



The Mental Health Effects Of Academy Deselection Within Youth Footballers: A Guide For Parents & Guardians

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The aim of this resource is to outline the mental health effects academy deselection can have on youth football players and identify ways in which you can best support your child through this challenging period.



The Extent Of The Problem

- One study on recently deselected academy players found out that 55% of them were suffering from clinical levels of psychological distress within 21 days of being released.
- Some of the levels of psychological distress experienced by youth players as a result of deselection have been so severe that it has been deemed clinical, requiring urgent action from mental health professionals.



Health

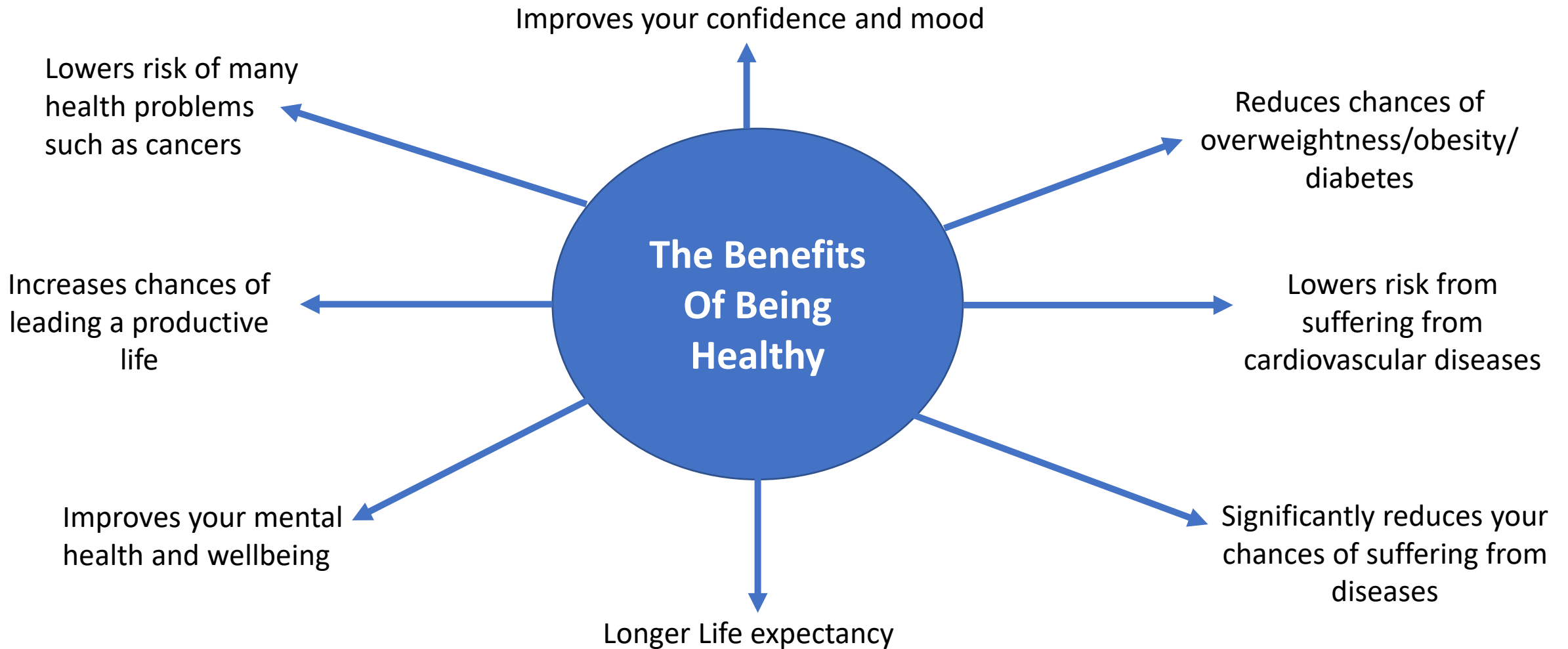
What is health?

The World Health Organization defines health as:

‘A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’



The Importance Of Good Health



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Did you know that many researchers believe that there is a mental health epidemic within children and teenagers?

