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<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4283-4356> (2022) Psychological readiness to return to sport- where are we up to? In: Research Seminar Series, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, 16th November 2022.

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# PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO RETURN TO SPORT – WHERE ARE WE UP TO?

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# DISCLAIMER

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I am not a psychologist

# AIMS OF TODAY'S TALK

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- Explore the concept of psychological readiness to return to sport
  - Define it
  - It's importance
  - How it is developed
  - How to make informed decisions over it
- Explain some of the research and practice challenges related to psychological readiness to return to sport

# THE RETURN TO SPORT LANDSCAPE

Chronic symptoms and impaired function  
(Cotchett et al., 2022; Hind et al. 2020)

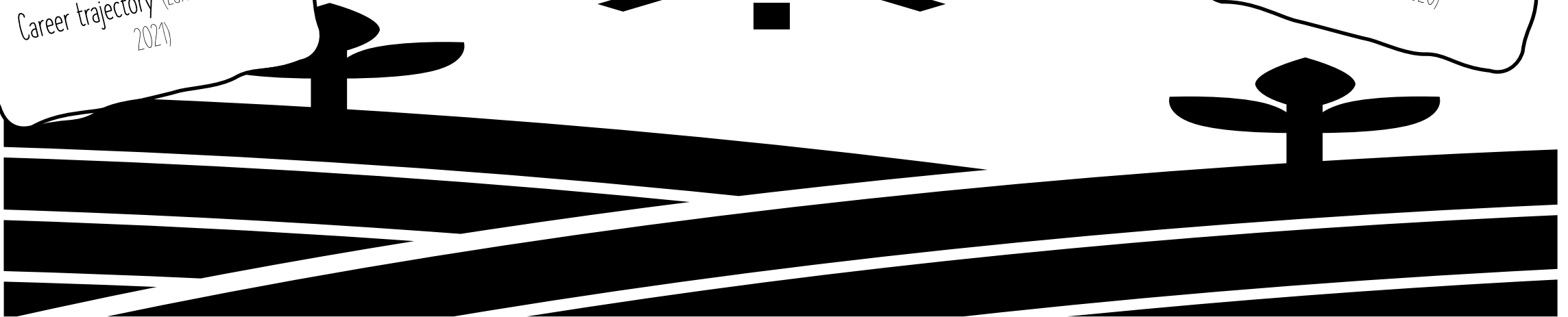
Return to pre-injury sport  
(Ardern et al. 2014; Faleide et al., 2021)

Return to pre-injury levels of performance  
(Drew, Raysmith & Charlton, 2017; Raya-Gonzalez et al., 2022; Worner et al., 2021)

Non-volitional retirement  
(Ristolainen et al. 2012)

Career trajectory (Larruskain et al. 2021)

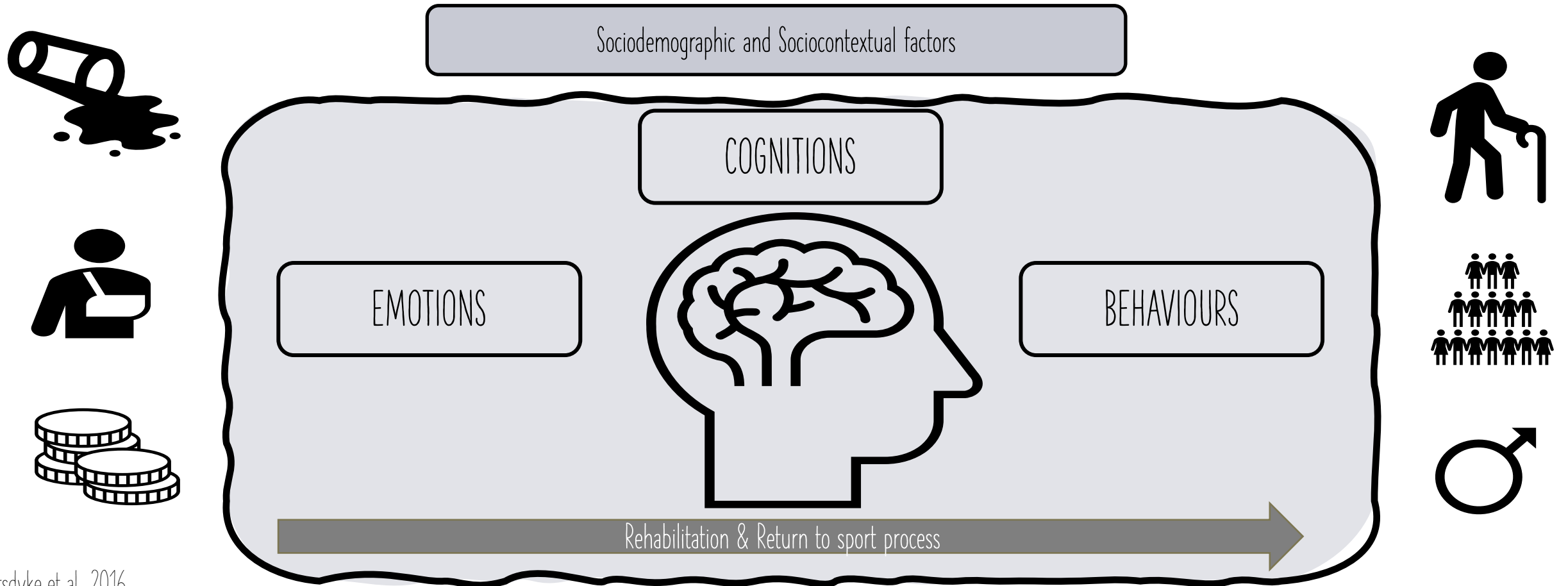
Re-injury  
(Ekstrand et al. 2020)



