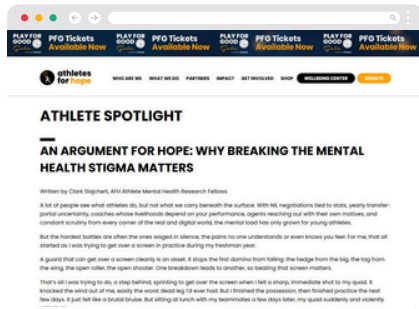
Author(s) Kennedy Collins, MS, Sara Tobias, MS, Mena Mirhom, MD, FAPA

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Sleep: The Cornerstone of Athlete Well-Being

Author(s) Lily Kurtz, DNP, Mena Mirhom, MD, FAPA

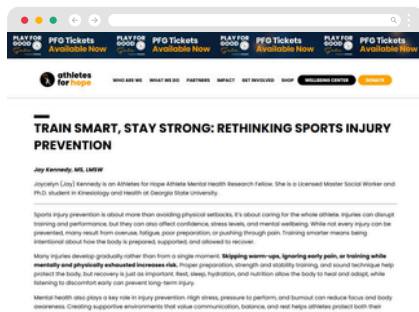
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An Argument for Hope: Why breaking the mental health stigma matters

Written by Clark Slajchert, AFH Athlete Mental Health Research Fellow

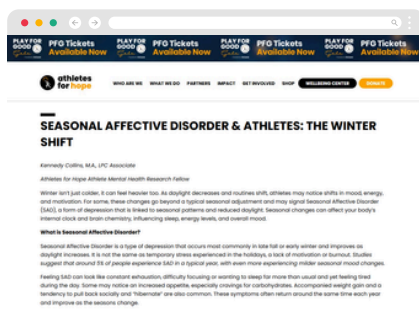
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Train Smart, Stay Strong: Rethinking Sports Injury Prevention

Written by Jay Kennedy, MS, LMSW, AFH Athlete Mental Health Research Fellow

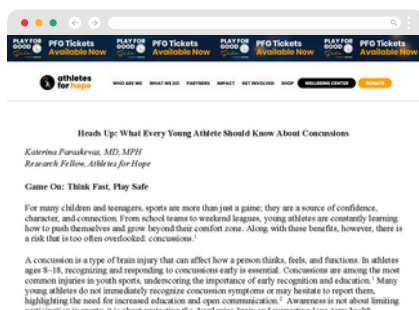
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Seasonal Affective Disorder & Athletes: The Winter Shift

Written by Kennedy Collins, M.A., LPC Associate, AFH Athlete Mental Health Research Fellow

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Heads Up: What Every Young Athlete Should Know About Concussions

Katerina Paraskevas, MD, MPH, AFH Athlete Mental Health Research Fellow

[Read Article](#)

Athlete Mental Health

2025–2026 Research Fellows



- Monthly office hours with Dr. Mirhom
- Quarterly guest lectures from people in athlete mental health





Brandee Grate-Perry

- Master of Science in Kinesiology, East Carolina University
- Master of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- LCSW Associate

Hi! I'm Brandee, a Durham, NC-native who loves building community and advocating through sport. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Work Associate with a background in kinesiology, sport management, education, and social work. I earned my Master of Science degree in Kinesiology from East Carolina University and a Master of Social Work from University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Some of my interests and passions include advancing the field of Sport Social Work and seeing others succeed in different ways.

Publications

- Submitted two articles for the Center on 3/22



Clark Slajchert

- Master of Science in Social Entrepreneurship, USC
- Bachelor's of Science in Philosophy, Politics & Economics with a minor in Psychology, University of Pennsylvania

Clark Slajchert recently earned his M.S. in Social Entrepreneurship from USC, following a B.S. in Philosophy, Politics & Economics with a minor in Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. He played Division I basketball for both Penn, where he served as team captain, and USC. During this time, balancing 30-hour training weeks with demanding academics, fueled his commitment to athlete performance and mental well-being. Clark is currently playing his first professional basketball season in Luxembourg and looks forward to helping Athletes for Hope turn leading research into practical mental-health resources for athletes, coaches, and parents.

