



Mental Health Awareness Week

THIS WEEK, THE LONDON & SOUTH EAST
REGIONAL TEAM ARE TALKING ALL THINGS
MENTAL HEALTH, BOTH ON AND OFF THE
COURT.

Pregnancy in Sport

Pregnancy in Sport and looking after your mental health

Pregnancy in itself is a whirlwind of hormones and emotions, never mind the regular day-to-day mental health issues we can all experience throughout our lifetime. Add in working in Sports and you have a whole other layer of complexity. Having concerns about becoming pregnant as a coach, or worrying that it'll affect your team or your ability to coach by being pregnant is completely normal. I'm going to share my own experience of pregnancy in sport, particularly coaching, to hopefully help ease your mind if you have similar worries.

I actually found out I was pregnant really late into the pregnancy – at 27 weeks! I was instantly hit with anxiety and worry about myself and the baby – I had been playing Netball and coaching, what if I've hurt the baby?! Is it safe for me to continue coaching? Netball is my life, will I have to give it up temporarily? It's safe to say it was all a bit of a whirlwind. I sought comfort and reassurance from those around me - my friends, family, midwife and so on, and they all reassured me that it was totally normal to feel worried, or even scared. It's important for me to tell you that you're not alone - there are thousands of other women in exactly the same position as you.

The decision for me to continue coaching Netball whilst pregnant was difficult, however Netball was my job and I decided to keep going, even if I had to adjust my role to be in more of a supporting capacity. I even helped run a holiday camp at 8 and a half months pregnant, albeit it taking on more of the administration and less of the physical work. I was very conscious about not wanting to let my colleagues down and having to scale back our project ideas. Looking back, I'm glad I didn't let my anxiety stop me, and now I have a beautiful baby girl to come home to at the end of every day.

The decision for me to continue coaching was the right one for me to make at the time, however that doesn't necessarily mean it's the best fit for everyone. There is no right or wrong answer to stopping or continuing coaching when pregnant, you just have to do what you believe in your heart is best for you and your baby (and of course listen to the advice of the medical professionals). Every person's situation is different, but there is always support out there to help guide you through the process and ensure yours and your baby's safety. Try running a risk assessment to explore all your different options, speak to your colleagues and teammates or other coaches to know what their experiences were like. All of this information will help you to determine the best course of action for you. Netball will still be here when your pregnancy is over and you're ready to return to the court. The most important thing to remember is to stay safe, healthy, and always keep on smiling!