

# THRIVING THROUGH SPORT

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT ON GIRLS' MENTAL HEALTH



### Sport participation can lower depression and anxiety.

Mental health disorders are

**1.5 to 2.5X**

lower for girls who play sports vs. those who never played.

#### DEPRESSION

**29%** of girls who never played sports have moderate-to-high levels of depression symptoms vs. 17% of girls who currently play.

#### ANXIETY

**21%** of girls who never played sports have moderate-to-high levels of anxiety symptoms vs. 11% of girls who currently play.

### Quality of sport settings impact mental health.

In sport settings that focus on effort, improvement and teamwork, **depression symptoms are significantly lower:**

**9.3%**

vs. settings where winning is the main goal and success is defined by ability compared to others:

**24.7%**

In sport settings where girls have more "voice and choice" over goals and activities, **depression symptoms are significantly lower:**

**10.4%**

vs. settings where they don't have that opportunity:

**35.1%**



### Coach relationships matter.

Girls who have strong relationships with their coach report **lower levels of depression and anxiety** than girls who don't.

#### DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

**13.4%** vs. **28.9%**

#### ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

**8.9%** vs. **21%**

### Multiple sports and long-term play make a difference.

Rates of **mental health disorders** are

**5X** lower

for girls who play multiple sports AND have played sports for 5+ years, vs. girls who don't play.



Rates of **clinical depression** are

**3.3X** lower

for girls who play more than one sport compared to girls who don't play.

### Girls who play sports are more involved in other activities.

**40%** of girls who play sports are **more likely to be involved in other extracurricular activities in school** vs.

**26%** of girls who don't play sports.



**35%**

of girls who play sports are **more likely to be involved in community service**

vs.

**21%**

of girls who don't play sports.



**23%**

of girls who play sports are **more likely to be involved in academic enrichment activities**

vs.

**15%**

of girls who don't play sports.

### Sports help girls thrive.

Girls who play sports report

**1.5X** higher levels of **meaning and purpose**

compared to those who have never played.



Source: Massey, W. V., Veliz, P. T., Zarrett, N., & Farello, A. (2024). Thriving Through Sport: The Transformative Impact on Girls' Mental Health. Women's Sports Foundation.

Girls Rugby Charlotte

Angel City Alliance