



BALANCED ATHLETE HEALTH

A RESOURCE FOR ALL ATHLETES TO SUPPORT
HEALTH, WELLBEING AND PERFORMANCE

Based on the pioneering work of Netball New Zealand and SmartHealth, with funding support from ACC.
Thanks to all those across the high performance sector who have had input.



YOUR WELLBEING MATTERS

Being an athlete is a balancing act across many things drawing on your time, energy and resilience.

When we feel in balance we are happier, healthier, and better connected through our relationships and communities.

This balance nurtures body, mind and spirit, supporting our progress toward our goals.

Thriving in high performance sport includes sustained high levels of performance and dimensions of wellbeing (such as autonomy, personal growth and mastery/competence), directly related to health.

Ask yourself

What does being healthy mean to you?

How does this affect your training/ performance?

Taking an all-encompassing concept of health and wellbeing – Hauora, what value or meaning does this have for you?

As an athlete how do you think being aware of your overall balance can guide and support you on your performance journey?



***FINDING BALANCE
TO SUSTAIN PERFORMANCE***

TE WHARE TAPA WHĀ*

HAUORA WELLBEING

The four dimensions of hauora influence and support each other. Get the best out of yourself by understanding your balance.



TAHA WHĀNAU **FAMILY & COMMUNITY**

Building strong relationships

I feel connected
and supported



TAHA WAIRUA **SPIRITUAL**

Lifting my spirit

I feel nurtured
and grounded



TAHA HINENGARO **MENTAL & EMOTIONAL**

My feelings and thoughts

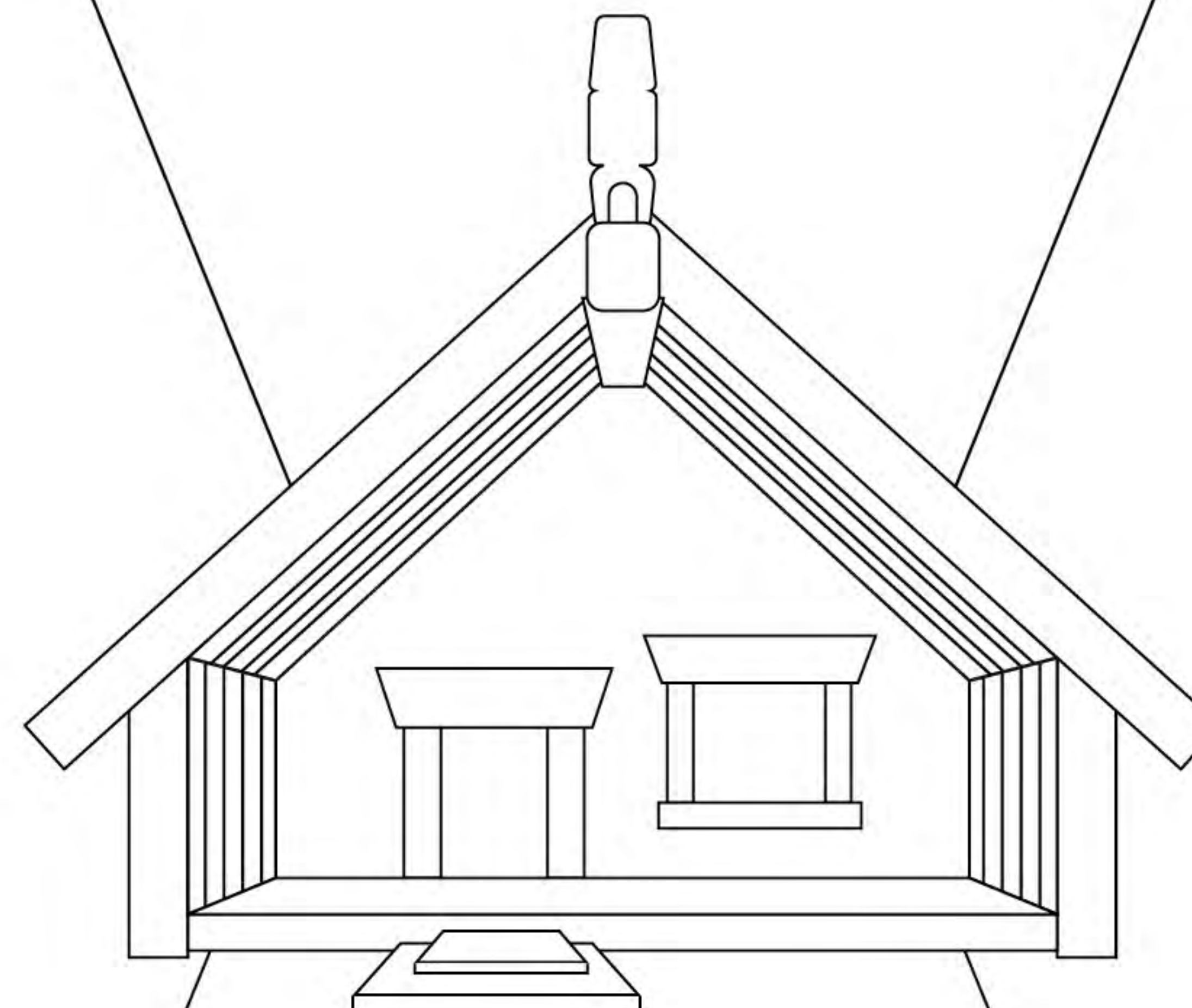
I feel confident
to progress



TAHA TINANA **PHYSICAL**

Taking care of my body

I feel healthy
and energized



* Te Whare Tapa Whā – A wellbeing model developed by Tā Mason Durie

TAHA WHĀNAU FAMILY & COMMUNITY

Building strong
relationships



I feel connected
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WHY ARE STRONG FAMILY AND COMMUNITY BONDS IMPORTANT?

Taha whānau is the capacity to belong, to care and to share where individuals are part of wider social systems.

Strong family bonds, camaraderie with teammates, and a sense of belonging within the high performance community provide your foundation for emotional stability, encouragement, and shared achievement.

Build your support network

Identify people in your life who:

- You have a strong connection with
- You can trust and speak to about anything
- Challenge you in a supportive way
- Foster your learning and development
- Care and make you feel like you belong

Be brave and speak up

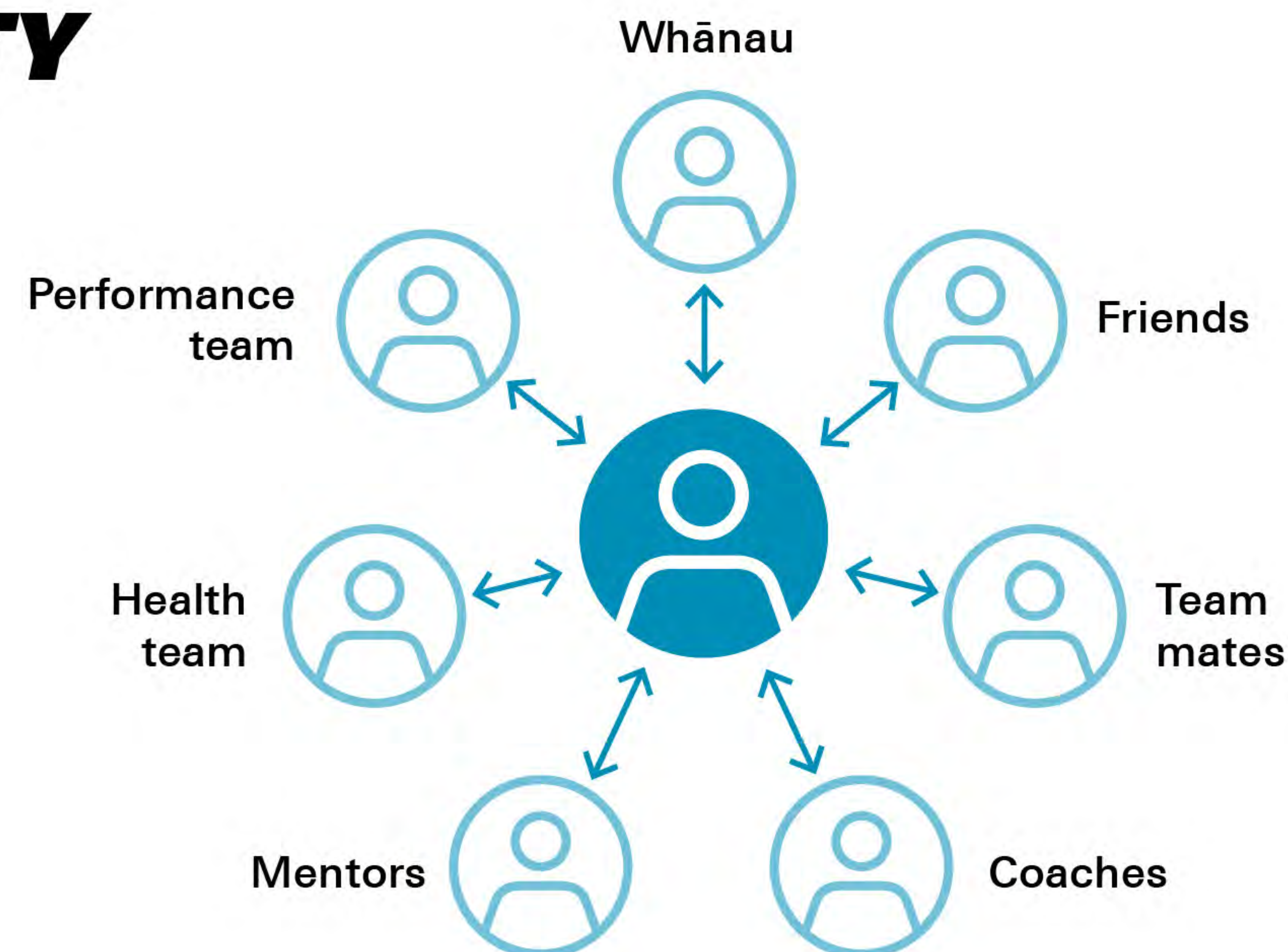
- Lean on your network to develop your voice
- Speak up if you or anyone else appears unwell



