

Handling Life As A High School Student-Athlete

by Shacora Perkins, AVCA Intern

High school is an environment that is filled with unforeseen events and is a place where essentially, anything can happen. From prom, to meeting that lifelong friend, anything is possible. That's why being a student-athlete makes it a bit more challenging. Trust me I know. I was a student-athlete in high school as well. From everyday practices, gamedays, and the endless amounts of homework, I fully understand how it gets tough sometimes. Plus, no one expects you to get tired and overwhelmed either. It's all or nothing. To make matters more stressful, your parents want the best from you, followed by your teachers, your coaches and then your teammates. Let's not forget about friends. They still want to spend time with you.

That's why it is imperative that every student-athlete in high school knows how to balance their time wisely between homework and their social life. Each is equally important and should be held to the same standard. Primarily, I believe student-athletes should have an agenda where they can write down all their homework assignments and other important tasks to aide them in the process of keeping up with their assignments and not dealing with the issue of accidentally forgetting things. Doing this will help alleviate a lot of the stress of trying to remember things and help keep them more focused, knowing in the back of their minds that their day is more organized and planned.

Simultaneously, student-athletes should fully understand the importance of an education and of keeping their grades up. I feel this specifically pertains to athletes who want to play at the collegiate level because colleges nowadays look to see if high school athletes have been good or exceptionally well-rounded students who can handle the pressures that come with playing a sport while also attending school. This shows whether you're a person who can multitask or handle more than one situation.

In addition, I recommend that student-athletes set out designated times for going out with friends. It isn't healthy to exclusively focus on studies outside of their sport(s). They need to actually schedule time into their schedule to enjoy themselves. Everyone needs time to relax, whether it's alone or with friends and family, to reflect on things they have accomplished or just to talk about different topics. Doing this will enable athletes with the opportunity to relax themselves mentally, emotionally, and physically. Just in case there is an athlete out there who may be feeling overwhelmed with their schoolwork and sports responsibilities, this could be the one small thing that gives them reassurance that everything will be okay and the reminder to just take things one day at a time.

Friends. Let's talk about them. I believe that student-athletes should be very careful with who they keep in their inner circle. Everyone that claims to be your friend and says they have your best interest in mind aren't always telling the truth. They should realize some people have their own agendas and will sometimes see them as an opportunity to have a "come up" and will try to take from them until there is nothing left. This is vital because friends influence each other and if

there is someone around who doesn't have your best interest, they have opportunity to influence you in a negative way without you realizing it, or they can bring large amounts of negative energy around, which could be detrimental.

For me, when it comes to making friends and choosing people I want to get to know better, I look to see what all we have in common. Do we have some of the same values, have we gone through similar situations in the past, do we like the same music and television shows, or maybe even the same food? These things are important because in times of need you'll want someone you can relate to, trust with your feelings, and depend on to give you their honest opinion on various situations no matter the circumstances. Don't get me wrong, it's good for you and your friend to have some differences because that is what makes each of you unique and differences aid in the process of keeping the friendship interesting.

Signs that I look for when it comes to choosing friends include how they treat others and the friends they already have. Do they show them love and support and genuine happiness when they accomplish different goals? Another factor I pay close attention to is whether they act the same way around that person when they are with them and not around them. This includes watching whether they talk about them in a negative or positive way and if they continuously speak negatively about everyone else. Having a great inner circle will benefit you in the long run because the people in your inner circle will assist you when it comes to making important life decisions, possibly grow with you, and see you when you go through life's ups and downs.