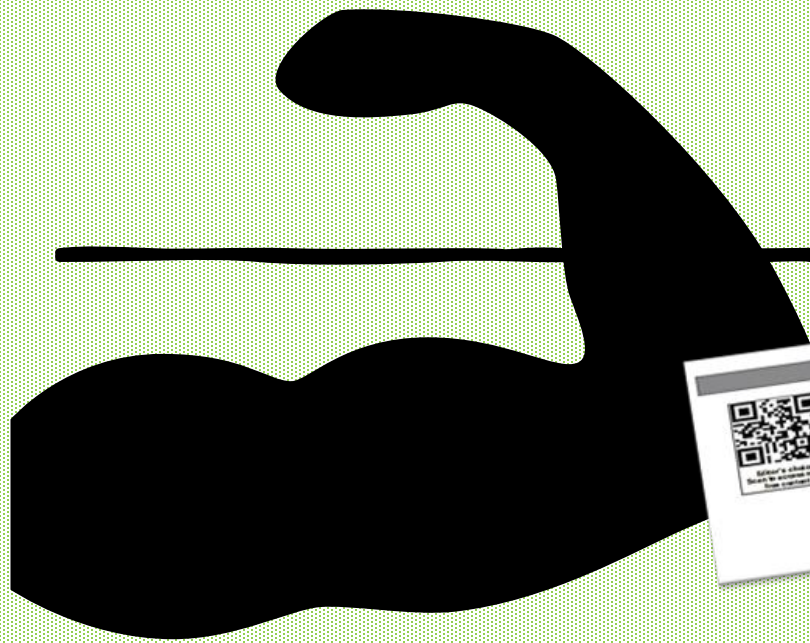


**Could factors other than,  
and additional to functional  
and biological factors be  
related to rehabilitation and  
recovery outcomes?**

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS?







Rarely are psychological factors considered in clinical decision making

Practitioners often feel under-skilled and over-challenged about psychological factors

VS



**Psychological factors**  
should be taken into account during rehabilitation and at the time the athlete is making the transition back to sport



