

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL



Why?

This activity will help you understand the importance of prioritizing your mental health while juggling other commitments.

How To:

Before beginning, state that each ball represents different commitments in a student's life, but do not specify what the commitments are. For the facilitator: the special ball represents a student's mental health. The tennis balls represent their other priorities and commitments (school, sports, work, etc.). This should not be shared with the group.

Instructions:

- This activity requires some movement and tossing, so make sure you are in an open space!
- Have your group form a circle so that they can throw and catch a ball (it is recommended that there be at least 6 people in order for this activity to be successful!)
- The ball should be passed in the same pattern and order every time, beginning with the designated starter. The ball can't be passed to the person directly next to you.
 - Start with a practice round and have everyone say their name when they catch the ball
- The pattern will be complete when everyone has caught and thrown the ball once without dropping it.
- The facilitator will start the group with one tennis ball and have them learn and practice the pattern. Their goal is to not drop the ball as it is passed around.
- After they have successfully completed the pattern with one tennis ball, introduce the second tennis ball about 5 seconds later, passing it to the starter.
- After two tennis balls, give them two more tennis balls, for a total of 4 balls. Once they have thrown those in the sequence, collect all the balls.

- Now introduce the ball that does not look like the others. Hold it up and tell the group this is a very important ball.
 - Say "Whatever you do, don't drop this ball, Keep focused on this ball. Try not to drop the other balls, but it's ok if you do."
- The facilitator will now pass a tennis ball to the starter to begin the sequence.
 - 5 seconds later they will toss in another tennis ball,
 - **5 seconds after that they will throw in the special ball. Announce "Here comes the special ball, do not drop it"**
 - 5 seconds after that they will throw in the last two tennis balls.
- See how long the students can keep the balls going, especially the special ball.
- When the special ball is dropped, end the activity.

Discussion Question

- What do the four tennis balls represent?
 - Answer: commitments & responsibilities: school, sports, work, etc.
- What does the special ball represent?
 - Answer: your mental health (your top priority)
- What was the key to not dropping the special ball?
 - Answer: prioritize it, focus on it, "care for it"
- What happened to the other balls when you focused on the special one?
 - Answer: they dropped
- So what is the big takeaway from this activity?
 - Prioritizing your mental health may mean having to drop other responsibilities, but it's okay if that happens! Those balls remained intact and even bounced back. Those other commitments will still be there but focusing on your mental health is most important.
- How can you work to prioritize your mental health?

Materials

- 4 tennis balls
- 1 ball that is not the same as the other 4 (different kind, color, or size)

Time

- This activity will take approximately 20 minutes.
- The discussion after will take 10-15 minutes.
- You can allot more time to this activity if you feel the need to! If you feel that this activity may evoke a larger or deeper discussion among your group consider extending the amount of discussion time.