

Both coaches and athletes play a crucial role in creating a culture that is weight and food neutral, that encourages athletes to celebrate their bodies despite their shape and size, that promotes food as fuel and that highlights the importance of adequacy for athletic performance and injury prevention.

Here are practical strategies that **YOU** can use to achieve a neutral training environment:

01.

Education and awareness

- Raise awareness about eating disorders in sports.
 - Hold **meetings with athletes and parents at the beginning of every season** to go over the key signs and symptoms, their impact on performance and health, and ways to address them.
- Educate on adequate nutrition for your sport.
 - Organize a **conference lead by a sports dietitian** to cover the basics of nutrition.
- Build a network of professionals to address these issues.
 - Have **dietitians and mental health specialists** in your support team or have a list of readily available professionals.



Remember, coaches!

As somebody that your athletes look up to, it is **YOUR** role as a coach to be a **model** of body and food neutrality and self-care practices. In fact, your actions as well as the words you choose set the tone for your team. Be mindful of how you speak about your **own body, food, and performance**.



02.

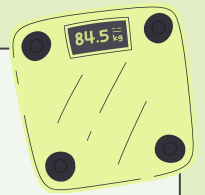
Normalize nutrition and avoid moralizing language

- Promote eating habits that allow athletes to **meet the nutritional demands** (energy, protein, carbohydrates, hydration) of training and competition.
- Discourage **extreme or restrictive diets**.
 - Of note: If athletes need to adjust their weight for competition, ensure they have access to a dietitian to do so safely.
- Avoid language that labels food or body types as “**good or bad**”.
- Avoid **moralizing statements** such as “Losing 10 pounds would make you quicker” or “I ran twice today so I deserve a burger”.
- Instead, use **neutral, non-judgmental language** to foster balance, well-being, and personal progress.



03.

Foster body neutrality



- Emphasize the value of **strength, agility, and skill over appearance**.
 - Encourage performance-based goals.
- Avoid making **weight-related comments** and focus on health and performance indicators.
- Avoid **weigh-ins or weights targets**.
 - Of note: If monitoring weight is necessary for health or a specific sport, ensure it's done privately, without pressure, and in the context of an athlete's overall health.
- **Diverse body types** should be promoted as athletes come in all shapes and sizes.
 - Showcase role models with varied body types.

Create a space for discussion

04.

- Regularly discuss mental health with athletes.
 - This does not simply mean asking athletes how they're doing at the beginning of a training. Hold a **monthly check-in** with athletes to see how they're doing outside of their sports.
- Create an open environment where they feel comfortable seeking help.
 - Be **approachable and compassionate** and make sure to actively listen to your athlete when they come to you for help and guidance.
- Ensure **confidentiality**.

