



Special Olympics
Strong Minds

Clinical Director Manual
April 2019

Special Olympics



Strong Minds is a collaborative effort and reflects the contributions of many mental health professionals, self-advocates, program administrators, coaches, volunteers and athletes; including:

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About this Manual

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CHAPTER 1: SPECIAL OLYMPICS OVERVIEW

Special Olympics and Healthy Athletes

From a backyard summer camp for people with intellectual disabilities to a global movement, Special Olympics has been changing lives and attitudes nearly 50 years.

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics strives to create a better world by fostering the acceptance and inclusion of all people.

Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills and success. Special Olympic athletes find joy, confidence and fulfillment -- on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential.

There are up to 200 million people with intellectual disabilities around the world. Special Olympics' goal is to reach out to every one of them – and their families as well. Special Olympics does this through a wide range of trainings, competitions, health screenings and fund-raising events. Special Olympics also creates opportunities for families, community members, local leaders, businesses, law enforcement, celebrities, dignitaries and others to band together to change attitudes and support athletes.

The Special Olympics 2016 Reach Report Summary outlines the scope and global impact of Special Olympics from sports to family leadership activities to health programs. The scope is broad and impact significant. Over 5.7 million athletes at 108,821 competitions in 172 countries are just a few of the achievements in 2016.

What is Healthy Athletes?

Healthy Athletes is a Special Olympics program that provides free health screenings in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the anxiety and trepidation people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a doctor or dentist.

The impact of Healthy Athlete on the health and well-being of Special Olympics athletes around the world is great, in some cases saving lives by discovering unknown health issues or providing health care that otherwise would not be available. Healthy Athletes not only serves the athletes but also trains health care professionals who then go back to their practices with increased knowledge of and compassion for people with intellectual disabilities.

Healthy Athletes' influence is evident with more than 135,000 healthcare professionals trained, free health screenings provided to more than 1.6 million athletes, and 100,000 free pairs of eyeglasses given to athletes. Healthy Athletes continues to grow each year with help from a global network of volunteers, in-kind donations and other financial support. An overview of the vision, problem, proposed solutions, and partnerships is depicted in the Sustaining Athlete Health Infographic.

There are eight disciplines in Healthy Athletes. Information and resources are available for each on the Special Olympics website.

Fit Feet offers podiatric screenings to evaluate ankles, feet, lower extremity biomechanics, and proper shoe and sock gear to participating athletes.

FUNFitness is the physical therapy component of Healthy Athletes. Designed to assess and improve an athlete's flexibility, functional strength, aerobic capacity and balance, these screenings also educate participants, families and coaches.

Health Promotion uses interactive educational tools and displays, motivational literature and demonstrations to heighten the awareness of athletes, reinforcing the need to improve and maintain an enhanced level of wellness and self-care. Screenings include BMI – Height and Weight, BP – Blood Pressure, BMD - Bone Mineral Density and an athlete interview to assess health related behaviors.

Healthy Hearing is a free hearing screening designed to ensure proper audiology care for participating Special Olympics athletes.

MedFest offers the physical exam that all athletes need prior to participating in Special Olympics sports programming.

Opening Eyes: The Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes program is a vision and eye health screening in partnership with the Lions Clubs International Foundation. Led by volunteer vision care professionals, Opening Eyes is able to offer prescription eyewear, sunglasses, and sports goggles to Special Olympics athletes.

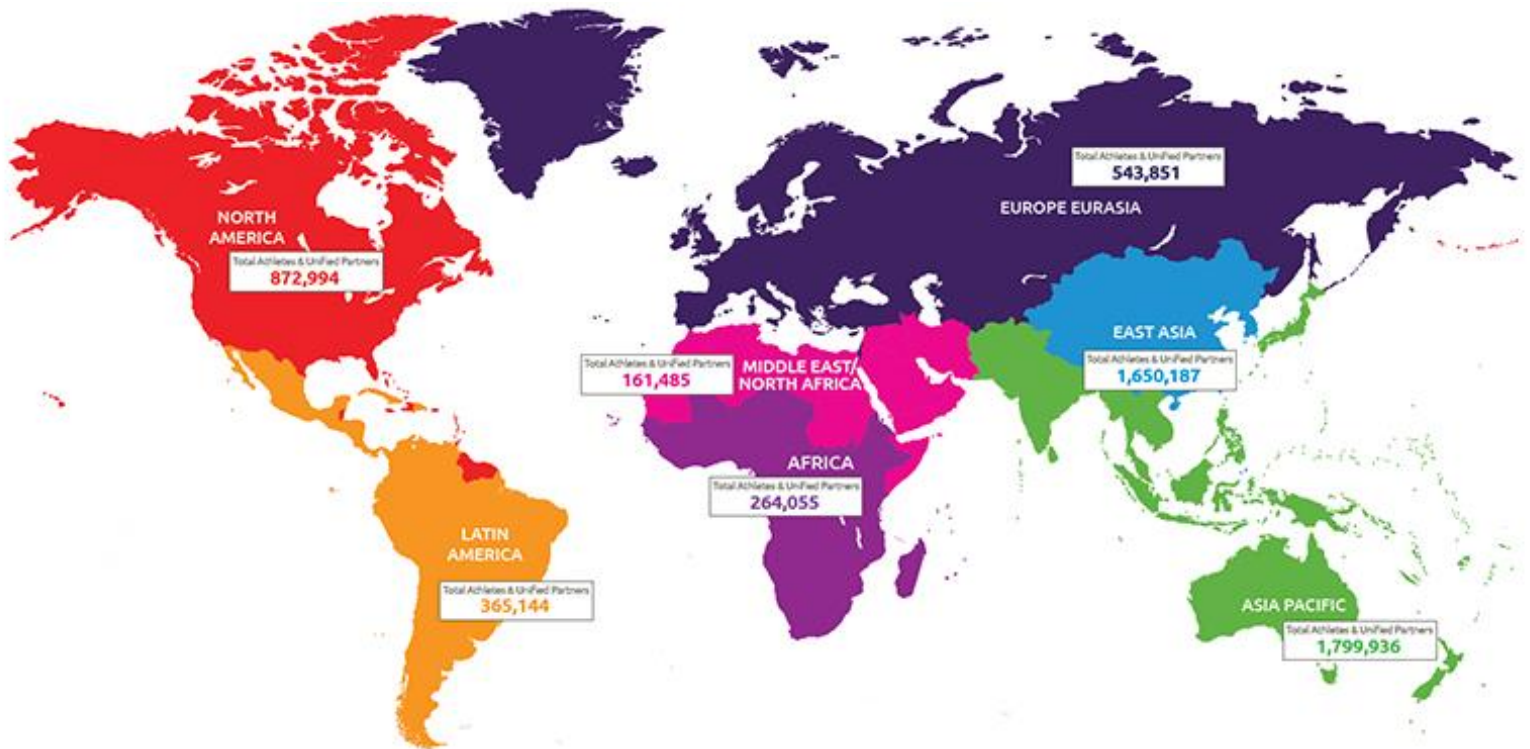
Special Smiles provides comprehensive oral health care information, including offering free dental screenings and instructions on correct brushing and flossing techniques to participating Special Olympics athletes. This also includes issuing preventative supplies like toothpaste and toothbrushes and fluoride varnish.

Strong Minds is an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as: thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others.

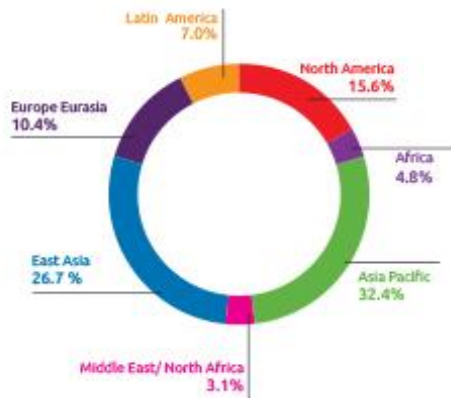
Special Olympics Overview

Special Olympics Global Outreach

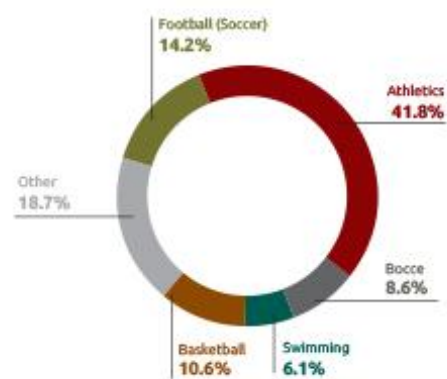
Reach Report is Available at: <http://annualreport.specialolympics.org/>



ATHLETES BY REGION



TOP SPORTS



Special Olympics Strong Minds



Strong Minds

Strong Minds is an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as: thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others. Athletes learn about and try a few different active coping strategies as they move through the stations. Before exiting, athletes identify the strategies they like best and volunteers provide them with visual reminders to use these tools in competition and in daily life.

Importance and Impact

Pilot data from Strong Minds events found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes face significant stresses on a daily basis, but have access to only a few adaptive coping strategies:

- **12%** of athletes report having no coping strategies
- **62%** mostly use avoidant strategies (e.g., not think the stressor), which is associated with increased depression
- **26%** mostly use active strategies (e.g. doing something to help themselves to feel better), which is associated with increased well-being

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Purpose and Goals:

- Increase athlete awareness of active coping strategies that can be used in competition and in life.
- Help athletes to identify ways to manage stress during competition and in daily life.
- Provide resources on good coping for athletes, coaches & caregivers.
- Start conversations about stress, coping and emotional wellness.
- Provide training and experiences for health student and professionals to discuss emotional well-being with individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.



Healthy Athletes Infographic

Sustaining Athlete Health



VISION

A world where every person with an intellectual disability & their family and/or caregivers understands what they need to do in order to optimize their health, & where accessible information, resources, systems & policies exist at the individual, community, national & global levels that support them in realizing healthy & productive lives.