Good connections are 2-way

- Find your role in relationships and community
- Identify where your contribution helps others

If in doubt, sing out!



Ask questions and explore ideas related
to all aspects of your health



**TAHA
WHĀNAU
FAMILY &
COMMUNITY**



**TAHA
HINENGARO
MENTAL &
EMOTIONAL**



**TAHA
WAIRUA
SPIRITUAL**



**TAHA
TINANA
PHYSICAL**



**HIGH PERFORMANCE
SPORT NEW ZEALAND**

TAHA WAIRUA SPIRITUAL

Lifting my spirit



I feel nurtured and grounded

WHY IS SPIRITUAL WELLBEING IMPORTANT?

Taha wairua is the capacity for cultural belief systems, faith and wider communication, to create a strong sense of purpose, mental resilience, and alignment with our personal and sport core values.

Connecting with a deeper sense of meaning can fuel motivation, help overcome setbacks and maintain focus.

Simple checks

- Make a list and find time for the things, people or environments that feed your spirit.
- Reflect on where you are now to plan for your future.

**Inā kei te mohio koe ko wai koe,
I anga mai koe i hea,
kei te mohio koe,
Kei te anga atu ki hea**

If you know who you are and where you are from, then you will know where you are going.



TAHA HINENGARO MENTAL & EMOTIONAL

My feelings
and thoughts



I feel
confident to
progress

WHY ARE MY FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS IMPORTANT?

