WHO WE ARE: Gurls Talk

Gurls Talk is a community-led nonprofit founded by Adwoa Aboah, dedicated to promoting the mental health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and young women. Gurls Talk creates safe spaces, both on and offline, where girls can access mental health resources, share their experiences, and support one another so they never feel alone or have to reach a breaking point.

Through our programs, campaigns, resources, live events, and podcast, we work to destigmatize mental health conversations while fostering a supportive community that gives all gurls a voice.

We believe that mental health is not just an individual issue. It is shaped by our relationships, communities, and the environments in which we grow.



WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS IN YOUTH SPORTS

Adolescence is a critical period for mental health, and girls continue to experience disproportionate levels of emotional distress.

- **On a global level, 1 in 7 adolescents ages 10-19 reported experiencing a mental health disorder**
- **In 2023, 53% of U.S. high school girls reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.**
- **In the past decade, suicide rates among youth ages 10-24 increased by 57%**

Mental health is shaped by more than individual experiences. Body image, social pressures, identity, belonging, and performance expectations all play a role.

Sport has enormous potential to support young people's wellbeing. But participation alone is not enough. The environments in which girls play, learn, and develop matter.

The question is not simply how sport can improve performance, but how sport can help girls feel supported, connected, and safe enough to thrive.



WHY COACHES MATTER

For many adolescents, coaches are more than people who teach them how to play. They can be trusted adults, mentors, role models, and a consistent presence.

Research on youth resilience highlights the protective importance of supportive relationships with dependable adults. Sometimes, one caring adult can make a meaningful difference in how a young person experiences the world.

COACHES ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO:

- Notice when something feels different.
- Create opportunities for connection and check-ins.
- Help normalize conversations about mental health.
- Recognize when a young person may need additional support.
- Connect girls to appropriate resources and professional care.

Coaches do not need to be therapists. They need the awareness, language, and confidence to show up.



COACH IN YOUR CORNER: A PARTNERSHIP WITH NIKE

GURLS TALK coach in your corner

In partnership with **Women Win**

In partnership with Nike, Gurls Talk developed Coach in Your Corner (CIYC) to challenge mental health stigma in sport and empower coaches to support girls' mental health.

The program recognizes that coaches are already influential adults in girls' lives. Our goal was to equip them with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to make mental health support a more natural part of coaching.

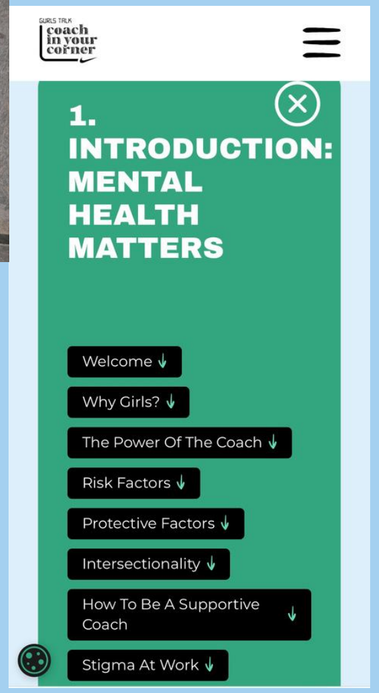


YEAR 1 | BUILDING AWARENESS

We trained a cohort of coaches across the U.S. and UK in mental health awareness, helping them build the language, knowledge, and confidence to better support their athletes. Coaches learned to recognize warning signs, respond to mental health concerns, and connect girls to appropriate care.

