Isolation and lockdown introduced unprecedented changes to high performance sport in Australia. Recommencing sport will require a period of adjustment for athletes, coaches, staff and organisations.

**Possible responses to returning to sport**

- Feeling stressed or uncertain, e.g. concern for safety, hygiene and new conditions.
- Excitement about returning to training, competition and re-engaging with others.
- A sense of urgency to make up for lost time.
- Feeling frustrated or unmotivated due to changes in training and competition.
- Mixed responses - feeling guilty about leaving loved ones, but excited about preparing for competition.

**Ways to support yourself**

- Be realistic. It will take time to return to your previous routines and pace of living.
- Prepare yourself for re-entry to the high performance environment by answering these questions:
  - What is most important for my return? e.g. knowing how we can train within the return guidelines, clarifying priorities and needs with my coach/manager.
  - Who are the important people that are involved in my return?
  - What practical and wellbeing strategies do I need to implement?
- For athletes, review your Individual Performance Plan with your relevant performance staff, make adjustments if required.
- For staff, have a clear agreement with your manager on current priorities and what your return needs are.
- Practice self-care by doing things that have worked for you that are consistent with current health guidelines, e.g. eating well, following routine, meditating, doing things you enjoy.

**Ways to support others**

- Others may have had a different experience and response to COVID 19; practice being supportive and non-judgmental.
- Reconnect with your teammates, coaches and HP staff.
- Be a role model by abiding by the return guidelines.
- Be aware of ongoing uncharacteristic moods or behaviours of others. Check in and ask if they would like to be connected with professional support.

**Support and when to seek additional help**

A level of uncertainty over returning to the high performance environment is completely normal. If emotional difficulties continue to impact everyday life without responding to these strategies, a trained professional may be able to help including:

- A Psychologist (through your sport, institute, academy or you may engage a Sports Psychologist privately).
- The AIS Mental Health Referral Network for eligible high performance athletes and staff.

For more information, refer to the AIS Framework for Rebooting Sport

AIS Mental Health Referral Network

AIS.gov.au/mhrn  +61 2 6214 1130  mentalhealth@sportaus.gov.au