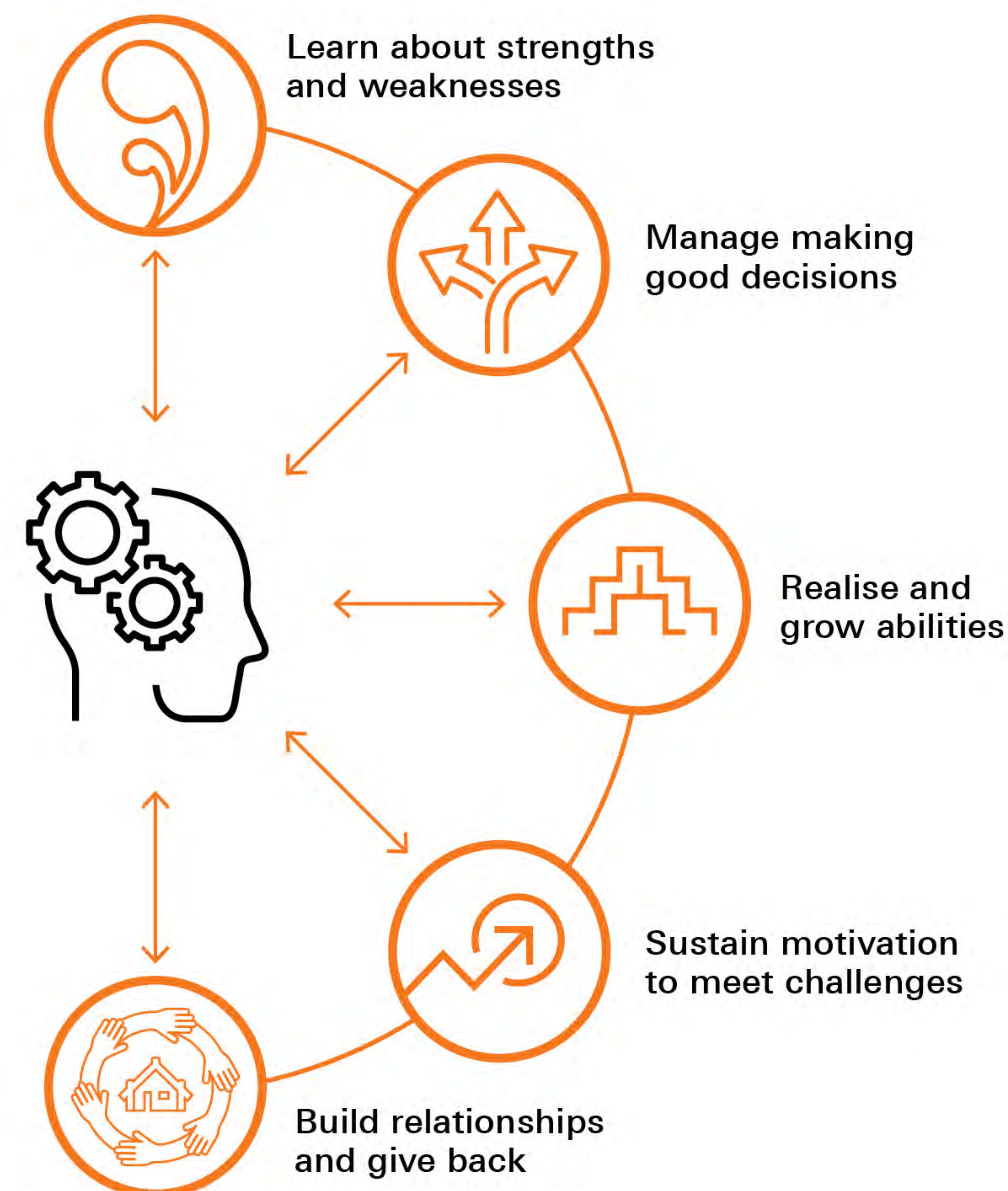
Taha Hinengaro is the capacity to communicate, to think and to feel, encompassing mental strength, emotional balance, and stress management.

You will learn to develop strategies to handle pressure, cope with high-stakes situations, and maintain a positive mindset for consistent and sustained peak performance.

Try these five actions

- 1. Connect, me whakawhanaunga**
Talk and listen, be there, feel connected
- 2. Take notice, me aro tonu**
Remember the simple things that give you joy – unplug and be present
- 3. Keep learning, me ako tonu**
Embrace new experiences, see opportunities, surprise yourself
- 4. Self manage, whakahaere whaiaro**
Be aware, recognise and take a step forward
- 5. Give, tukua**
Give your time, your words, your presence

Awareness of our feelings and thoughts helps us to:



**Taking care
of my body**



**I feel healthy
and energised**

WHY IS PHYSICAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

Taha Tinana is the capacity for physical growth and development.

It emphasises the body's physical vitality, health and balance. Proper care, exercise, and nutrition are central to optimising physical condition, allowing you to engage fully in daily life and pursue your goals.

Got balance? Time for a self check-in.

