



In the Winter term of 2023, two competitive postsecondary athletes participated in a focus group. The athletes viewed two "Setback Solutions" intervention videos addressing ways to cope with sport setbacks. The purpose of the session was to gain insights on the impact of the videos prior to launching a larger online study. After watching the videos, participants were asked questions on the video content and whether it related to their own experiences of setbacks. Additionally, participants provided feedback on the video style and structure. This research brief focuses on the major themes that emerged in the discussion.

Methods

- Participants ($N = 2$) viewed two videos (plus intro video)
- Semi-structured interview
- 33-minute discussion
- Discussion transcribed semi-verbatim; extraneous sounds and interjections were eliminated
- 19 unique codes were identified
- 3 major themes: Plateau, validation, letting go of a goal



The participants identified "plateauing" as a more complex or ambiguous setback experience compared to universal (e.g., Covid-19) or anticipated (e.g., injury) setbacks.

Plateau

"...plateauing is one of the most complicated things in sports."

"...how do you come back from long-term plateau. You know – is that just destiny kind of? Is that just the way it's going to be or is there a way to really stimulate a mental reaction to that?"



"I think just contrasting it [plateau example] to the first two athletes [Covid-19 and injury examples]... they had that fork in the road-- which avenue athletes take during setbacks and I guess because his situation [athlete experiencing plateau] wasn't clear, his path wasn't as clear."

Validation

The examples provided in the modules related to participants' own sport setbacks. Both participants spoke about the importance of validating the emotional aspects of facing a setback.

"Seeing real people who have had real injuries and real setbacks was really relatable and validated it."

I think acknowledging that athletes feel, you know, all the feelings they do about frustrations and setbacks, it kind of makes you feel like - ok this is real..."



Openly discussing the option of letting go of a goal or adjusting a goal was identified as something that was missing from both athlete's training and sport culture. The idea of letting go of a goal while considering how to navigate a sport setback was "refreshing".

Letting go

"...I really liked the way [the video] simplified the idea of letting go of a goal. Like I said, I felt like that was really refreshing for me."

"... I think the culture within sport is that you have to make it or that you have to be successful all the time. And that's one of the hardest things with setbacks is – that there's a very high chance that you might not be where you thought you would be or where you thought you could be."