THE PROBLEM

The Issue

Up to **200,000,000** people with intellectual disabilities are denied access to quality health services.



Our Role

Promote the overall well-being of people with intellectual disabilities via programs that ensure ongoing access to quality, community-based healthcare services, highlighted by free health exams and a year-round focus on health and wellness.



Successes

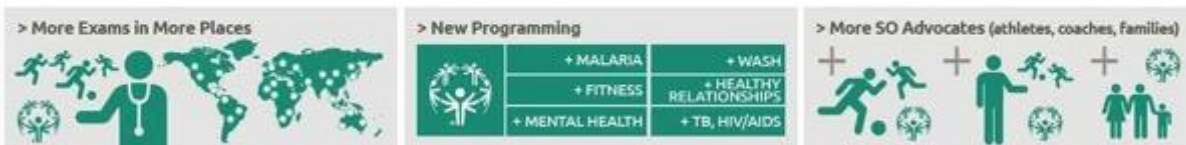
- ✓ 1.4 million exams
- ✓ 7 healthcare disciplines
- ✓ 120,000 professionals trained
- ✓ New data for research & awareness
- ✓ Increased access to care through the launch of Healthy Communities

Limitations

- ! Episodic exams (at games only)
- ! 3.5% athlete penetration rate
- ! Static snapshot data system
- ! Limited engagement of coaches, families & community partners
- ! Low awareness of Special Olympics' role as the largest global public health organization dedicated to people with ID

THE SOLUTION

- 1 Infuse expanded health services into all of Special Olympics' worldwide, year round events & programming.



- 2 Create local Healthy Community networks of health providers engaged in Special Olympics' health work & committed to providing ongoing health resources & services to people with intellectual disabilities & their families outside of Special Olympics.



- 3 Create global Healthy Communities coalition of leading businesses, NGOs & governments that support Special Olympics' health work & increase access to health resources & services through macro-level action.



- 4 Develop world class bio-informatics capability to monitor longitudinal health outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities to measure progress, inform public policy leaders, and demand health justice worldwide.



CHAPTER 2: STRONG MINDS LOGISTICS

What is Special Olympics Strong Minds?

Strong Minds helps Special Olympics athletes strengthen their coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop positive and active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as: thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others.

Importance and Impact

Strong Minds screenings found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes face significant stresses on a daily basis, but have access to only a few positive and active coping strategies.

12% have no coping strategies

62% mostly use avoidant strategies (e.g., not think the stressor), which is associated with increased depression

26% mostly use active strategies (e.g. doing something to help themselves to feel better), which is associated with increased well-being.

What Happens at Strong Minds

Athletes try a few different strategies as they move through the station. Before exiting, athletes identify the strategies they like best and volunteers provide them with visual reminders to use these tools in competition and in daily living. Each athlete also receives a resources to encourage them to practice strategies in sport and everyday life.

Goals of Strong Minds

- Increase awareness about active coping strategies that can be used in competition and in daily living.
- Support athletes to identify stress management/coping strategies that they like and think they will use
- Provide resources on good coping for athletes, coaches & caregivers
- Start conversations about stress, coping and emotional wellness

The Healthy Athletes Clinical Director Role: Strong Minds

Special Olympics is recruiting for volunteer clinical directors for Strong Minds, an emotional wellness pilot program.

Since 1997, Special Olympics has been providing free examinations and education for people with intellectual disabilities across the areas of audiology, dentistry, health promotion, optometry, physical exams, physical therapy and podiatry. The award-winning Healthy Athletes program and the more than 135,000 health care professionals trained on the specific health care concerns of people with intellectual disabilities have provided more than 1.6 million free examinations to Special Olympics athletes worldwide in more than 130 countries. In addition to the existing areas of Healthy Athletes, new programming made possible by the Golisano Foundation is in development, such as Strong Minds.

Volunteer Clinical Directors are an important part of Special Olympics health work, and Special Olympics is now recruiting for people to lead local Strong Minds events. Clinical Directors are responsible for working with their local Special Olympics Program and other volunteer health professionals in coordinating a Strong Minds event in their region.

Special Olympics is a global movement of people creating a new world of inclusion and community, where every single person is accepted and welcomed, regardless of ability or disability. We are helping to make the world a better, healthier and more joyful place -- one athlete, one volunteer, one family member at a time. Join us!

The role of a Strong Minds Clinical Director includes, but is not limited to:

Determining Event Opportunities

Identifying and scheduling the best opportunity to provide Strong Minds events are joint efforts between the Clinical Director and his/her local Special Olympics Program.

Recruiting and Training Volunteer Health Professionals

Clinical Directors are the best people to identify and train health volunteers to work in the specific areas that will be offered in the Strong Minds venue, because they know their community and its local health care professionals. Potential volunteers may come from:

- Private Practices
- Universities/Colleges/Schools
- Health and Professional Associations
- Medical Facilities
- Government Medical Facilities (Military/VA/State/National/Local) and
- State or Local Public Health Agencies
- Social Work organizations
- Yoga studios

Obtaining Equipment, Supplies and Athlete Giveaways

Needed supplies, equipment and athlete giveaways may be available to Clinical Directors through donations or loans obtained by networking with local sponsors and health services. Special Olympics headquarters also receives donations of goods and equipment that can be made available for events, if local sources are not available. It is possible to obtain supplies through Special Olympics International if not found at the local level.

Capacity Grant Application

Clinical Directors will work with their local Program to assure that supplies and equipment needed to deliver the core components of Strong Minds are included in the Healthy Athletes' Capacity Grant application. These grants assist Programs in purchasing interactive educational materials, signage and other supplies/equipment needed to conduct an impactful Strong Minds program.

Setting up and Supervising the Strong Minds Venue

On the day of the event, the Clinical Director is responsible for supervising the set-up, delivery of screening, interactive education services by trained volunteers, and break-down/wrapping up.

Collecting and Reporting Data

Clinical Directors use Healthy Athletes Software (HAS) to document screening data collected during the event. Data are used to determine need for health care provider referrals, and to assess the health status and needs of individual Special Olympics athletes. This data provides Special Olympics with factual information to increase awareness and provide more services. Additionally, the Clinical Directors are responsible for writing a post-event summary reports.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation gives Clinical Directors the opportunity to continuously improve and adapt their programs to the needs of the athletes.

Strong Minds Clinical Director Background and Requirements:

- Certificate and current licensure as a Mental Health professional (ie. Clinical Psychologist, Licensed Social Worker, Licensed Counselor.)
- A minimum three-year commitment to ensure quality and continuity of the Strong Minds program should the pilot program move forward;
- Attendance at a Special Olympics, Inc.-sponsored Train-the-Trainer session where information and training about Special Olympics, its health program, Strong Minds, specific management and clinical requirements are provided. During training, Clinical Directors will participate in a Strong Minds event. Expenses are covered by Special Olympics, Inc.

Checklist for Clinical Directors

This checklist serves as a general guide for the activities of the Strong Minds Clinical Director before, during and after an event:

Prior to an Event:

____ Recruit volunteers for the event. Ideally 1-2 people per station is best, so try to recruit 6-12 volunteers for each event.

____ Provide an orientation and training to the volunteers concerning: goals of Healthy Athletes and Strong Minds, interacting with athletes, how to facilitate station activities, paperwork duties and issues to bring to attention of clinical director (i.e., referrals)

____ Work with a SO program manager to obtain materials and other logistical supports for the event

____ Create a local/regional list of community-based resources for referrals that may emerge; include emergency supports, counseling/psychological supports, as well as leisure/community engagement and social supports

During an Event:

____ Greet volunteers and provide refresher of day's activities

____ Oversee volunteer orientation to each station and rotate them across stations

____ Oversee/assist with group management, staffing needs, giving volunteers breaks and helping to keep flow reasonable and to minimize wait time; adjust station layout as needed

____ Manage any emergency situations that may arise

After an Event:

____ Ask volunteers to provide feedback

____ Express gratitude to volunteers, either verbally, with a thank you note or with a certificate








____ Ensure data from HAS system is entered

CHAPTER 3: STRONG MINDS STATIONS

Station Overview & Layout

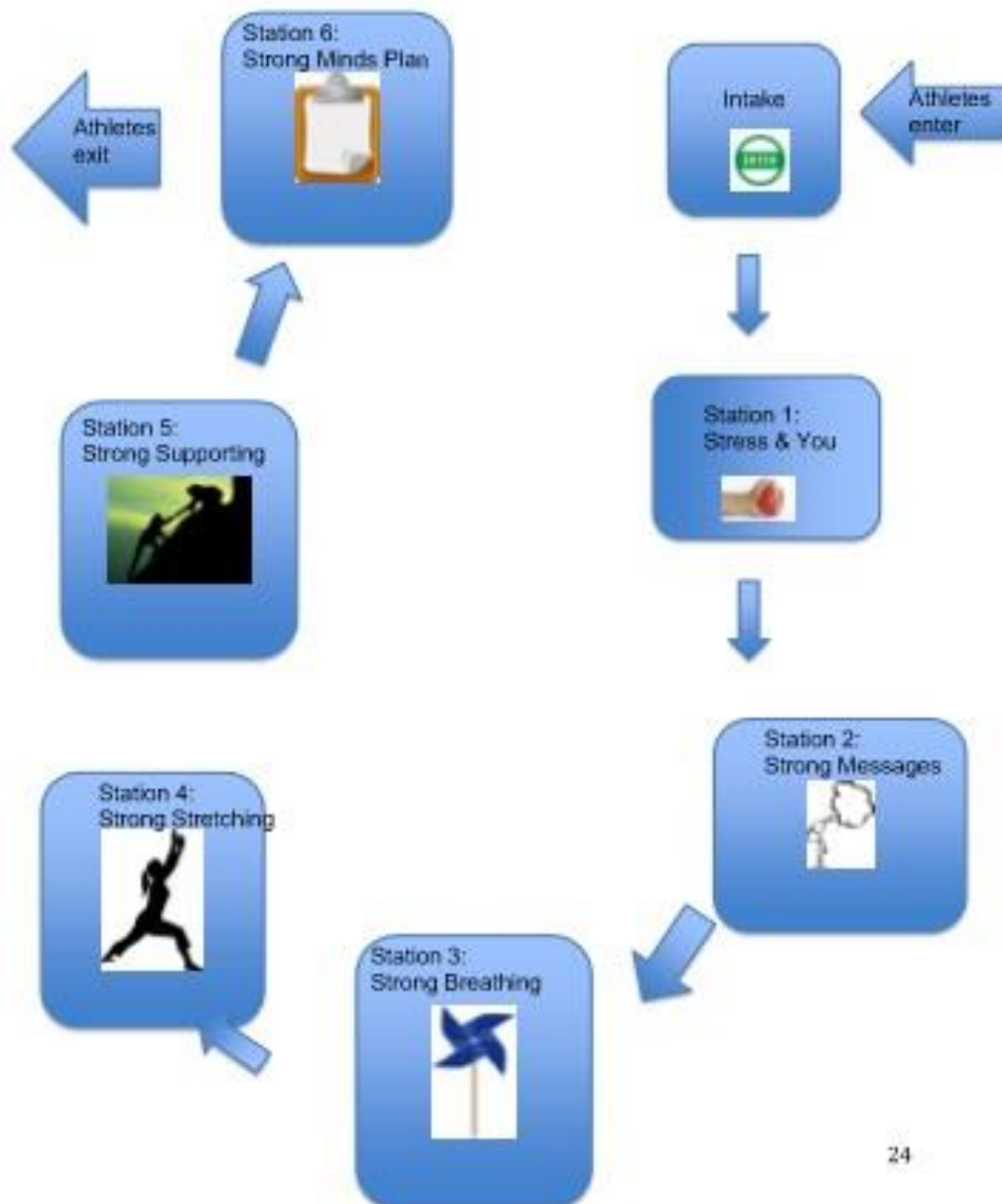
The Strong Minds program includes a Check-In Table/Intake Table and Check-out, followed by 5 stations, each with a title and visual cue, and ending with a Check-out Table. They are best illustrated by the *Strong Minds Strategies for Stress Handout*, which is given to the athlete at Check-out and is used by the athlete to indicate which tools he/she thinks will be most helpful in the future. (See Appendix).

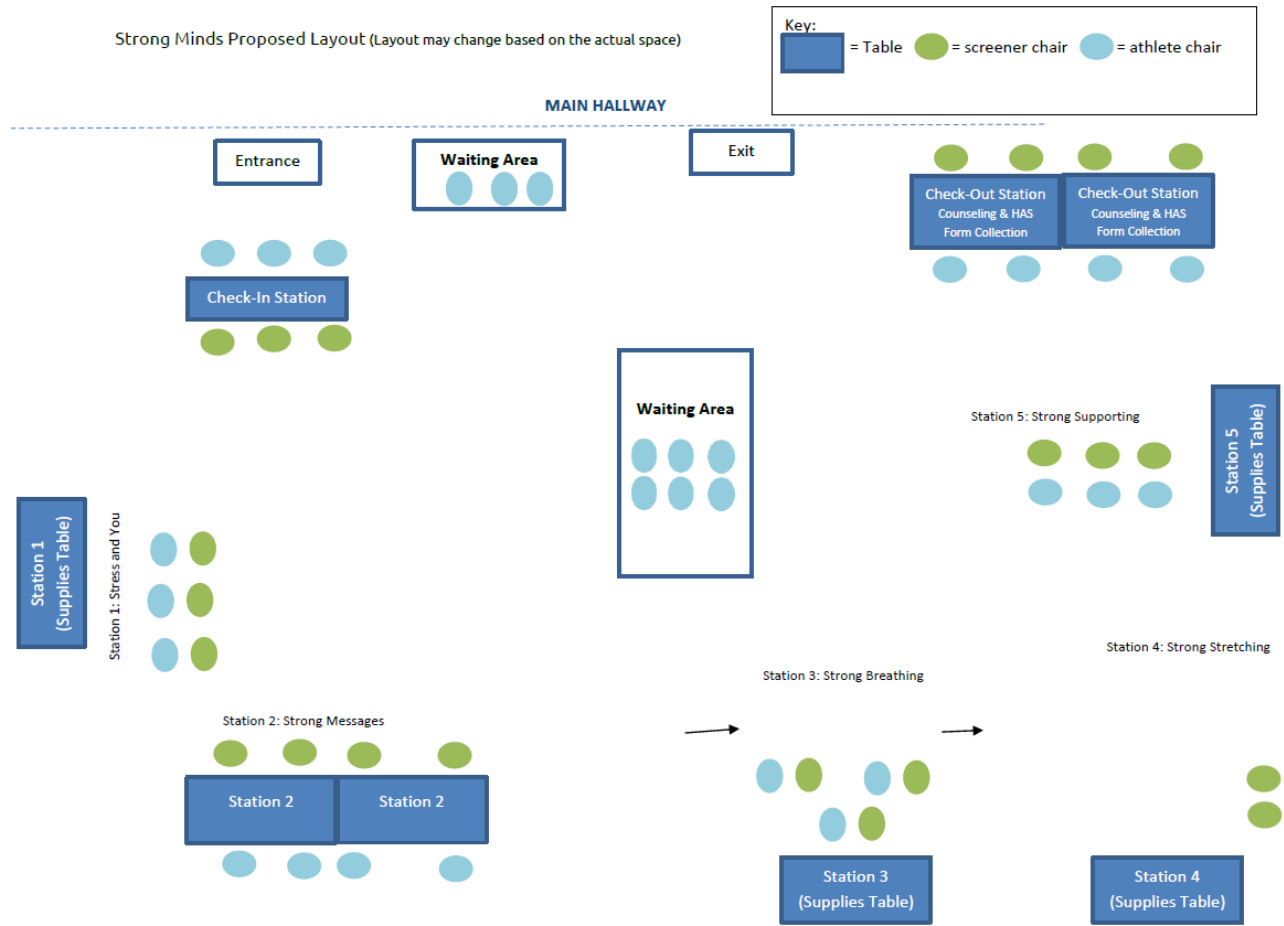
Each of the 5 stations has a title and an associated image. Signs for each station are provided in Appendix.

Check-in/Intake	
Station 1: Stress and You	
Station 2: Strong Messages	
Station 3: Strong Breathing	
Station 4: Strong Stretching	
Station 5: Strong Supporting	
Check-out	

Sample Layout

The layout of the stations is very flexible and we have seen successful pilots held outside, under tents, and inside (within the space of a classroom). Arranging the stations in a U-formation has worked well, as illustrated below:





Conceptual Model: Strong Minds stations were developed from three conceptual models for emotional wellness: positive psychology, social-emotional learning, and mindfulness-based stress reduction practices. For more information on the research basis for the Strong Minds stations, please see “Research Background for Strong Minds” in the Appendix

Structure of this Section: Each station is presented in the following way:

- (1) At-a-glance (i.e., an overview of the goals & logistics of the activity)
- (2) Step-by-step procedures, with a sample script.
- (3) Alternative activities (i.e., if the activity as written is not a good fit for the culture or setting or athletes in attendance, the Clinical Director may decide to implement an alternative activity. Ideas for alternatives are provided for each station.)

How to Use this Manual:

It is recommended that all volunteers review each station briefly in order to understand the overall goals and activities provided in each station.

Volunteers should spend more time reading through the sections on the stations they will be facilitating.

It is helpful to have at least one copy of the manual available at each station.

Please note that the sample scripts are provided for general guidance; it is not necessary to memorize or deliver the script word-for-word.

For Strong Minds, we ask the Clinical Director have a Check-in Table, Intake Table, Check-out Table, and select 4-6 stations from the manual.

Appendices: Please see the back of the manual for masters of supporting documents. Those that need to be printed for the event are identified accordingly. Documents needed for each station are bolded in the material list and text.

Interaction guidelines: Be positive, up-beat, enthusiastic, encouraging.

Expected length of each activity: 5 minutes

Modifications:

Script (provided below) is appropriate for verbal individuals. It can be modified for use with athletes who use communication devices, picture symbols, and/or sign language. Please collaborate with the athlete and coach in order to deliver the content in an appropriate manner for each individual. See Appendix 3.1 for example of a picture board to support the concepts.

Print Materials (if possible, laminate the masters identified below)

File Title	Station	Quantity	Note
Station Signs	All	1	REQUIRED
Strong Minds Strategies	All	1/athlete	REQUIRED
HAS Form	All	1/athlete	REQUIRED unless using tablets
Picture Boards	All	10 Masters	REQUIRED
Calm Water Picture	3	2	REQUIRED
Stormy Water Picture	3	2	REQUIRED
4-7-8 Breathing Cards	3	1/athlete	Optional
Stretching Handout	4	2 Masters 1/athlete	REQUIRED Optional
Be Kind Pledge	5	1/athlete or 1 banner	Optional
Coach Playbook	ALL	1/team	Optional

Strong Minds Supplies

Strong Minds Specific Supplies	QTY (based on 100 athletes)	Purpose/Notes
Pinwheels	1/athlete	Strong Breathing Station
Stress Balls	1/athlete	Stress and You Station
Strong Minds Banners	2	Decoration
Resistance Bands	5 to 10	Strong Stretching (shoulder internal rotation)
Art supplies- paper	1/athlete	Strong Messages Station
Art supplies- markers	25	Strong Messages Station
Art supplies- positive stickers	1/athlete	Strong Messages Station
Yoga mats	5 to 10	Strong Stretching
Wristbands or bracelets	2/athlete	Printed with words (ex. Strong, Brave, Kind) Strong Supporting
General Supplies		
Plastic bags for giveaways	1/athlete	
Trash bags	10	
Clipboards	20	
Hand sanitizer	10	
Paper towels	5 rolls	
Pens/Pencils	50	
Tape (duct, packing, scotch)	2 rolls of each	
Table coverings	8	
Disinfectant wipes	300 wipes	
Plastic storage bins	5 to 10	