Publications

- *An argument for Hope: Why Breaking the Mental Health Stigma Matters*, [AFH Wellbeing Blog](#)



Dr. Ganeev Singh

- Bachelor of Medicine, Sri Guru Ram Das Institute of Medical Sciences & Research
- Bachelor of Surgery MBSS, Sri Guru Ram Das Institute of Medical Sciences & Research
- Post-Doc research fellow at Harvard MGH

Dr. Ganeev Singh is a physician and psychiatry research fellow contributing to Athletes for Hope's Mental Health Center of Excellence. He has trained at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the OCD and Autism Lab and previously at Massachusetts General Hospital in the Cardiac Psychiatry Research Program. His academic interests include sports psychiatry, innovative therapies, and culturally informed approaches to mental health. A lifelong soccer player, Dr. Singh brings a personal understanding of the athlete experience to his work. He has presented nationally and internationally and is currently preparing to begin psychiatry residency training in the U.S.

Publications

- *Fueling the Athletic Mind: Supplements in Athletics*, [Psychiatric Times](#)



Izza Mozaffar

- Master of Public Health, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (specialization in Health Policy and Management)
- Bachelor's Degree, University of California, Irvine

I am a recent graduate from the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, where I specialized in Health Policy and Management. During my time in New York, I worked with the CUNY Center of Innovation in Mental Health, working with CBOs to provide mental health resources to youth in the city. I also worked with the Arthur Ashe Institute of Urban Health in their Brooklyn Health Disparities program. Originally from Orange County, California, I have a bachelors from UC Irvine, where I worked with the UCI Neuromuscular Center to research Movement Disorders and Neuromuscular diseases.



Joycelyn “Jay” Kennedy

- Master of Social Work, Georgia State University.
- Ph.D. in Kinesiology and Health (in progress), Georgia State University.

Joycelyn (Jay) Kennedy is a Licensed Master Social Worker and Ph.D. student in Kinesiology and Health at Georgia State University. Her current research explores how mental health policies and practices are implemented across NCAA institutions, with a focus on organizational structures and administrative decision-making in collegiate sport. With experience as a crisis responder and school-based therapist, Joycelyn has worked directly with youth facing emotional and academic challenges. Joycelyn’s goal is to enhance mental health support in sport by bridging clinical care with organizational policies to create supportive, effective environments for athletes.

Publications

- *Train Smart, Stay Strong: Rethinking Sports Injury Prevention*, [AFH Wellbeing Blog](#)



Julia Vitagliano

- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Gender & Women’s Studies, Connecticut College
- Master of Public Health, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Julia graduated from Connecticut College with a BA in psychology and gender and women’s studies, and received a Master of Public Health degree from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. At Connecticut College, she was a four-year varsity rower and conducted research on body image and disordered eating in athletes. Julia has over six years of experience in mixed methods mental health research and state-level policy management. She is passionate about eating disorders awareness and prevention. Currently, Julia manages a federal grant to support mental health awareness and training for teachers, coaches, and caregivers.



Katerina Paraskevas, MD, MPH

- Master of Public Health, Columbia University

Dr. Paraskevas is committed to culturally sensitive, patient-centered care. She has served in public health roles in New York, including with the Departments of Health and Justice, and is recognized for her expertise in cross-cultural communication. She brings experience in medical education, public health, and leadership, having served as an adjunct professor at the CUNY Graduate Center and as a fellow, then health and environmental advisor to the City of New York. She holds leadership positions with the Medical Society of the State of New York that further her advocacy for patients and physicians. Her focus is on strengthening communication, trust, and access in healthcare.

Publications

- *Eating Disorders and Athletes: Why Awareness Matters*, [Psychiatric Times](#)
- *Heads Up: What Every Young Athlete Should know About Concussions*, [Center for Wellbeing](#)



Kennedy Collins

- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Houston Christian University
- Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Houston Christian University

Kennedy Collins, M.A., Licensed Professional Counselor Associate (LPC Associate), under the supervision of Dr. John Spodee, LPC-S, is a former Division I Women's Basketball athlete at Houston Christian University, where she earned her B.A. in Psychology and M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She combines her clinical training with lived experience to help athletes achieve performance goals, navigate mental health challenges, and cultivate identity beyond sport. She is passionate about reshaping athlete culture from the inside out, focusing on whole-person care, identity development, and guiding athletes through triumphs and challenges with compassion and practical strategies.

