

PROCESSING LOSS

“Your hard work is not lost or wasted. It is an investment.” Tyler Mislawchuk, 2016 Olympian, Triathlon

COVID-19 has resulted in many losses in our life. Below is a list of phases people typically go through when there is sudden change or loss in their life. Although we sometimes think of loss as big things like COVID, sport is full of loss along the entire path. Sometimes we lose a big game or a starting role or a scholarship. Sometimes we get injured and lose the right to play. Kevin Kristjanson is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. He wrote the below thoughts to help us unpack what this means for sport. It can be helpful to look at something like this because it normalizes how you feel and react to a bad event. Remember, how you respond is a normal reaction to a tough situation.

WHAT DO THESE PHASES MEAN?

Pre-Disaster: Before something bad or unexpected happens. This is your usual emotional level before something bad happens.

Impact: When something bad or unexpected happens. This is the immediate response to the loss. You might feel angry, sad, frustrated, discouraged, nervous or many other emotions.

Heroic & Honeymoon: This is a time where you might show your resilience by helping out your teammates, or coming together to support your coaches and each other.

Disillusionment: You have had a chance to do an assessment and start to realize the impact of this event on your life. The sadness, disappointment and self-doubt return. Certain events that you typically enjoy but that are negatively impacted or canceled (e.g., going on a trip or the starting date of the season) may bring up the emotions even more strongly.

Reconstruction: Things gradually get a little easier and you come out the other side stronger and more capable than you were before. There may be minor bumps and setbacks along the way, but you’ve shown that you can handle them.

HOW CAN I BEST HANDLE IT?

- Practice being accepting of all of your emotions, even the ones you don’t really like. Remember, all emotions are good and have purpose. Even the ones that are tough.
- Watch for changes in your behavior or your mood. Be curious about what you are feeling and label it by saying “I am feeling angry” rather than “I am angry”. This will create space between yourself and your emotions.
- Reach out to your teammates, parents and coaches for support. They know you well and sometimes we need other people to help us.