Station Instructional Guides

Check-In Table and Intake Table

Goals:

- To greet the athletes and describe the Strong Minds Stations
- To complete the Healthy Athlete Software Form (HAS Form)

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-3

Supplies

Healthy Athlete Software Form

Strategies for Stress printed 1/athlete

Station signs (6 stations)

Clipboards

Pens

Steps and Sample Script

1. DO: Greet the athlete and family/coach and welcome them to Strong Minds.
2. SAY: *"Welcome to Strong Minds! My name is Bob – What's yours?"*
3. *What events are you participating in today?*
4. *<talk to athlete about his/her sport>*
5. DO: Introduce goals of Strong Minds and see if athlete is interested in the stations.
 - a. SAY: *"Athletes work on training their minds, as well as their bodies, in order to be calm and focused for competitions. We've put together 6 stations to show you 5 different ways to keep your mind strong – particularly when you are having strong feelings about something. Does that sound like something you'd like to learn more about?"*
 - b. IF: No: SAY: *"I see... Tell me more...does it seem like stuff you already know? <listen to the reasons why the athlete isn't interested and see if you can gently encourage some exploration of the stations; but don't push it. If the athlete isn't interested, he/she can choose not to go through the stations; try to answer any questions or address any reservations that the athlete may have> SAY: "I understand...it feels pretty personal, doesn't it. Well, it's totally up to you if you want to check it out or not. You don't have to do any of the activities that you don't want to do. It's completely up to you. Maybe it'd be helpful to see what other people do when they have strong feelings about something? IF: No: SAY: "Well, thanks for stopping by! Have a good day"*
 - c. IF: Yes: SAY: *"Great, let's get started with a few questions and then you'll go to the first station."*
<review the HAS form, item by item with the athlete>

Intake Table



Intake Table: Steps and Sample Script

1. DO: Greet the athlete and family/coach and welcome them to Strong Minds.
2. DO: Complete the HAS form.
 - a. SAY: *"I have a few questions here to ask you. Your answers will be kept private. You can always choose to skip a question if you'd like. follow HAS form script">*
3. DO: Direct the athlete to Station 1.
 - a. SAY: *"Thanks for taking the time to answer these questions. Please go to Station 1. Enjoy!"*



Intake Table: Additional Notes

- Intake Table and Check-in may be combined based on Clinical Director preference
- HAS forms should be filled out in a semi-private interaction with a volunteer, as some of the answers will be personal to the athlete. The athlete may decide to bring a coach or caregiver along; however, try to encourage the athlete to respond to the questions and not rely on the adults to answer on their behalf. In the event that the athlete prefers for an adult to answer for him or her, please note that on the HAS form and proceed, asking the questions to the athlete, but accepting the answers from the designee.
- Provide the athlete with positive feedback after a response and do not pressure the athlete come up with a response.
- If an athlete says they are "not good", you may want to generally ask why to see if there is a way you can support that athlete.
- Give the athlete the *"Strategies for Stress"* handout to take to each station.
- Volunteers will ask the athlete to circle either the "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" icon to indicate his/her interest/likelihood of using the strategy in the future.
- HAS forms may be administered on paper, or may be entered via tablet computer. Athletes will only interact with the HAS form during Intake and Check-out. HAS forms will be managed by the volunteers.

Station 1: Stress and You



Goals:

- To define what it means to be “stressed out”.
- To illustrate that everyone feels “stressed out” sometimes. Different people feel “stressed out” at different times. Knowing what causes you stress is important for helping yourself manage it.
- To show that feeling “stressed out” impacts your thoughts and your body in ways that can make you feel worse (if you don’t understand what’s happening).
- To show that you can help yourself feel better when you’re stressed out.

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-2

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 3-5 athletes at a time.

Supplies

Stress Ball

Station 1: Steps and Sample Script



1. **DO:** Greet the athlete and then introduce the topic.
2. **SAY:** *I'm glad you came by Strong Minds! My name is Jay – what's yours?...Nice to meet you, Lila. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about stress and then show you one of the ways you can help yourself feel better when you're stressed out.*
3. **DO:** Engage the athlete in a brief discussion of what stress is, showing through examples that some stresses are commonly experienced, and others may be unique to a particular person.
4. **SAY:** *Everyone feels stressed out sometimes. For example, I get really stressed out if I'm late for an appointment. How about you – what makes you feel stressed out?*
5. **DO:** Listen, elaborate, share information, as appropriate; point out stresses that are familiar/commonly experienced and try to make some connections about how different people may find some things more stressful than others.
6. **DO:** Review that stress impacts how we feel in our bodies; and that built-up stress can make you feel really tense and unhappy
7. **SAY:** *A person who's "stressed out" is usually feeling strong emotions (like sadness, or worry, or feeling mad) that are really uncomfortable. Stress can also make your body really tense – making it harder and harder to feel calm and relaxed. For a lot of us, we have to calm our bodies before we can calm our feelings.*
8. **DO:** Remind that sometimes we can't make what's stressing us out go away, but we can do things to help ourselves feel better.
9. **SAY:** *Even though we may not be able to control what stresses us out, we can do things to help ourselves feel better when we're stressed. This stress ball is one way you can use your body to get rid of stressful feelings.*
10. **DO:** Give the athlete a stress ball and demonstrate a brief tense-and-release exercise:
11. **SAY:** *Go ahead and squeeze the ball for about 3 seconds – 1..2...3..there you go! Great! Now release your grip. Feel anything? Can you tell that your hand is more relaxed after you squeeze the ball?*
12. **DO:** Coach the Athlete to try it a few times. Praise effort.
13. **DO:** Review that these kinds of exercises (tense-and-release) can be done with or without a stress ball, and can be done anywhere. Encourage the athlete to try it the next time he/she feels nervous before a competition or stressed out by something.
14. **SAY:** *What's nice is that you can do these stress exercises anywhere – with or without the stress ball. Although, I like having the ball, as it reminds me to relax. Do you think this tool will be helpful to you as you deal with the stresses of competing? Are there other times in your life where you think this might be helpful?*
15. **SAY:** *Thanks for trying this activity with me! The stress ball is yours to keep. I hope you like it.*
16. **DO:** Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet

Station 1: Stress & You: Alternative Activities



Instead of using the stress ball, you could lead the athlete(s) through a brief progressive relaxation exercise. The following activity was created by Dr. Marina Heifetz:

Progressive Relaxation:

Steps for Muscle Relaxation Exercises

Whenever you feel tense, nervous, upset or in pain, the muscles in your body can get tight. When you are having fun and are relaxed, your muscles are relaxed too and feel loose. These exercises will help you learn how to relax when you notice that your muscles are tight.

TOES

Pretend that you are barefoot and standing in the mud. Now squish your toes deep into the mud for 5 seconds and then relax your toes.

LEGS

Pretend that your mom is vacuuming underneath your feet and you have to hold your legs up out of the way. Lift your legs straight out in front of you and hold them there and don't let them drop for 5 seconds. Then drop your legs down very slowly and feel the difference between tense and relaxed.

HANDS AND ARMS

Pretend you have a whole lemon in your left hand (then alternate with the right hand) and squeeze it hard for 5 seconds. Pretend like you are squeezing all of the juice out. Release your grip and relax your hand then try it again.

ARMS AND SHOULDERS

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat and stretch your arms out in front of you and then above your head. Release your stretch and relax your arms and shoulders.

SHOULDERS AND NECK

Pretend you are a turtle and you want to hide your head into your house by pulling your shoulders up to your ears and pushing your head down into your shoulders. Hold this position for a few seconds and then slowly relax your neck and shoulders.

JAW

Pretend you have a giant piece of bubble gum in your mouth. Bite down on it as hard as you can, then relax and let your jaw hang loose.

Station 2: Strong Messages



Goals:

- To show that we can use music, photos and other reminders of what inspires us to feel better when we are under stress
- To show that putting positive messages into our thoughts can improve our confidence and ability to handle stress.

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-2

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 1-3 athletes at a time.

Supplies

Art Supplies (markers and paper/index cards)

Sample positive statements and/or pictures

Stickers with positive messages (Optional)

Station 2: Steps and Sample Script



1. **DO:** Greet the athlete and then introduce the topic.
2. **SAY:** *Welcome to the Strong Messages Station! We're going to talk about personal ways you can keep your mind strong when you are under stress. We all find our inspiration from different places and it's important to find what works for you.*
3. **DO:** Show how music can provide encouragement.
4. **SAY:** *Many professional athletes get themselves calm and focused for competition by listening to their favorite music. If you listen to really encouraging, positive music, you will feel more confident and strong.*

For example, when I listen to Katy Perry sing "Roar", I feel like I can do anything!

What kind of music – or what songs- make you feel powerful? Anytime you need to give your brain a positive boost, try listening to music that makes you feel good...it will really help your confidence!
5. **DO:** Show that keeping photographs of favorite people or places in view can be calming.
6. **SAY:** *Another strategy is to bring a favorite photo or two with you to an event. Then, if you're feeling nervous or want some inspiration, you can look at the photo and think positive thoughts. Some people like to make miniature photo books to take along to competitions. Are there people or places or things you'd like to have pictures of – that would make you feel good just to look at?*
7. **DO:** Demonstrate power of positive messages.
8. **SAY:** *Sometimes it's helpful to have a written list of encouraging statements you can read or look at – kind of an individual pep-talk to yourself. Let's take a moment to write down a few things you could say to yourself to stay positive and focused. <using index cards, write down up to 3 positive self-statements>. Or we can use these stickers – pick some that you like. <Athletes can decorate their index card if they would like.*
9. **DO:** Summarize.
10. **SAY:** *So, you can see that there are lots of ways to create positive messages for yourself – music, photos, words, stickers...positive thoughts will increase your confidence and help reduce stress*
11. **DO:** *Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet*

Note: Place a few positive statements on the wall or table as examples. Athletes that don't want to take their positive statements with them can put them on the wall or table.

