

Personality & Personality Disorder in Athletes
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Personality disorders are enduring patterns of inner experiences and behaviour that are both pervasive and inflexible. They generally onset in late adolescence and are associated with distress and impairments. They have similarities with other psychiatric conditions for example a mixture of genetic and environmental precursors.

Personality disorders are considered in both categorical and dimensional ways and each conceptualisation has its merits. The issue of personality disorder is a contentious one for many. For example, some consider the diagnosis to be stigmatising, unhelpful or redundant and possibly even a reflection of the relationship between clinician and client rather than a valid clinical entity.

The prevalence of personality disorder in elite sporting populations is little studied and this is compounded by difficulties of definition. As a consequence the exact prevalence is not known. Nonetheless it can be helpful to consider the role that personality might play in a range of presentations and to consider the interplay between personality characteristics and environment. Some personality traits are functional in one setting but unhelpful and problematic in another.

The assessment of personality and personality disorder is founded on the clinical interview. Likely this will take place over a series of interviews rather than a single consultation. A good assessment should be augmented by collateral information from a range of sources and the use of personality inventories can be additionally helpful.

Approaches to the management of personality disorder are founded on a careful assessment and agreed formulation of the problem areas and how to address these.

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