Training

- ☐ I am enjoying my training
- ☐ I feel motivated to attend, train and compete
- ☐ I feel that all parts of my training are well balanced
- ☐ I am progressing toward my goals



Community Connection

- ☐ I connect regularly with friends and social groups
- ☐ I have enough time to spend doing what I love, with those I love
- ☐ Life is a good balance of challenging and fun



Menstrual Cycle

- ☐ I know where I can get good reliable information
- ☐ I have connections and support I feel comfortable talking to about female health
- ☐ I understand my menstrual cycle and its importance in relation to my health and performance



Hobbies

- ☐ I have downtime and enjoy social activities away from sport
- ☐ I have activities that restore and balance my energy in different ways



Nutrition

- ☐ I eat according to the work I am doing
- ☐ I bring a snack during long or intensive training sessions
- ☐ I recover well between training sessions



Sleep & Rest

- ☐ I regularly get 8+ hours of sleep
- ☐ I feel energised and well recovered for my next day or session
- ☐ I have at least one rest or recovery day per week



Support

- ☐ I have a good support network
- ☐ I have someone I can talk with to help me find my balance



Injury and Illness

- ☐ I haven't experienced repeated injuries or illnesses
- ☐ I haven't had a prolonged injury or illness affecting my training, competition or sense of wellbeing



**If in doubt,
check it out!**

How did you go?

Talk with your support network, discuss, share and think about opportunities to improve your balance.

Explore changes, and keep a record of things that work.

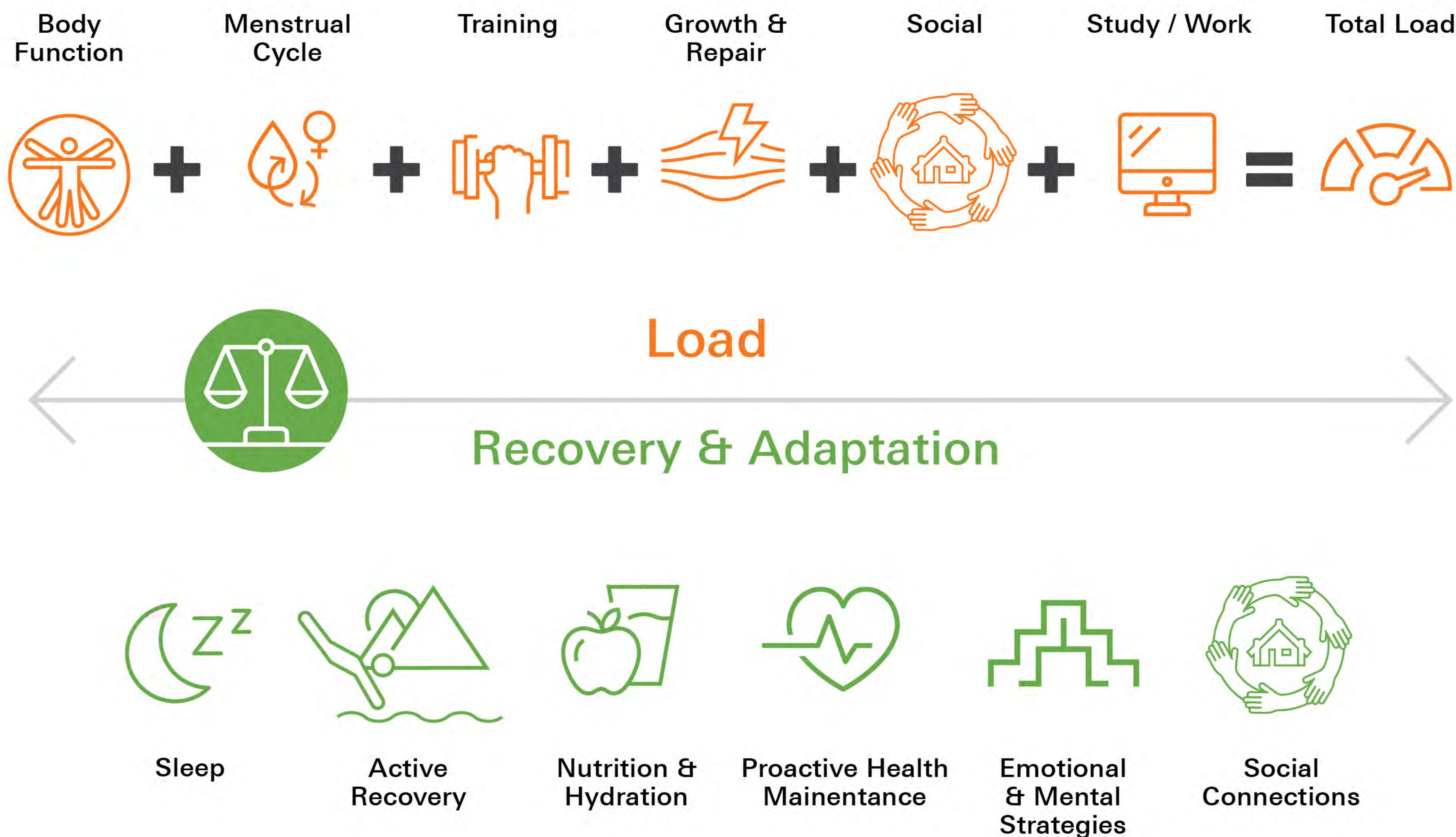
If you have concerns, check with your doctor for medical advice and support.