YEAR 2 | CREATING THE TOOLKIT

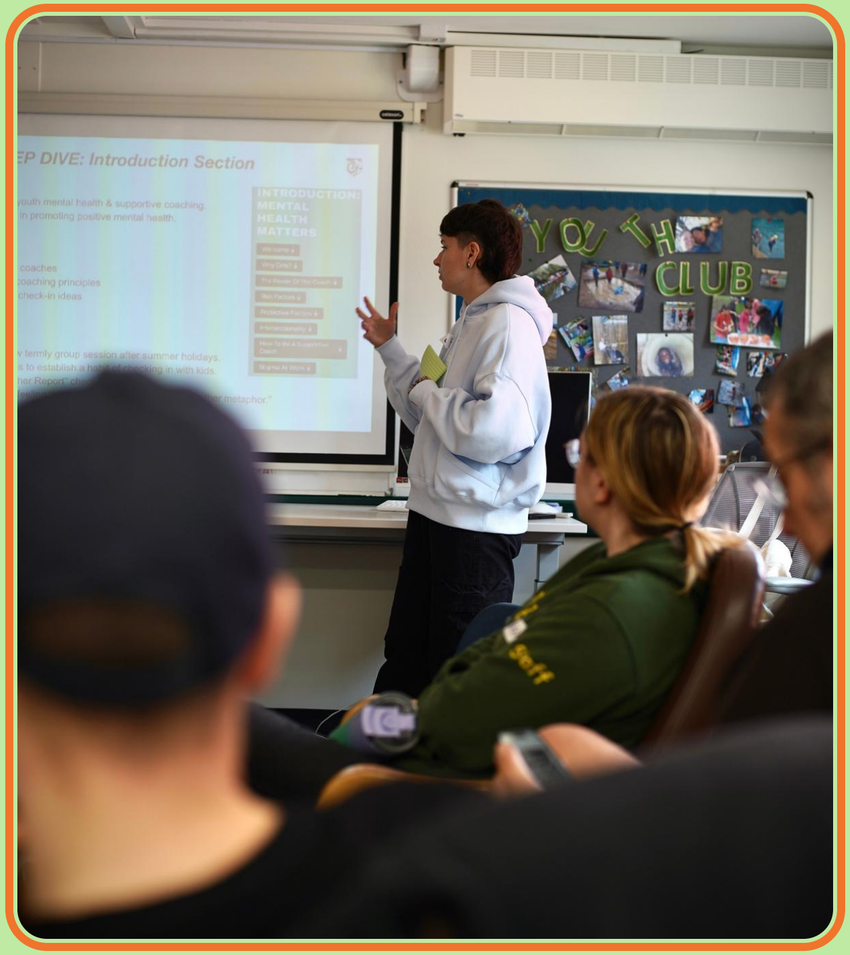
We translated our learnings into the free and accessible Coach in Your Corner Toolkit. The toolkit provides mental health education, practical activities, conversation starters, coaching strategies, and resources to help coaches integrate mental health awareness into everyday practice.



FOUR YEARS OF GROWTH: YEARS 3-4

YEAR 3 | PUTTING THE TOOLKIT INTO PRACTICE
We brought our original coaches back together to develop their own initiatives using the toolkit. The focus shifted from learning about mental health to asking: How can we make these practices feel natural, accessible, and sustainable within coaching?

YEAR 4 | TRAIN THE TRAINER
We transitioned to a Train-the-Trainer model, equipping two CIYC Lead Coaches to disseminate the toolkit through webinars and in-person trainings with other organizations. This allowed us to move beyond a single cohort and build a model for broader, peer-led reach.



WHAT DOES MENTAL HEALTH-INFORMED COACHING LOOK LIKE?

Coach in Your Corner is not about turning every practice into a mental health session. It is about making small, intentional changes to how coaches engage with their athletes.

THROUGH THE TOOLKIT, COACHES CAN:

- Incorporate simple emotional check-ins into practice.
- Use activities that build confidence, connection, and resilience.
- Recognize when a girl may be struggling.
- Create opportunities for girls to speak openly without pressure.
- Understand their own mental health and the importance of caring for themselves.
- Know when and how to connect a girl to additional support.

Supporting girls begins with supporting the adults who show up for them. Coaches reflected on caring for their own mental health so they could show up as their best selves. They also emphasized creating a “safe enough space” where girls feel comfortable bringing sensitive topics to someone they trust.



WHAT COMES NEXT

Our vision is to continue building a community of coaches who see mental health as an essential part of sport.

Because the impact of sport goes far beyond the field, court, or track.

Sometimes, the most meaningful thing a coach can do is remind a girl that she is not alone, that she matters, and that someone is in her corner.