With the effects of the Covid19 outbreak worsening our young people's mental health, with a recent study highlighting that now 1 in 4 high school students are now suffering from mental health issues.



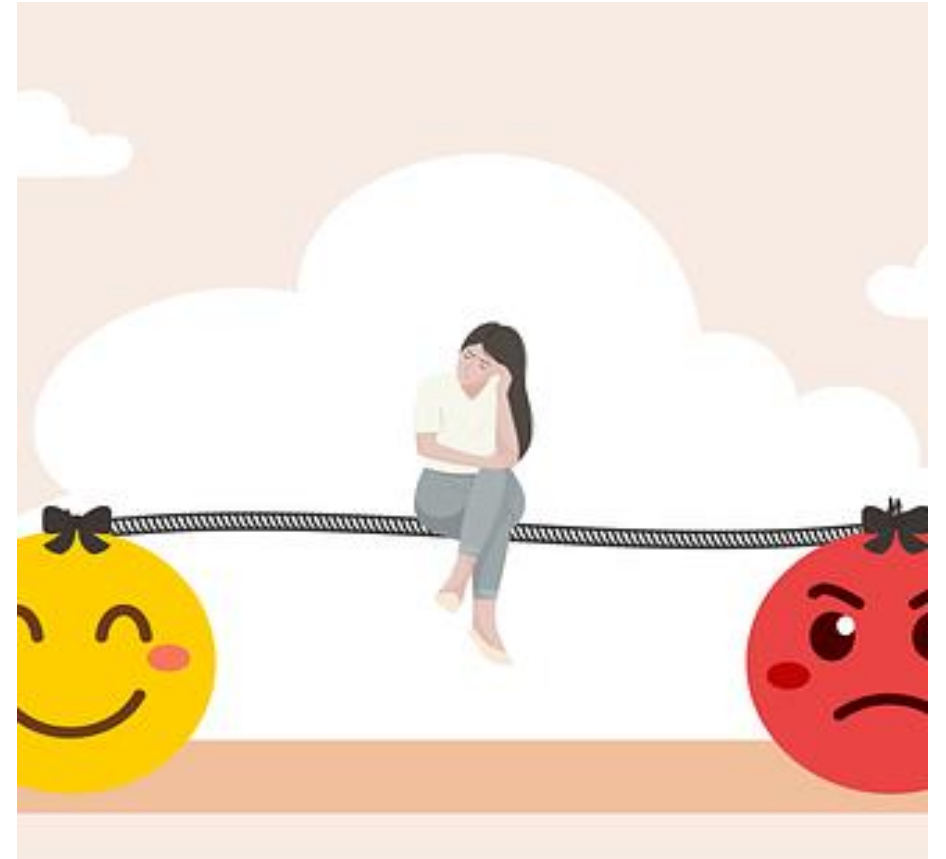


So What Actually Is Mental Health?

The World Health Organization has defined mental health as a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well and contribute to their community.

Factors That Can Cause Mental Health Issues:

- Major life changes such as losing a loved one, receiving a serious health diagnosis, getting divorced, losing your job or home
- Low social economic status for example living in poverty which puts individuals under a great deal of stress.
- An individual's genetics can cause mental health issues.
- An individual suffering from poor health can cause the onset of mental health issues.
- Substance abuse through the frequent use of illegal drugs and alcohol.



Types Of Mental Health Disorders

Anxiety – Refers to an individual feeling extremely worried, nervous and uncertain about a certain situation.

Depression – Individual experiences frequent negative mood swings with feelings of sadness, hopelessness and lack of self worth.

Eating Disorders – Individual suffers from abnormal eating due to concerns about their body shape and weight.

Bipolar Disorder – Individual experiences frequent depressive episodes with intervals of manic symptoms.

PTSD – Individual constantly relives a traumatizing event through memories, thoughts and persistent perceptions.

Schizophrenia – Individual suffers from major impairment in their perception and frequent changes of behaviour.



Moving Onto How Youth Academy
Deselection Can Cause These
Mental Health Issues

So What Are Youth Football Academies?