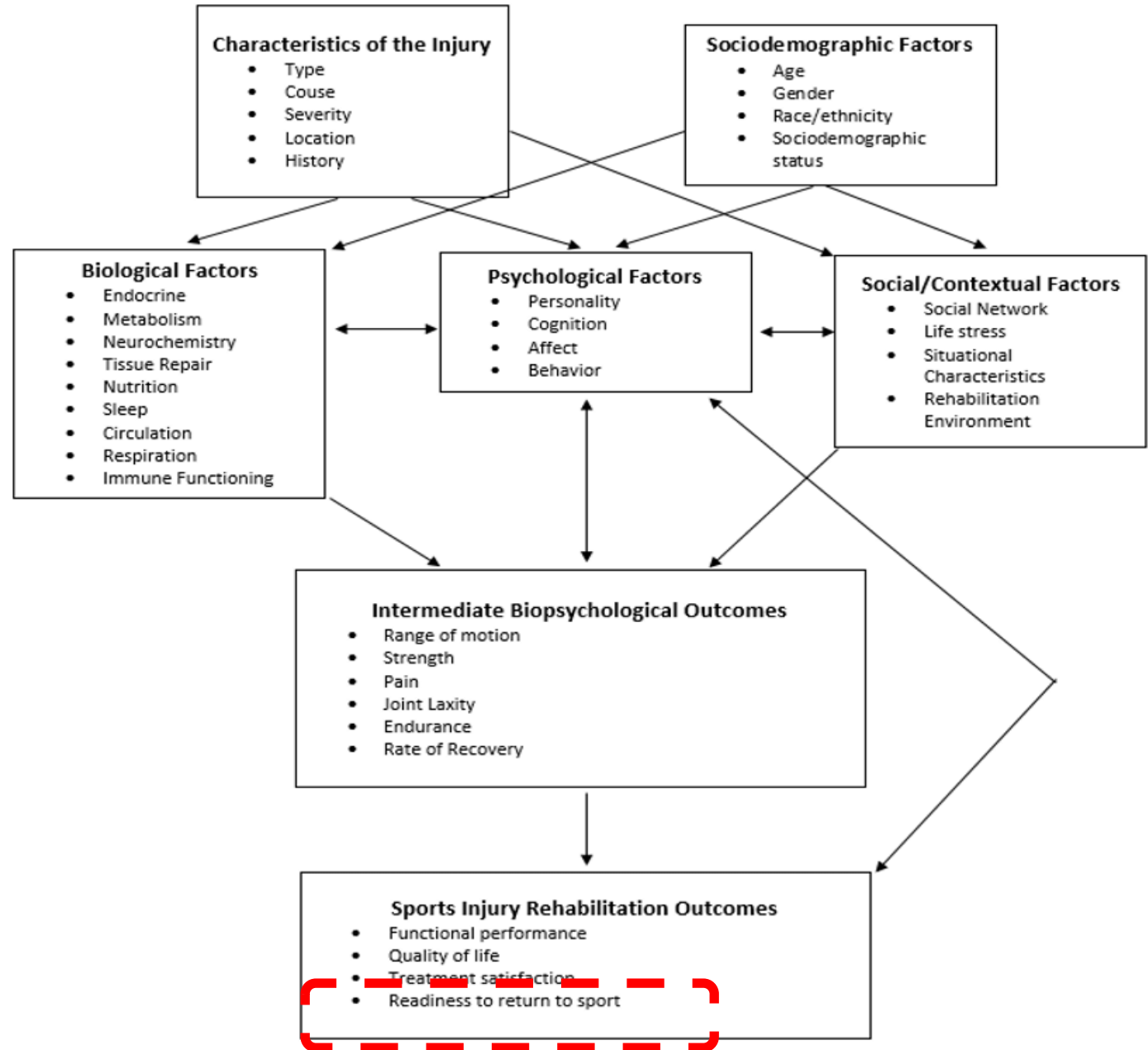


MORE SO THAN BIOLOGICAL OR FUNCTIONAL FACTORS, PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ARE DYNAMIC AND  
EASIER TO MASK

Forsdyke et al., 2016; Truong et al., 2020

# THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF SPORTS INJURY REHABILITATION (BREWER, ANDERSEN & VAN RAALTE, 2002)