Station 2: Strong Messages Alternative Activities



Doing activities that we enjoy helps increase opportunities to send ourselves positive messages. This station can be connected to encouraging athletes to explore different hobbies and seek out fun activities that they enjoy and can access easily. Any activity that a person enjoys – such as listening to music, eating good food, looking at art – can provide opportunities for strong, positive self-statements. The station could be set up to show a variety of leisure activities the athlete's may enjoy, such as:

- a. Art activities – such as adult coloring books, sandart, clay, etc.
- b. Music activities – such as listening to a piece of music, or exploring sounds made by different instruments/objects. Inexpensive percussion instruments (perhaps loaned by a local school) could work. Instruments that require mouth contact would not be appropriate for sharing safely across athletes. Similarly, filling several glasses with different amounts of water and tapping them with a spoon might promote exploration of sound in an interesting way.
- c. Gardening – this is a higher cost alternative – with the purchase of small plastic plant containers, some soil, and some seeds for a hearty plant from the athletes region – guide the athletes in the 5-senses exercise while they are planting the seeds and then allow them to take the plant home or donate to a community garden project of some kind.
- d. Buddha Boards- Inspired by the Zen idea of living in the moment. Athletes can paint on the surface and slowly the image disappears.
- e. Positivity Mirrors- Encourage athletes to use small compact mirrors to state a positive message to themselves

Station 3: Strong Breathing: At-A-Glance



Goals:

- To show that the way we breathe impacts how calm or nervous we may feel. Breathing slowly and deeply and from the stomach has a self-calming effect.
- To demonstrate that breathing is a powerful and portable tool that we can use anytime, anywhere to help ourselves feel better when we are nervous or stressed.

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-2

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 1-5 athletes at a time.

Supplies

Pictures of calm and stormy water (laminated copies)

Pinwheels (optional)

Breathing cards (optional)

NOTE: The Strong Breathing station may not be appropriate for individuals with certain medical conditions, such as epilepsy. Please either skip or modify the station based on needs of the athlete.

Station 3: Strong Breathing: Steps & Script



Pinwheel Activity

1. **DO:** Greet the athlete and introduce the topic.
2. **SAY:** *"Welcome to the Strong Breathing Station! My name is Jessica and I'm going to show you how powerful your breathing can be!"*
3. **DO:** Introduce breathing as a powerful tool.
4. **SAY:** *"For a very long time, people have understood that breathing is a powerful tool. Paying attention – noticing or watching how you breathe – is part of that power."*

Breathing is our best tool for calming ourselves down. It is always with us – and it's something we do naturally; but it's also something we can learn to do better."
5. **DO:** Show picture of calm waters, with light breeze (CalmPicture.jpg)
6. **SAY:** *"When we're calm, we usually breathe softly, gently, calmly...like the wind in this picture. See how it just moves the water a little."*
7. **DO:** Show picture of storm, with powerful winds making waves rise out of water. (StormPicture.jpg)
8. **SAY:** *"When we're feeling flooded – when feelings are strong and big – our breath can become fast and rough...like the wind in this picture."*
9. **DO:** Connect breath with feelings.
10. **SAY:** *"The more you breathe fast and rough, the worse you feel. So if you can catch yourself breathing like in a storm (point to picture #2), you need to change the way you're breathing so you can get to here (point to picture #1)."*
11. **DO:** Introduce the exercise.
12. **SAY:** *"I'm going to show you how. We'll do it together. If you like it, you can practice as often as you'd like and see how well it works for you."*
13. **DO:** Give each athlete a pinwheel and demonstrate deep breathing.
14. **SAY:** *"This pinwheel is yours to keep, as a reminder of the importance of breathing. What I'd like for you to do is to take a long deep breath – pull in the air so much that you can feel your stomach move outward – and then breathe out towards the pinwheel to make it spin."*
 - a. <demonstrate a few times, encouraging the athletes to try it.>
15. **DO:** Describe how breathing is a biological (or body) tool for calming.
16. **SAY:** *"Scientists have shown that 3 deep breathes, from your belly, can actually bring you a feeling of calm, especially if you do it slowly by pulling air in through your nose and out through your mouth. Have you ever noticed that when you're stressed out or nervous, your breathing can get kind of fast and shallow. Simply slowing down your breathing, and making it deep and slow and long can send your body the message that you are okay...that you are calm...it's a great tool that you can use anywhere."*
17. **DO:** Practice slow, deep breathing and link to bodily feelings.
18. **SAY:** *"Even though it seems kind of simple, it actually takes some practice. Try putting your hand on your stomach and see if you can feel your belly move outwards as you pull the breath in, then...slowly release"*

it and feel your belly go back inwards. Or...you can lay on the floor and put a yoga block on your stomach to help you to see your own breathing. (demonstrate).

Describe different times/places/ways deep breathing can help a person to feel calm when stressed.

"Lots of professional athletes practice deep breathing before they compete. Scientists also say that taking 3 deep breaths when you're upset can help you to get control of your feelings. They also tell us that doing some deep breathing when you go to bed can help you to fall asleep faster."

19. **DO:** Encourage the athlete to think of times he/she can make a habit out of deep breathing.

20. **SAY:** *"You can do deep breathing with or without the pinwheel – it's really just a reminder of how helpful it can be. Some people make a habit out of doing 3 deep breaths at certain times in their day – for example, every time they are waiting at a stop light in traffic. That can help you to feel calm when you are rushing around. Are there some times in your day where doing 3 deep breaths would be a good habit?"*

21. **DO:** Tell the athlete about other ways deep breathing can be practiced.

22. **DO:** *Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet*

Station 3: Strong Breathing: Alternative Activities



4-7-8 Activity: This is a more complicated breathing exercise and is recommended for older adolescents and adults. It is very important NOT to do this exercise with an athlete who has certain health conditions, as repetitions of this exercise can be dangerous for people with cardiac problems.

1. **DO:** Check on the athlete's heart health.
2. **SAY:** *"Before we get started, I need to ask you: Do you have a heart problem or do you have trouble breathing?"*
If the athlete provides an answer that suggests he/she may have a heart problem, implement the pinwheel activity (see above). If the athlete cannot communicate this information, implement the pinwheel activity. Otherwise, continue.
3. **DO:** Pull out the 4-7-8 card (see appendix; 478.pdf) and describe the instructions one step at a time. Demonstrate each step after you describe it.
4. **SAY:** *"First, breathe out through your mouth making whooshing sound" <demonstrate>*

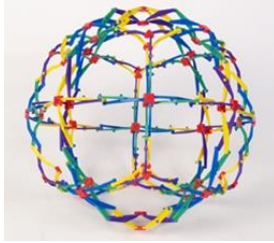
Then, close your mouth and breathe quietly through your nose – for count of 4.
<demonstrate>

"Then, hold your breath for a count of 7." <demonstrate>

Last, breath out through your mouth for a count of 8. Try to make a whooshing sound."
<demonstrate>

"Let's try one more time."
5. **DO:** Practice one more time. Gauge the athlete's interest/engagement and either repeat or stop.
6. **DO:** Ask the athlete if he/she felt calmer after the breathing exercise. <discuss>
7. **DO:** Caution the athlete against doing the 4-7-8 exercise too many times.
8. **SAY:** *"Remember, you only want to do this 2 or 3 times. Doing it too many times may make you feel dizzy. If you feel dizzy, stop and breathe normally."*
9. **DO:** Offer the 4-7-8 card.
10. **SAY:** *"I have a lot of cards like this one – if you liked this exercise and want to practice, please take one. It'll help you remember what to do."*
11. **DO:** Tell the athlete about other ways deep breathing can be practiced and remind them of the resources listed on the back of their Strong Minds Strategies for Stress.
12. **SAY:** *"Some people really like doing deep breathing with someone guiding or talking them through relaxation exercises. Some people call this "meditation" or "guided practice". You may also hear the word "mindfulness". Breathing is also a part of yoga and martial arts, like karate. If you're interested in learning more about these options, we've put a few websites and other resources together – they are listed on the back of the handout you'll get at the end."*
13. **DO:** Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet

Expanding Sphere Activity: You can purchase an expanding sphere and use it to show the athletes how breathing works.



1. **DO:** Expand and contract the sphere while talking.
2. **SAY:** *See how this ball moves in and out – that’s what happens when you breathe. You pull air in and your lungs get bigger; you let air out and your lungs get smaller. Let’s practice breathing in time with the movement of the ball.*
3. **DO:** Expand the sphere slowly while counting to 5 and modeling breathing. Label the inhale and exhale and model how to slow one’s breath for a longer inhale/exhale cycle. After about 5 breaths:
4. **SAY:** *How do you feel? Do you feel calmer?*
5. **DO:** As with the examples above, try to link the athletes breathing in this activity to competitions and to real-life events.

Starfish or 5-finger Breathing: As you breathe in and out, you trace around your fingers. On the in-breath, trace up the outside of your left pinky finger with your right index finger. On the out breath, trace down the other side. Repeat for the next four fingers. If you want – you can do all 10 fingers! Notice how you feel afterwards.

Hand on Heart: This exercise uses the heart as an anchor for mindful breathing. Put your hand over your heart. Notice the pressure of your hands on your chest. Feel your chest rising and falling as you breathe normally. Feel the rhythm of your breath for a few minutes.

Station 4: Strong Stretching

Goals:

- To show that we hold tension and stress in our bodies and that we can release that tension by doing some simple stretches.
- To link the feelings of tightness in our bodies to the emotional feelings of being stressed, nervous or anxious.
- To illustrate that we can use our bodies to help our minds feel better.

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-2

Interaction guidelines: Be positive, up-beat, enthusiastic, encouraging.

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 1-4 athletes at a time.

Supplies

Yoga mats
Chairs
Disinfecting wipes
Small towels
Stretching Guide

Notes:

If athletes are not fully clothed (e.g., wearing a bathing suit), be very careful that the stretching exercises you are doing are dignified and will not be embarrassing or immodest for the athlete. Having chairs available is also a good alternative for showing how stretching can help without risking a loss of privacy.

