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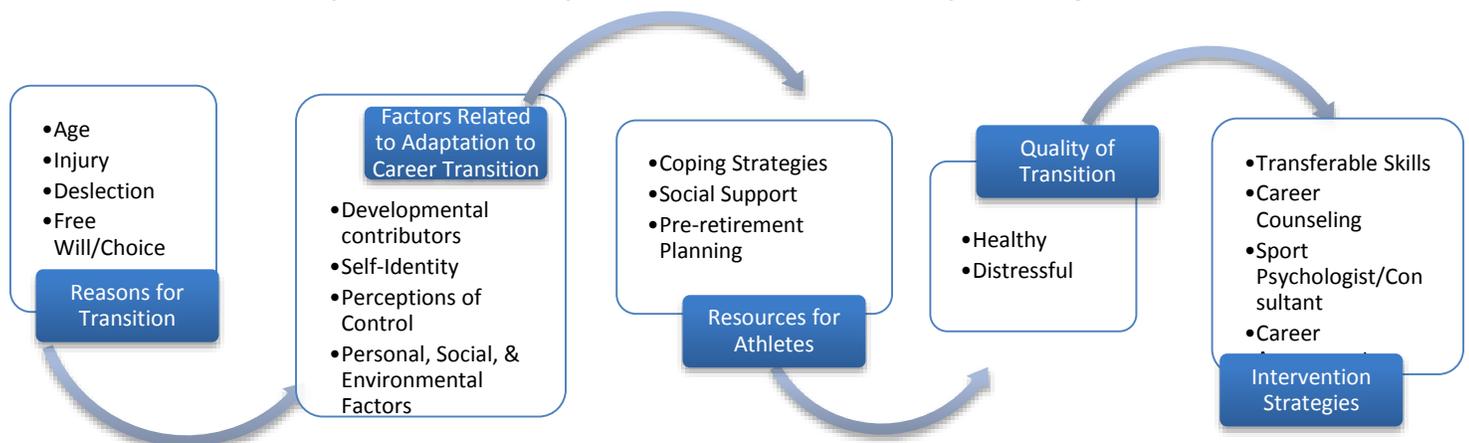
Athletic Identity and Transitions

The transition out of sport prompts an identity change for the athlete. When putting an end to their sporting career, an athlete loses an important part of themselves, particularly if they have been training and competing in their sport for much of their life. This may apply to the youth athlete who will not compete in college, the collegiate athlete who will not compete professionally, and the professional athlete who is retiring. Because athletes spend a great deal of time training and devoting themselves to their sport, they may not have time for exploration of activities or careers outside of sport. This leads to identity foreclosure and a strong athletic identity, which has been associated with difficulty adjusting following sport career termination (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996).

Transition out of Sport

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994) introduced a conceptual model, which outlines five stages important to address with athletes who are transitioning out of sport either expectedly or unexpectedly.

Conceptual Model of Adaptation to Career Transition (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994)



Transferable Skills

Transferable skills (also known as life skills) are important skills that athletes have developed through sport that can be used in other areas of life. Examples of transferable skills for athletes include the ability to perform under pressure, problem solving, organization skills, ability to meet deadlines and challenges, setting and achieving goals, dedication, self-motivation, and team-related interpersonal skills

Athletes should explore the following questions to identify new potential directions in education and career:

1. What are the skills that helped you succeed as an athlete?
2. What are the athletic skills that are transferable?
3. What are some of the skills that are similar to those that employers are looking for?
4. How can these skills help you as you take on the challenges of “life after sport”?

Careers in Sport

Many athletes struggle with their careers ending largely because their identities are so strongly rooted in athletics, but they may struggle less if this career-ending decision is voluntary (Martin, Fogarty, & Albion, 2014). If athletes are aware of potential careers with which to continue their tenure and involvement in the sport realm, they may be less likely to endure decreased well-being or life satisfaction, especially when the individual’s career is ended abruptly.

Educational advisors and career counselors should encourage athletes with a high level of athletic identity to consider careers which allow continued engagement with sport. Forbes compiled a list of the Top 10 Careers in Sport and provided the median salary for each position: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/02/04/the-10-best-careers-in-sports/#40e4aced564b>.

Wellness after Sport: Fitness and Nutrition

If the individual has engaged in fitness primarily through the sport context, then retirement from sport requires establishing a new relationship with fitness. Reifsteck, Gill, and Labban (2016) indicate that former athletes whose sense of self-identity includes exercise identity and athletic identity are more likely to remain motivated for physical activity after completion of their collegiate athletic careers.

Athletes transitioning out of sport should consider:

- The role of exercise in health and wellness promotion.
- Personal motivation to exercise, including opportunities for competition if competition is a motivator.
- Schedule, age, and ability level in determining type, duration, intensity, and frequency of exercise.
- How to properly assess and treat injuries when they occur.
- Appropriate dietary choices and calorie consumption based on post-sport activity level; meal planning consists of eating a variety of foods, controlling portion sizes, and balancing the amount of food with daily physical activity (Moshak, 2013).

Where can I learn more about career transition for athletes?

Moshak, J. (2013). *The next arena: Transitioning to life after collegiate athletics*. University of Tennessee Press.

Murphy, G. M., Petitpas, A. J., & Brewer, B. W. (1996) Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 239-246.

Reifsteck, E., Gill, D.L., & Labban, J.D. (2016). “Athletes” and “exercisers”: Understanding identity, motivation, and physical activity participation in former college athletes. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 5, 25 – 38.

Taylor, J., & Ogilvie, B. C. (1994). A conceptual model of adaptation to retirement among athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 6, 1-20.

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