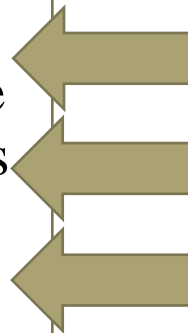
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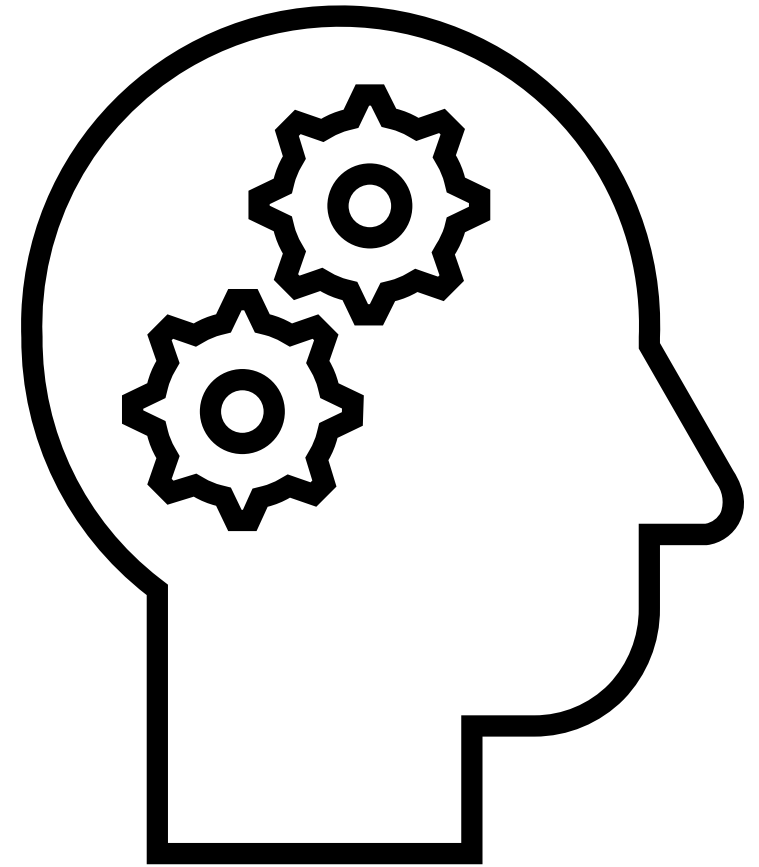
# WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO RETURN TO SPORT?

Psychological readiness to RTS after injury reflects an individual's state of mental preparedness to resume sport-specific activities, that can shift over the rehabilitation and return to sport process and which is comprised of three dimensions, including **cognitive appraisals, affective** and **behavioural components**.

Podlog et al., (2022)



Contextual factors





# IS PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO RETURN TO SPORT IMPORTANT?

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Decision to pre-injury RTS (e.g., Ardern et al., 2014)

Return to performance (e.g., Kitaguchi et al., 2019)

Re-injury (e.g., McPherson et al., 2019)

Functional performance (e.g., Zarzycki et al., 2019)



# SUGGESTED MECHANISMS OF ACTION (PODLOG ET AL., 2022)

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## Behavioral

High psychological readiness = better  
behavioral engagement = enhanced RTS  
outcomes

## Physiological

High psychological readiness = modulates  
physiological parameters = enhanced RTS  
outcomes





# A RETURN TO SPORT - 'QUADRANT OF DOOM' (FORSDYKE & GLEDHILL, 2021)

Functional readiness to return to sport



Psychological readiness to return to sport



**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF  
SPORTS INJURY**  
FROM RISK TO RETIREMENT

Edited by  
ADAM GLEDHILL  
AND DALE FORSDYKE

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# HOW IS PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO RETURN TO SPORT DEVELOPED?

Early reconditioning of quadriceps strength (De La Villa et al., 2021; Suzuki et al., 2022)

Feeling relaxed and less fear of reinjury (Liew et al., 2022)

High confidence and low anxiety (Forsdyke et al., 2016)

High self-report function scores, greater LSI, shorter interval between injury and surgery, pre-injury frequency of participation (Webster et al., 2018)

Confidence in the process, physical ability, medical professionals, and not re-injuring themselves (Kunen et al., 2020)

Greater limb symmetry (Aizewa et al., 2020; Meierbachtol et al., 2018)

Trust in medical professionals, high-quality of social support, realistic expectation management and feeling wanted (Podlog et al., 2015)