Caution: In order to protect athletes, we strongly discourage having volunteers touch the athletes, so please refrain from placing the athletes into specific positions. Instead, model the stretches or describe them, but do not physically prompt athletes to assume poses.

Station 4: Steps and Sample Script



1. **DO:** Greet the athlete and then introduce the topic.
2. **SAY:** *Welcome to the Strong Stretching Station! We're going to show you a few simple ways you can move your body to get tense, tight, stressful feelings out.*
3. **DO:** Show the athletes the stretching guide and demonstrate the moves, coaching them to move gently, breathe at the appropriate time and to take it easy and slowly.
4. **SAY:** *There are lots of different ways to stretch and you may already have a few favorites. I'm going to take you through some of the moves we like for getting stress out of our bodies. It's always important to start slowly and gently – don't strain yourself and don't go too quickly...stretching is supposed to be a gentle, relaxing activity.*

<demonstrate the stretches, coaching and encouraging
5. **DO:** Encourage athletes to feel the tension in their bodies and to reflect on whether stretching has helped them to feel less stressed.
6. **SAY:** *"How do you feel after you stretched for a bit? Anything feel lighter? Looser? More calm?"*

<discuss connection between stretching and bodily feelings
7. **DO:** Remind the athletes to breathe with the stretches for full relaxation effects.
8. **SAY:** *"Now, let's try the stretches while we are focusing on our breath".*
9. **DO:** Ask the athletes to consider times when stretching would be a helpful tool for them – both within competition and in real-life.
10. **SAY:** *"Some people like to stretch at a regular time every day – like when they get up in the morning or right before bed. Some people only stretch right before or right after they exercise. When do you think you'll want to do some stretching?"*
11. **DO:** Remind athletes of ways to make stretching fun and tell them about the resources for good stretching.
12. **SAY:** *"Some people like to listen to music when they stretch, which can make it more fun. Others like to go to classes to learn more about it – people who do yoga, karate, weight-lifting and lots of other sports also have specific stretching routines you might like. Even bowlers and golfers have specific stretches that your coaches can teach you. Check out our resources on the back of your handout!"*
13. **DO:** Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet

Station 4 Strong Stretching: Alternative Activities



1. Some Strong Minds volunteers will have particular expertise in stretching, yoga, dance and other forms of movement that promotes flexibility. Asking a skilled volunteer to lead this station is extremely beneficial! These volunteers may wish to follow a different set of exercises, which is fine, as long as the Clinical Director approves and those exercises have the following characteristics:

- appropriate level of difficulty
- appropriate for setting of event (i.e., doesn't require lying down if event is in parking lot)
- accessible to all participating athletes
- focus on movements that release tension.
- don't involve touching the athlete.

2. Adding music can enhance the enjoyment of this activity.

3. Stretching activities can be done on chairs, mats on the floor, or even in water (should the setting allow safe access to a pool)

4. You could replace this activity with the guided muscle relaxation activity, which is provided in the "Alternative Activities" section of Station 1.

5. Guided visualization exercises can also be introduced in this station. See "Resources" for audio and text versions of guided visualization exercises that you can try.

Station 5: Strong Supporting



Goals:

- To emphasize that social support (on both the receiving and the giving end) is good for our health. Kindness has health benefits and makes the world a less stressful place.

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 1-2 (1 per athlete is ideal)

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 1 athlete per volunteer is ideal, but can be done in pairs

Supplies

Pledge (optional)

Bracelets: Be Fearless, Be Kind bracelets OR bracelets that say “Strong, Brave, and/or Kind” (optional)

Station 5: Strong Supporting Script



1. **DO:** Introduce Topic.
2. **SAY:** *This station is called “Strong Supporting” because – it turns out – supporting other people that you care about helps reduce your stress. Scientists have found that when we help other people, our immune systems get stronger, and – sometimes – we feel calmer. So, kindness is good for your health!*
3. **DO:** Discuss examples of being supportive, elaborating on athlete’s responses.
4. **SAY:** *Can you think of an example of a time that you helped another person, or cheered them on?*

{If needed, can provide examples of what we mean by “supporting others” are: helping out a friend, taking time to listen to someone who’s had a bad day and remembering someone’s birthday.}
5. **DO:** Discuss importance of seeking support from others.
6. **SAY:** *It’s also important to remember that other people can really be helpful to us when we are feeling stressed or upset. Let’s take a moment to think about who you can rely on to be supportive.*

Who can you go to for support if you’re feeling nervous or stressed out?

<discuss>

What’s the best way to reach that person? Do you call them? Text them? Go see them in person?
7. **DO:** Provide a reminder of Strong Supporting. A bracelet that says and encourage the athlete to take a second one to give to a friend, as a way of spreading kindness and support. (Programs supported with “Be Fearless, Be Kind” bracelets, should ask the athlete to sign the pledge when receiving the bracelet).
8. **SAY:** *I have a reminder here for you – just a little something that you can look at and remind yourself to treat people with kindness. <give bracelet to athlete>...In fact, how about if you take a second one <provide another bracelet> and give it to someone you know who could use a little kindness. This bracelet is a symbol of courage and kindness that you show yourself and show others – it isn’t always easy to be kind and it takes courage to do the right thing.*

Another way to spread kindness and support is by signing the (Inclusion Revolution Pledge OR Hasbro Be Fearless, Be Kind Pledge); by signing this pledge you promise to: stand up for others, be inclusive, and make a difference. Would you like to sign the pledge?
9. **DO:** Remind athlete to check the green or red circle on the Strategies for Stress Worksheet

Station 5: Strong Supporting Alternative Activities

1. Inclusion Revolution Pledge: As an alternative to giving the athletes bracelets, athletes can complete the Inclusion Revolution Pledge: To make it more interactive, athletes can get their photo taken with their pledge. https://play.specialolympics.org/page/s/jointherevolution?source=2018campaign_wwwIR. Consider using a banner with the pledge on it or large sign instead of printing individual pledges.
2. Hasbro Be Fearless, Be Kind Pledge: As an alternative to giving the athletes bracelets, athletes can complete the Be Fearless, Be Kind Pledge: To make it more interactive, athletes can get their photo taken with their pledge. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/gadxk945f23euu8/Pledge%20Cards.pdf?dl=0>. Consider using a banner with the pledge on it or large sign instead of printing individual pledges.
3. Carabineer Giveaway: Instead of bracelets, athletes can be given a mountain climber's carabineer and take them through the script above through step 9, then:

SAY: I have a reminder here for you – just a little something that you can look at and remind yourself to treat people with kindness. *<give carabineer to athlete>*. This is a tool that mountain climbers use to help their teammates to get to the top of a tough climb. Climbers use these to connect their ropes to the ropes of their teammates. That way, if anyone slips while trying to climb the mountain, the whole team can keep them safe and keep them from falling. You might want to put this on your backpack as a reminder of how you are part of a team – other people will support you and you will support others.

To illustrate this concept, it's helpful to have a poster of mountain climbers (ideally 3 or 4 connected by a common rope) or you can draw a simple mountain image on a dry erase board, with 3-4 stick figures attached to a common rope. Lead the athlete through thinking about who is on his/her support team and put their names next to the stick figures.

Check-out/Strong Minds Plan



Goals:

- To review the stations/different tools for managing stress and nervous feelings with the athlete using the “Strategies” worksheet
- To encourage the athlete to choose which stations they liked/found useful by indicating their “likes” and “dislikes” on the worksheet
- To remind the athlete that the tools they’ve learned about in the Strong Minds stations can be used before a competition, as well as in real-life
- To complete the HAS form
- To encourage athletes to set a goal for utilizing one of the strategies

Logistics:

Volunteers needed: 2-4 (1 per athlete is ideal, and this station can take up to 10 minutes to do well)

Maximum/ minimum number of participants: 1 athlete per volunteer

Supplies

HAS Forms

Strategies for Stress Handout

Pens

Clipboards

Check-out: Steps and Sample Script



1. **DO:** Greet the athletes and ask them about their experiences.
2. **SAY:** *Welcome to the last Strong Minds Station! Did you enjoy the experience today?*

 <chat with the athlete about their experiences, following their lead
3. **DO:** Refer to the “Strategies Worksheet” and encourage the athlete to reflect on each station and choose “like” or “dislike” for each (if he/she hasn’t already done that).
4. **SAY:** *This worksheet is for you to keep, as a reminder of the tools and strategies that you either liked or didn’t like. Different people like different tools. There’s no right or wrong answers here. Let’s take a moment to go through them. If you liked the strategy and think you’ll use it, please check the green circle. If the strategy wasn’t something you liked or think you’ll use, check the red circle*

 <assist as much as needed; more independence the better; discuss in a supportive way, praising the athlete for his/her openness to trying new strategies
5. **DO:** Work with the athlete to complete the HAS form and create a goal using one of the strategies the athlete would want to use in the future and identify a person that will support them with that goal.
6. **DO:** Thank the athlete for his/her time and encourage them to practice their chosen strategies.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What if we are working in a small space and can't really include all of the stations?

We highly encourage you to follow the model outlined above, but if there are space or personnel constraints, stations can be grouped or eliminated per the determination by the Clinical Director. It is important to provide examples of both cognitive strategies (e.g., thinking positive thoughts) and body strategies (e.g., breathing).

2. What if we don't have enough volunteers to run all of the stations?

We recommend that you merge Stations 1 and 2 (Stress and You and Strong Messages) and Stations 3 and 4 (Strong Breathing and Strong Stretching). Keep the 5th and 6th stations separate. Thus, you'll have a total of 4 stations. One volunteer or two can man each of these stations.

3. What if the athlete doesn't understand oral language very well?

We have developed a picture board to assist with communication challenges. In addition, we recommend relying on the athlete and/or coach/caregiver to share any additional communication systems you can use to share concepts. Working with caregivers can be helpful. Engaging the athlete to his/her ability level will be very important.