Publications

- *Stress to Strength*, [AFH Wellbeing Blog](#)
- *Stress in Sports: What It Really Means and How to Discuss With Athletes*, [Psychiatric Times](#)
- *Seasonal Affective Disorder & Athletes: The Winter Shift*, [AFH Wellbeing Blog](#)



Lily Kurtz

- Doctor of Psychiatric Nursing Practice, Columbia University
- Bachelor's degree in Cognitive Brain Science, Tufts University

Dr. Lily Kurtz is a board-certified Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner actively practicing in New York City. After earning her Doctor of Psychiatric Nursing Practice from Columbia University, she has focused on providing comprehensive mental health care to current and former athletes of all levels. She also holds a degree in Cognitive Brain Science from Tufts University, where she swam all four years- earning Scholastic All American, All Conference, and All American Consideration honors. Dr. Kurtz's goal is to ensure that seeking care does not involve the additional pressure of being forced to choose between mental wellness or peak performance.

Publications

- *Sleep: The Cornerstone of Athlete Well-Being*, [Psychiatric Times](#)



Lydia Rader, Ph.D.

- Dual doctorate in Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Colorado Boulder
- Master of Arts in Genetics, University of Colorado Boulder

Lydia Rader, Ph.D., holds a dual doctorate in Psychology and Neuroscience and researches how chronic pain, substance use, and mental health intersect. She is passionate about translating science into meaningful resources that support community well-being and mental health. She has served on multiple nonprofits and boards dedicated to advancing science communication, education, and advocacy. At Athletes for Hope, she is committed to sharing this research to empower athletes and inspire positive impact in sports communities. Outside of work, Lydia enjoys hiking, reading, and traveling.

Publications

- *Substance Use and Performance: How Best to Support Athlete Patients*, [Psychiatric Times](#)



Malea Jackson

- Pursuing both a Masters of Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a Masters of Science in Kinesiology, LSU

Malea is a former collegiate basketball player at the University of Illinois Springfield and is currently pursuing dual master's degrees at Louisiana State University—an M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and an M.S. in Kinesiology. Drawing on both athletic and academic experiences, Malea is passionate about research in sport psychology, athlete well-being, and mental performance. Malea is dedicated to advancing knowledge on the intersections of mental health, performance, and identity to better support athletes in achieving holistic success.



Mark Guirguis, M.D.

- Doctor of Medicine, Semmelweis University
- Resident Doctor, SBH Health System

My name is Mark Guirguis, I am a psychiatry resident at SBH Health System in NYC and I completed my medical training at Semmelweis university. I am deeply passionate about child and adolescent psychiatry as well as the bridge between mental health and sport. As a lifelong squash player who competed in the Canada Winter Games, I will be able to bring a personal understanding of the demands of support and am deeply committed to supporting the mental well-being of athletes through research and advocacy.



Ofir Horovitz

- Bachelor of Science in Public Health, Global Health from the University of Washington
- Second-year medical student at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Ofir is a second-year medical student at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and is excited to join Athletes for Hope as a Fellow. She holds a BS in Public Health–Global Health from the University of Washington and is currently involved in orthopedic research focused on pediatric musculoskeletal health and recovery. She is passionate about sports medicine, adolescent mental health, and the role of identity in injury and rehabilitation. A lifelong athlete who has experienced multiple knee surgeries, she brings lived experience and a deep commitment to supporting others through the recovery process. Outside of medicine, she enjoys staying active, exploring new coffee shops, and walking her dog.



Sara Tobias

- Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Anthropology, Middlebury College
- Master's degree in Psychosocial Kinesiology, Oregon State University

Sara Tobias received her bachelor's degree in psychology and anthropology from Middlebury College and her master's degree in psychosocial kinesiology from Oregon State University. At Oregon State, she pursued research on sport-based youth development, with a specific focus on girls in sport. Upon graduation, Sara began a role in development at Coach Across America and currently works on the community impact team at the Women's Sports Foundation. Aside from her professional endeavors, Sara is a former athlete herself, having played baseball at an elite level and softball at a collegiate level. Sara is also a certified personal trainer.

Publications

- *Stress in Sports: What It Really Means and How to Discuss With Athletes*, [Psychiatric Times](#)



Join the Next Generation of Athlete Mental Health Leaders

Athletes for Hope is seeking passionate emerging professionals committed to advancing athlete wellbeing through research, advocacy, and education.

Help Shape the Future of Athlete Mental Health

**To Apply:
Send your CV and Resume to
fellowships@athletesforhope.org**