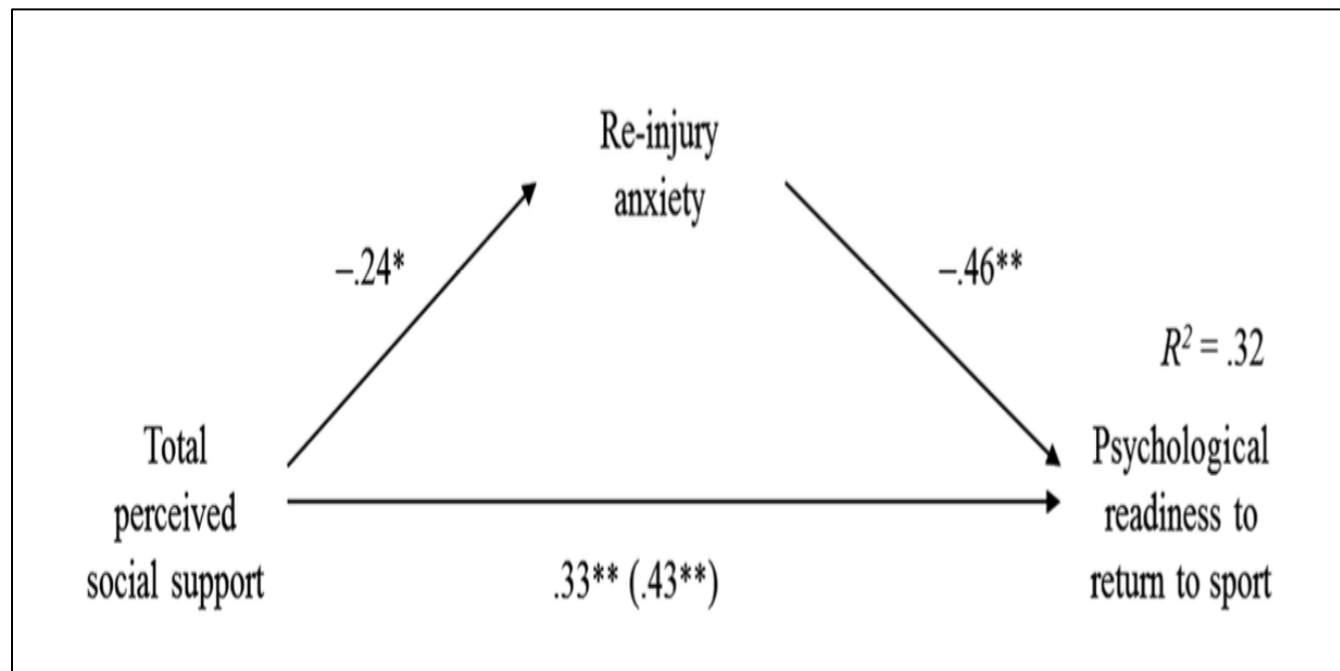


## Perceived Social Support, Reinjury Anxiety, and Psychological Readiness to Return to Sport in Soccer Players

Dale Forsdyke,<sup>1</sup> Daniel Madigan,<sup>1</sup> Adam Gledhill,<sup>2</sup> and Andy Smith<sup>1</sup>

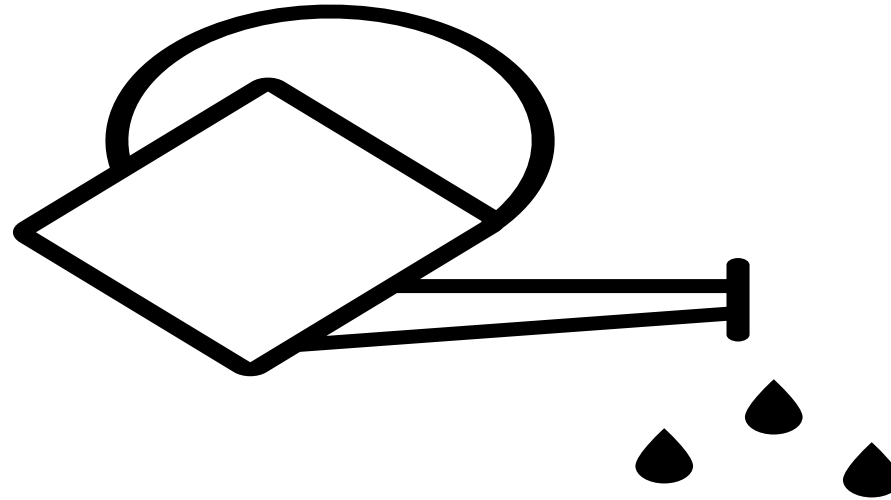
<sup>1</sup>School of Science, Technology and Health, York St John University, York, United Kingdom; <sup>2</sup>Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom

Variable	Overall (N = 150)	Men (n = 83)	Women (n = 67)
Age, mean (SD)	25.32 (4.28)	24.53 (4.94)	26.12 (3.22)
Injury time loss, wk, mean (SD)	17.17 (12.22)	15.2 (11.18)	19.14 (15.54)
Performance level, n (%)			
International	11 (7.3)	2 (18.2)	9 (81.8)
Professional	11 (7.3)	6 (54.5)	5 (45.5)
Semiprofessional	30 (20)	19 (63.3)	11 (36.7)
Recreational	98 (65.3)	65 (66.3)	33 (33.7)
Injury type, n (%)			
Traumatic	119 (79.3)	55 (46.2)	64 (53.8)
Overuse	31 (20.7)	20 (64.5)	11 (35.5)
First time injury	126 (84)	71 (56.3)	55 (43.7)
Reinjury	24 (16)	6 (25)	18 (75)