4. What if an athlete discloses a traumatic event, or shows significant signs of a mental health condition?

Part of the role of the local Clinical Director is to oversee any local referrals for mental health services, social supports or other community referrals. If an athlete expresses a concern, the volunteer alerts the Clinical Director, who determines the best course of action/referral for the athlete. Prior to conducting a Strong Minds event, each Clinical Director is asked to provide a list of local mental health/mental wellbeing supports to athletes and their families as part of the last station. Local resources need to include 3-5 local providers, including: a crisis/helpline; local medical support for psychiatric issues, local counselors and/or community mental health centers. If there are specialty practitioners who identify working with individuals with developmental disabilities, then it will be important to include those in this handout as well.

5. How to maintain confidentiality at a Strong Minds event?

Please note that we value the privacy of the athletes and work to ensure that any information an athlete shares about their stresses, worries or fears is kept completely confidential. Clinical Directors, as licensed mental health and/or allied health professionals, are well-trained in maintaining confidentiality and are directed to specifically include issues of privacy in the training of volunteers.

Specifically, Clinical Directors provide the following guidance to volunteers within the training process:

1. All information that an athlete, coach or caregiver shares with a volunteer during their time in Strong Minds is kept confidential (with one important exception which is described below). This means that volunteers are instructed not to share any information, anecdotes, observations or comments about an athlete with anyone other than the Clinical Director at their event. This includes a prohibition on volunteer use of social media, which may not include any information about specific athletes.
2. Any time an athlete discloses information that indicates a potential threat of harm to self or others, the volunteers are to inform the Clinical Director immediately, who will follow-up with the athlete and will adhere to the mandated reporter procedures commonly practiced in the community. In the United States, these procedures require human services professionals to report concerns about the physical and emotional safety of vulnerable individuals (i.e., children and any individual with a developmental disability of any age) to the local Department of Social Services. Clinical Directors operating outside of the United States shall determine the appropriate course of action in their communities.

Volunteer Training Outline

Strong Minds

Day- of Volunteer Training (approximately 90 minutes)

1. Introduction

- a. **Welcome** and THANK YOU to all volunteers
- b. **Group Introduction** (briefly introduce self and have each volunteer state where they are from and why they are volunteering today).
- c. **Special Olympics:** The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Special Olympics strives to create a better world by fostering the acceptance and inclusion of all people.
- d. **Working with our athletes**
 - i. Review the following handouts with the entire group (print ahead of time):
 - http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/press-kit/2014_FactSheet_Final.pdf
 - <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/health/disciplines/Working-With-Our-Athletes.pdf>
- e. **Health:** Healthy Communities, Healthy Athletes, and Fitness
- f. **Healthy athletes:** Healthy Athletes' influence is evident with more than 135,000 healthcare professionals trained and free health screenings provided to more than 1.6 million athletes

2. Strong Minds Introduction

- a. Strong Minds is an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills and improving emotional wellness under stress. Stations include: stress and you (using a stress ball), positive messages, deep breathing (using a pinwheel), stretching, strong teamwork, and developing an action plan.
- b. Strong Minds is focused on emotional wellness/ emotional strength, rather than mental health
- c. Strong Minds increases athlete awareness of active coping strategies that can be used in competition and in life
- d. Strong minds is goal oriented and each athlete should leave with tools that they can utilize.

3. Stations

- a. It is important that each athlete is treated with dignity and respect. It is also important to protect privacy at all times. In addition, each athlete and coach should be greeted with a positive, upbeat attitude and words, helpful mentality, and provide plenty of positive and encouraging statements. Each station has a script available to all volunteers. Here is a brief overview of each station.

Check in (and HAS form)

i. Definition

1. This station is the gatekeeper for the event. Athletes and coaches are greeted at this intake station and thoroughly explained Strong Minds and the process. Encourage the athletes to complete and answer questions on their own in addition to going through each station without assistance. Since this stations

focus is gathering information, it should be done in a semi-private manner (as best as possible) to avoid any breaches in confidentiality.

- ii. Goals
 - 1. To make the athlete comfortable about going through the Strong Mind process.
 - 2. To complete the Healthy Athlete Software form (HAS) and provide athlete with all forms needed.

Station 1: Stress and You

- i. Definition
 - a. This station is designed to introduce an activity based circuit to the athlete.
- ii. Goals
 - a. Define to the athlete what stress is and what it means to be “stressed out”
 - b. To illustrate that everyone feels “stressed out” sometimes. Different people feel “stressed out” at different times. Knowing what causes you stress is important for helping yourself manage it.
 - c. To show that feeling “stressed out” impacts your thoughts and your body in ways that can make you feel worse (if you don’t understand what’s happening).
 - d. To show that you can help yourself feel better when you’re stressed out.
- iii. Demonstrate station

Station 2: Positive Messaging

- i. Definition
 - a. Positive Messaging will show the athlete that having pictures, music, and/or words can be motivating and relieve anxiety and stress.
- ii. Goals
 - a. To show that we can use music, photos and other reminders of what inspires us to feel better when we are under stress
 - b. Find which method works best for individual athletes.
 - c. To show that putting positive messages into our thoughts can improve our confidence and ability to handle stress.
 - d. Provide the athletes with a tool that can be accessed anywhere and kept on them at all times.
- iii. Demonstrate station

Station 3: Deep Breathing

- i. Definition
 - a. This station encompasses the use of deep breathing and its impact on stress relief.
- ii. Goals
 - a. To show that the way we breathe impacts how calm or nervous we may feel. Breathing slowly and deeply and from the stomach has a self-calming effect.
 - b. To demonstrate that breathing is a powerful and portable tool that we can use anytime, anywhere to help ourselves feel better when we are nervous or stressed.
- iii. Demonstrate station

Station 4: Stretching

- i. Definition
 - a. This station will introduce the use of physical activity to cope with stress in all aspects of life (before, during, and after). Important to know athlete limitations.
- ii. Goals
 - a. To show that we hold tension and stress in our bodies and that we can release that tension by doing some simple stretches.
 - b. To link the feelings of tightness in our bodies to the emotional feelings of being stressed, nervous or anxious.
 - c. To illustrate that we can use our bodies to help our minds feel better.
- iii. Demonstrate station

Station 5: Supporting

- i. Definition
 - a. This station allows for the athlete to express and understand their support team and how they can be a part of reducing stress of others by being there as teammates and friends.
- ii. Goals
 - a. To emphasize that social support (on both the receiving and the giving end) is good for our health. Kindness has health benefits and makes the world a less stressful place.
 - b. To remind athletes that we can all use Strong Minds strategies to win and lose gracefully.
 - c. Have athletes leave station with tools to help others in stressful situations.
- iii. Demonstrate station

Checkout

- i. Definition
 - a. The athlete should be greeted in a very positive upbeat manner. This station allows for feedback and processing with each athlete.
- ii. Goals
 - a. To review the stations/different tools for managing stress and nervous feelings with the athlete using the "Strategies" worksheet
 - b. To encourage the athlete to choose which stations they liked/found useful by indicating their "likes" and "dislikes" on the worksheet
 - c. To remind the athlete that the tools they've learned about in the Strong Minds stations can be used before a competition, as well as in real-life
 - d. To complete the HAS form
 - e. To encourage athletes to set a goal for utilizing one of the strategies.
- iii. Demonstrate station

4. Emergency Response

- a. **WE DO NOT DIAGNOSE OR TREAT ATHLETES DURING EVENTS**
- b. Clinical Director is responsible for any emergency response and action during event.
- c. If athlete reports mental health concerns (delusions, harm to others, harm to self, etc.)
 - i. Immediately report to Clinical Director before athlete leaves area
 - ii. CD will provide local resources to Coach and Athlete

- iii. CD will call or instruct delegate to call 911 (or emergency number in your region) if crisis is imminent.
 - d. If Volunteer reports unusual behavior from Athlete (ex. Flinching when close to athlete, noticing cuts, bruises, and/or discussing rough play).
 - i. Immediately report to Clinical Director
 - ii. Clinical Director will obtain contact information of patient (including phone number, home location). If suspected abuse CD and volunteer will call Adult Protective Services in that athlete's region.
 - iii. No follow up needed after report
 - e. If Medical Emergency call 911 (or emergency number in your region.)

5. Communication

- a. Clinical Director is point person for everything. Any questions/breaks/assignments will come from the CD only (unless otherwise delegated or shared)
- b. Sharing of personal information (social media, contact info, etc.) is prohibited and all information both personal and information given by an athlete or coach is confidential.

6. Practice

- a. Have volunteers partner up and role play each station (use a timer at 4 min per station)

7. Assign

- a. Ask volunteers to choose a station
- b. If unable to choose, then assign
- c. Rotate throughout the day to accommodate breaks
- d. Briefly discuss plan to accommodate waiting/full stations (to avoid overcrowding and minimize downtime).

8. Today's schedule

- a. Include types of sports being played today
- b. Opening and closing (all days)
- c. How breaks will be conducted
- d. Locations of restrooms
- e. Find out if anyone has scheduling issues

9. Questions and answers

10. Have Fun!

Appendices

Strong Minds HAS FORM

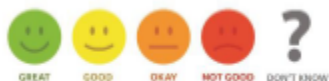
Firstname	Lastname	HAS ID _____
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Date	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female	DoB	Age (years) <input type="radio"/> Not sure
Event	Location	<input type="radio"/> Athlete <input type="radio"/> Unified partner	Sport
Delegation	SO Program		
Cell phone number	Number is <input type="radio"/> Athlete's <input type="radio"/> Parent's / Guardian's		
Providing a phone number is optional. It may be used to call or send reminders if follow up is recommended after screening			

Check-in/In-take:

1. Is this your first time going through Strong Minds?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

2. How are you feeling right now?



3. I'd like to tell you a story about an athlete named _____. He/she is a Special Olympics athlete in Athletics. He/she made it to the National Games for the 400 meter race (1 lap around the track) and was so excited! But, on the day of the big event, he/she didn't have his/her best day on the track. Nothing seemed to be going well. He/she came in last and didn't advance to the finals and is feeling stressed/overwhelmed.