- Youth academies are a prevalent sight across football with the majority of professional football clubs having their own personal football academies.
- The purpose of academies is to identify, develop and create the next cohort of talented young players capable of playing first team football for their respective academy.
- Football academies are the main pathway for youth footballers looking to obtain a professional contract.
- From the age of 9 young players can be scouted by clubs to join their academies. Recent stats show around 10,000 young players aged between 9 to 12 years are currently involved in academies across the UK.



What Is Academy Deselection?

- Put simply this is when a young academy football player does not have their contract renewed at that club and as a result they are released with immediate effect.
- Of the thousands of young players that join football academies across the UK in hope of achieving a professional contract over 85% of these individuals will face academy deselection and as a result will not go on to becoming professional footballers.

Physical Development – The players age and stage of development plays a major role in many deselections

Struggling To Cope – Many young players struggle to cope with the pressures of academy football leading to many being deselected

Coaches Opinion – The coaches at one club may think that player isn't right for them but coaches at other clubs may think otherwise

Academies Finances – The club may not have the finances to keep the player on even if they really want to

Attitude – Players with poor attitudes towards training, players and coaches

Ability – The player may just not have the required skill set

Competition – The club only has limited number of contracts to keep players

Injuries – Players with frequent injury issues are less likely to be kept on



Reasons Why Youth Players Are Deselected

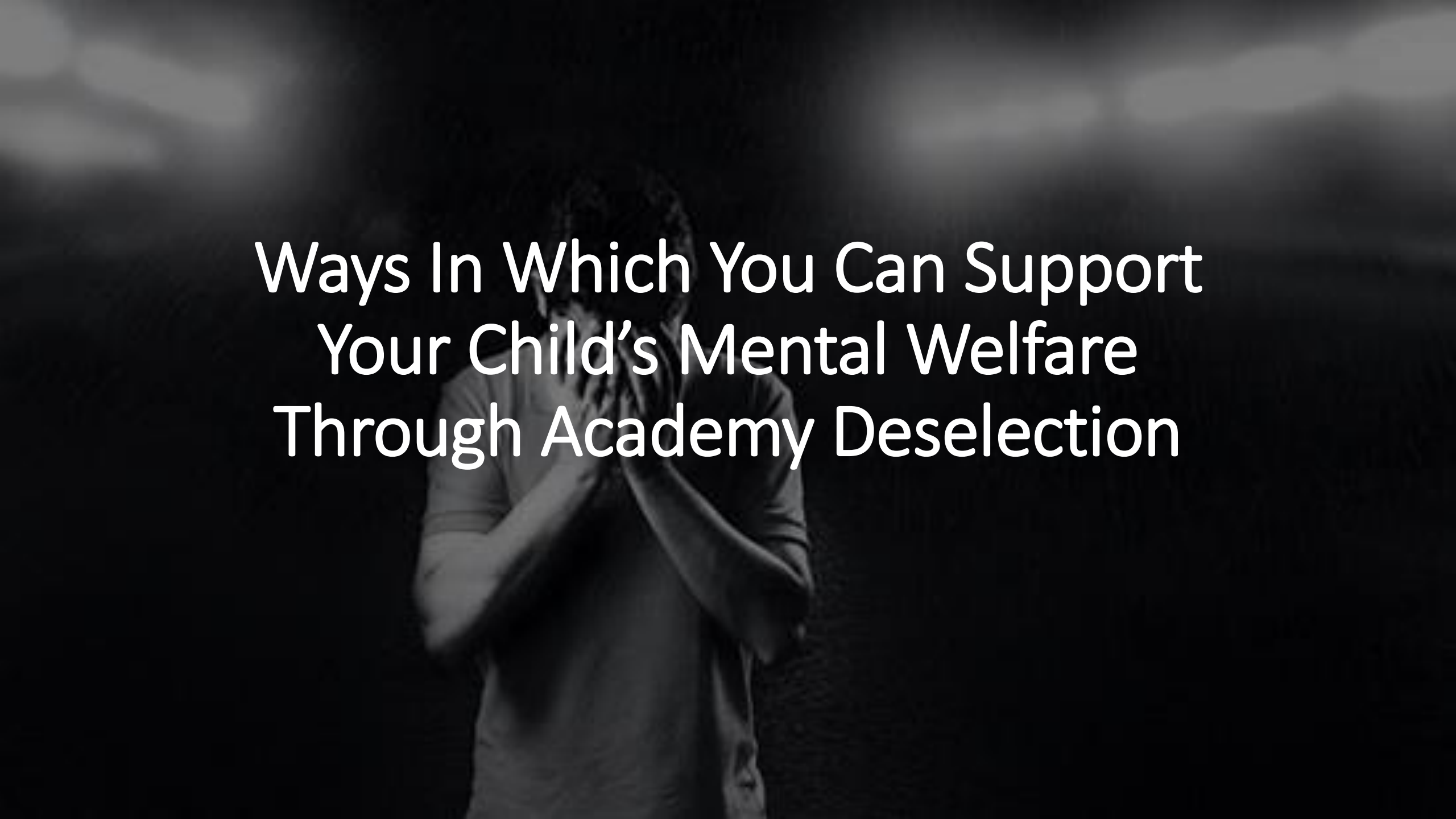
The Mental Health Effects Of Academy Deselection On Your Child