# FOSTERING PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS (FORSDYKE & GLEDHILL, 2021)

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Providing high quality  
social support

Improvements in  
physical qualities

Developing confidence

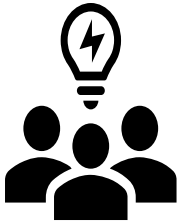
Managing anxieties

# MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO RETURN TO SPORT

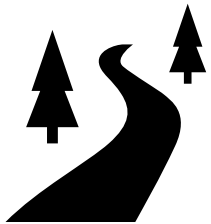
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Evaluate psychological factors using tools AND using your working knowledge of the athlete



Use these impressions to make more rounded clinical decisions



Continue to monitor in order to inform decisions throughout the rehabilitation and recovery journey

# MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS (FORSDYKE ET AL., 2017; PODLOG ET AL., 2021)

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**I-PRRS scale** (Glazer, 2009)

Nomothetic measure

**ACL-RSI** (Webster et al., 2008)

**ACL-RSI (SF)** (Webster et al., 2018)

**SI-RSI** (Geromotta et al., 2018)

**ALR – RSI** (Signonney et al., 2020)

Injury specific measures

**PRIA-RS** (Gomez-Piqueras et al., 2014)

Sport specific measure

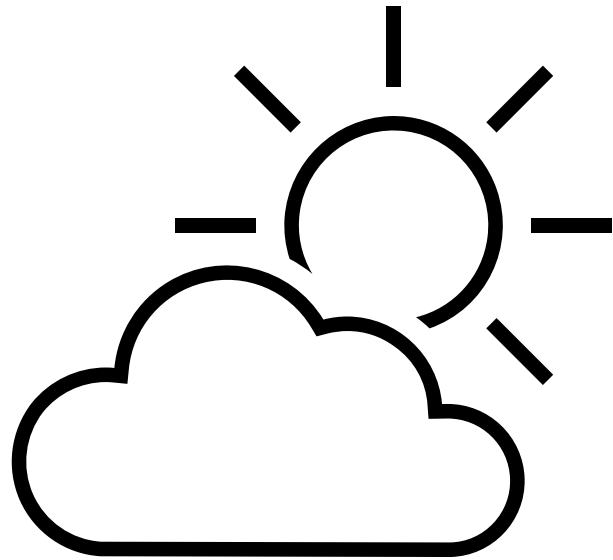
**TSK** (Miller, Kori & Todd, 1991)

**RIAI** (Walker, Thatcher & Lavallee, 2010)

**K-SES** (Thomee et al., 2007)

Related measures

ACL-RSI = ACL-Return to Sport after Injury scale, SI-RSI = Shoulder Instability-Return to Sport after Injury scale, ALR-RSI = Ankle Ligament Reconstruction-Return to Sport after Injury scale, PRIA-RS = Psychological Readiness of Injured Athletes to Return to Sport questionnaire, I-PRRS = Injury-Psychological Readiness to Return to Sport scale, TSK = Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia, RIAI = Reinjury Anxiety Inventory, K-SES = Knee Self-Efficacy Scale



# THEREFORE, IT APPEARS.....

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Psychological readiness is important in the return to sport process

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We should measure it

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We should consider psychological readiness when making multifaceted shared decisions on return to training and competition



HOWEVER.....

# RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CHALLENGES

- This could be a case of 'tail wagging the dog' (Podlog et al., 2022)
- Most research is atheoretical and cross-sectional
- The nature of psychological readiness is most likely heavily contextual
- Practically...
  - Current measures can't reliably be used on an individual level (Slagers et al., 2021; Webster & Feller, 2021)
  - What do you do with the data?





# SO, IN SUMMARY

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- It appears that psychological readiness maybe an important consideration in the return to sport process
- We have a developing understanding of how we can develop or diminish psychological readiness
- However, we are some way off having a developed conceptual understanding of psychological readiness and the ability to measure it with validity, reliability, and responsiveness
- Therefore, there is plenty of research to do before we can confidently make decisions over psychological readiness to inform return to sport decision making

# ANY QUESTIONS

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