What do you think _____ can do to feel better in the situation?

*(Note for Volunteer: Ask the above question open-ended and check any of the responses the athlete states below. You may give a few examples, but please **don't** list the items below to the athlete. If an athlete says something not on the list, check yes next to "Other" and write in the response. If the athlete indicates that there's nothing that can be done or they aren't sure, select "Nothing/Don't Know".)*

	YES
Think good thoughts	
Listen to music	
Look at pictures/reminders of good stuff	
Talk to someone	
Breathe deeply	
Stretch or tense/relax muscles	
Take a walk	
Use a stress ball	
Exercise or play sports	
Try not to think about it	
Watch TV/Play video games	
Go home and go to sleep	
Other:	
Nothing/Don't Know	
No response/Unable to answer	



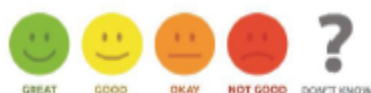
Firstname	Lastname	HAS ID _____
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Check-out:

Instructions to Volunteer: Please copy the information from the Strong Minds handout into this chart to record which stations the athlete completed during Strong Minds and how they felt about each station. When you are finished, please ask the athlete the series of questions below the chart.

	Use in the future	Won't use in the future
Stress and you		
Strong Messages		
Strong Breathing		
Strong Stretching		
Strong Supporting		

4. How are you feeling right now?



5. Do you think you will use any of the strategies you learned today in competition or everyday life?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

6. Would you tell a friend, family member, or teammate about any of the strategies you learned today?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure


7. Use one strategy you learned today to set your Strong Minds Goal:

<p>Select one strategy you will use in the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use a stressball <input type="checkbox"/> Think positive thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Do deep breathing <input type="checkbox"/> Stretch <input type="checkbox"/> Support others <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ 	<p>When do you think you could use this strategy?</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>*volunteers: please select the appropriate box that corresponds with the athlete's response</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Before competition <input type="checkbox"/> During competition <input type="checkbox"/> After competition <input type="checkbox"/> In the morning <input type="checkbox"/> Before bed <input type="checkbox"/> In a crowd <input type="checkbox"/> At school <input type="checkbox"/> During work <input type="checkbox"/> At the doctor or dentist <input type="checkbox"/> When I am teased/bullied <input type="checkbox"/> When I feel stressed/overwhelmed <input type="checkbox"/> Other 	<p>Who will support you?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>This person is a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Teammate <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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Strong Minds Strategies for Success


STATION #1

Stress & You




STATION #2

Strong Messages




STATION #3

Strong Breathing




STATION #4

Strong Stretching



STATION #5

Strong Supporting



GOAL: _____

SUPPORT: _____

Stretching Handout

Strong Minds Station 4: Strong Stretching Station

Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



Try holding each stretch for 30 seconds.



Sidelying trunk rotation

Lay on one side with your knees and hips bent at a right angle. Move the top shoulder backwards, lay the top shoulder down on the floor and hold. Lie on the other side and repeat the stretch.



Lower Trunk Rotation

Lie on your back with your arms stretched out as shown. Keep your shoulders down, bend your knees and keep your feet supported. Slowly drop your knees to one side until you feel a gentle pull and hold. Return to starting position, and drop knees to other side.

Modified stretch (chair):

1. Sit tall in chair with legs on the floor
2. Reach right arm up and over toward the left side of the chair
3. Stay tall as you turn to the left
4. Return to starting position
5. Repeat on opposite side by reaching left arm up and over to right side of chair.



Trunk Release

While sitting, straighten arm and lean to opposite side. Support yourself with the other arm.

Strong Minds Station 4: Strong Stretching Station

Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



Supine Angels

Lying on your back with your knees bent, start with your arms flat on the table next to your side. Slowly slide your arms out to the side and up over your head. Return to the starting position and repeat for 3 times.

Modified stretch (chair):

Put both legs down on the floor. Move the arms out to the side and up over your head, and then back down.



Seated Rotation Stretch

1. Sit tall on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you.
2. Cross your right leg over your left leg and put your right foot on the floor close to your left knee.
3. Turn your upper body towards your right side using your right arm to help you sit tall and your left arm against your right leg to help you twist. You should feel a stretch in your hip and the side of your back.

Modified stretch (chair):

Put both legs down and reach both arms to the right base of the chair. Turn your head and body to the right. Repeat on left side. (as pictured).



Shoulder Internal Rotation (standing or sitting)

Holding on to a belt or towel with one arm behind your neck and the other arm behind your back. Pull the opposite end up on the towel with the upper arm, as pictured, to stretch the lower arm. Do this stretch so that it pulls, but never hurts.

CHECK-IN



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



STATION 1

Stress and You



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



STATION 2

Strong Messaging



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



STATION 3

Strong Breathing



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



STATION 4

Strong Stretching



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



STATION 5

Strong Supporting



Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®



4-7-8 EXERCISE

Breathe out, making a whooshing sound
Close your mouth and breathe in for a count of 4
Hold your breath for a count of 7
Breathe out, making a whooshing sound to a count of 8

Repeat this cycle up to 4 times

4-7-8 EXERCISE

Breathe out, making a whooshing sound
Close your mouth and breathe in for a count of 4
Hold your breath for a count of 7
Breathe out, making a whooshing sound to a count of 8

Repeat this cycle up to 4 times

4-7-8 EXERCISE

Breathe out, making a whooshing sound
Close your mouth and breathe in for a count of 4
Hold your breath for a count of 7
Breathe out, making a whooshing sound to a count of 8

Repeat this cycle up to 4 times

Picture Board

Strong Minds Tips for Stress

Special Olympics
Healthy Athletes®

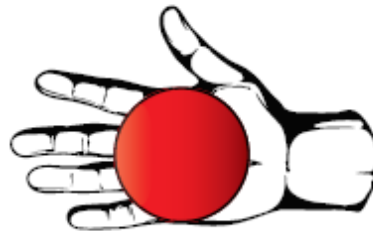


Station 1

1 Squeeze the ball for 3 seconds.



2 Release the ball and any tension.



Station 2

1 Think a good thought.



2



Station 3

1 Smell the flower [pinwheel].



2 Blow the flower [pinwheel].





Station 4

1 Try a few stretches



2 How do you feel?



Station 5

1 Support others



2 Seek support from others



Station 6

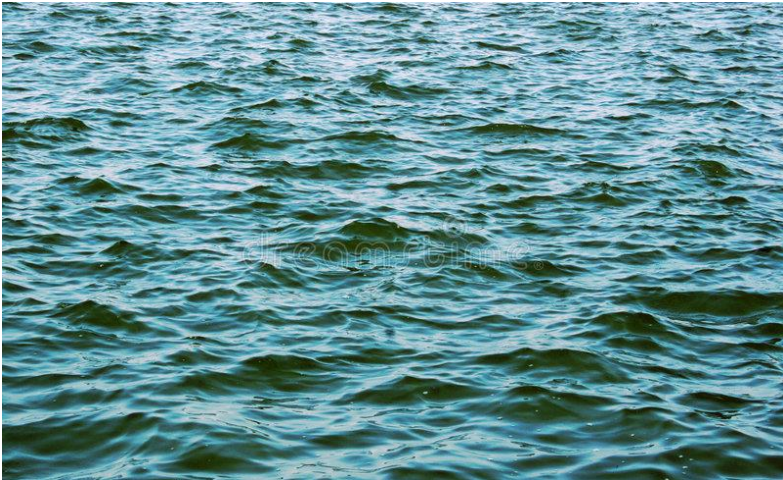
1 Pick the strategies you like



2 Use the strategies in everyday life



Calm Water and Stormy Water Examples



Be Fearless Be Kind Pledge

*Clinical Directors are encouraged to print the pledge as a banner, not as individual pledge cards.



PLEDGE

**I pledge to be fearless and kind
To be inclusive
To stand up for those who need my help
And to make a difference whenever I can, wherever I
can, because I can!**

Take the Be Fearless, Be Kind pledge.

Coach Playbook

Strong Minds Tips for Stress

Coach's Playbook

Special Olympics
Strong Minds



Strong Minds is an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as: thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others. During Strong Minds, your athletes will learn the following strategies and will benefit greatly if you can incorporate these strategies into practice and games.

Station 1

1 Squeeze the ball for 3 seconds.



2 Release the ball and any tension.



Coach Recommendations

- On the way to a game or competition
- During a pre-game team talk
- After the game during a team talk
- For an athlete sitting on the bench or in between turns/games

Station 2

1 Think a good thought.



2



- During practice and games, state positive statements to athletes
- Start practices with a song with a positive message
- Ask an athlete to start each practice with a positive statement to the team
- After the game, ask the athletes what went well

Station 3

1 Smell the flower [pinwheel].



2 Blow the flower [pinwheel].



- Encourage deep breathing during stretching
- Teach the athletes to use deep breathing during a stressful situation in a game (ie. Before shooting a foul shot).
- Before a game, do a few rounds of deep breathing as a team

Strong Minds Tips for Stress

Coach's Playbook

Special Olympics
Strong Minds



Station 4

1 Try a few stretches



2 How do you feel?



- Make sure athletes hold static stretches for at least 30 seconds
- Incorporate deep breathing into stretching routines
- Lead stretches that also focus on relaxation
- Encourage athletes to do a few stretches before they go to bed each night

Station 5

1 Support others



2 Seek support from others



- Set up drills for partner work to allow athletes to build connections
- Encourage athletes to use positive messages to teammates during practices and games
- Remind athletes that their coach and teammates are there to support them
- Encourage family members to also incorporate these strategies with their athletes

Station 6

1 Pick the strategies you like



2 Use the strategies in everyday life



- Encourage athletes to visit Strong Minds at Healthy Athletes or Game Ready Minds at Performance Stations
- Remind athletes who visited Strong Minds to utilize the skills they learned in practice and games
- Ask the athletes to practice these strategies at home

This Strong Minds Tips for Stress concept was created by Special Olympics Texas