Below are some of the potential mental health conditions and feelings your child may experience as a result of academy deselection:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – flashbacks to the deselection
- Low levels of self esteem
- Loss of identity
- Loss of confidence
- Feeling distressed
- Feeling worried
- Feeling dissociated
- Lower Levels of Social engagement
- Feeling humiliated/embarrassed

Thoughts From Academy Players That Have Experienced Deselection

- “I think it definitely killed me emotionally and I lost all my confidence. I felt lost and confused. I got very depressed and didn’t know where my life was going.”
- “Everything I had worked for in my life had come crashing down in front of me, being released makes you think you are a failure.”
- “I didn’t know who I was anymore because football was my life and I didn’t have that anymore. It was as though they had taken away my identity and stripped me of everything I knew”.

A young boy is shown in a dark, moody setting, covering his face with his hands. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting an outdoor environment at night or in low light. The boy's expression is obscured, but his body language suggests distress or sadness.

Ways In Which You Can Support Your Child's Mental Welfare Through Academy Deselection



Consoling Your Child

- Consoling your child in the immediate aftermath of being deselected is a key way we as parents/guardians can support our child with this heart-breaking news. As being there to listen and communicate with our child at this time is paramount.
- After deselection players often experience feelings of loss, rejection and confusion therefore by having loved ones around them to provide them with warmth, support and a shoulder to lean on is extremely beneficial in supporting your child.



Seeking Professional Counselling

- If your child is struggling mentally with coming to terms with being deselected, encouraging and arranging for your child to see a counsellor has shown to be extremely beneficial for helping the individual come to terms with this life changing news.
- Many deselected players have used this support mechanism as counsellors can provide the player with professional support in dealing with any mental health issues they are suffering from by showing an understanding of the individuals personal world.
- Past deselected players have also highlighted that they greatly benefit from the warmth, respect and unconditional positive regard that counsellors can provide them with.



Encourage Your Child To Continue Playing

- Encourage your child to NOT GIVE UP!!!
- Just because one club doesn't think your child is good enough it doesn't mean all other clubs think the same.
- Encourage and support your child to keep playing and improving while seeking out trials with other academies to enhance the chances of them being offered another professional contract with another club.
- Remind your child of current players who have been deselected from academies in the past who have made it all the way to the top for example Andrew Robertson, Franck Ribery, Declan Rice, Joao Felix and Jamie Vardy to just name a few.



Summary



Takeaway Messages

- Mental health issues within deselected youth academy players is a common sight within football with one study showing that 55% of players were suffering from clinical levels of psychological distress within 21 days of being released.
- Many deselected players have outlined that they have suffered mentally from depression, anxiety, PTSD and an array of negative feelings and emotions following their release from the academy.
- Our children needs our support through this challenging period by consoling them via listening and communicating with them.
- Seek counselling for your child if they are suffering with their mental health as a result of the deselection.
- Encourage your child to not give up playing football and continue pursuing their dream of achieving a professional contract, if that's what they want to do!!!