FINDING BALANCE TO SUSTAIN PERFORMANCE



EVERY BODY NEEDS FUEL AND RECOVERY. HEALTHY ATHLETES NEED MORE!

The human body requires fuel and recovery to support all the key body systems to achieve what you do every day and stay healthy.



FINDING BALANCE TO SUSTAIN PERFORMANCE



WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS

Learning what works for you is a journey of self-discovery.

The four dimensions of hauora wellbeing influence and support each other.
Get the best out of yourself by understanding your balance.



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HINENGARO**
MENTAL &
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**TAHA
WAIRUA**
SPIRITUAL



**TAHA
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PHYSICAL



Balance

Seek balance in your life. Include a mix of activities:

- Challenging
- Fun
- Sociable

Time away from training aids recovery, nurturing enjoyment and enthusiasm.



Priorities

Sleep plays a major role in your overall wellbeing.

Aim for 7-10 hours sleep per night to reduce the risk of illness/injury and aid recovery.



Connect

Take time to connect:

- Friends
- Whānau
- Hobbies
- Spiritual
- Relaxation
- Self-learning
- Discovery



Health

Injury and illness may mean lost time to sport and training, which can, in turn, impact your emotional wellbeing. Ongoing or recurrent issues may be a sign of imbalance.



Awareness

Monthly report card: Is my cycle healthy?

- Regular
- Bleeding
- Pain
- Symptoms

Your menstrual cycle should be healthy even with hard training.



Total Load

Athlete demands are high:

- Social
- Emotional
- Training
- Recovery
- Adaptation
- Work
- Education
- Media



Share

Talk about your health and wellbeing with those who care and support you. Have regular conversations about your balance and changes that matter for you.

If in doubt, check it out!

BALANCED FEMALE ATHLETE HEALTH

A RESOURCE FOR FEMALE ATHLETES TO SUPPORT
HEALTH, WELLBEING AND PERFORMANCE



HIGH PERFORMANCE
SPORT NEW ZEALAND

In collaboration with

ACC SportSmart



NETBALL
NEW ZEALAND
POI TARAWHITI AOTEAROA

 **NetballSmart**

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



ME ARO KOE KI TE HĀ O HINE-AHU-ONE

***PAY HEED TO THE DIGNITY
AND POWER OF WOMEN***

He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world?
It is people, it is people, it is people.

To Māori, women are considered te whare tangata – the house of humanity – and are recognised for their centrality to whānau, hapū, and iwi, as creators of life and conduits between the physical world (te ao kikokiko) and the metaphysical (te pō).

Menstruation/ the menstrual cycle (mate wahine) demonstrates a deep connection between te taha tinana and te taha wairua, as well as the connection between wāhine and Ātua Māori (Māori gods and deities – particularly Papatūānuku), from who wāhine derive mana - in this context spiritual power or prestige. For women, these two dimensions cannot be separated.

Taking care
of my body



I feel healthy
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YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Your menstrual cycle and its hormones have a big positive impact on your health, wellbeing and performance!

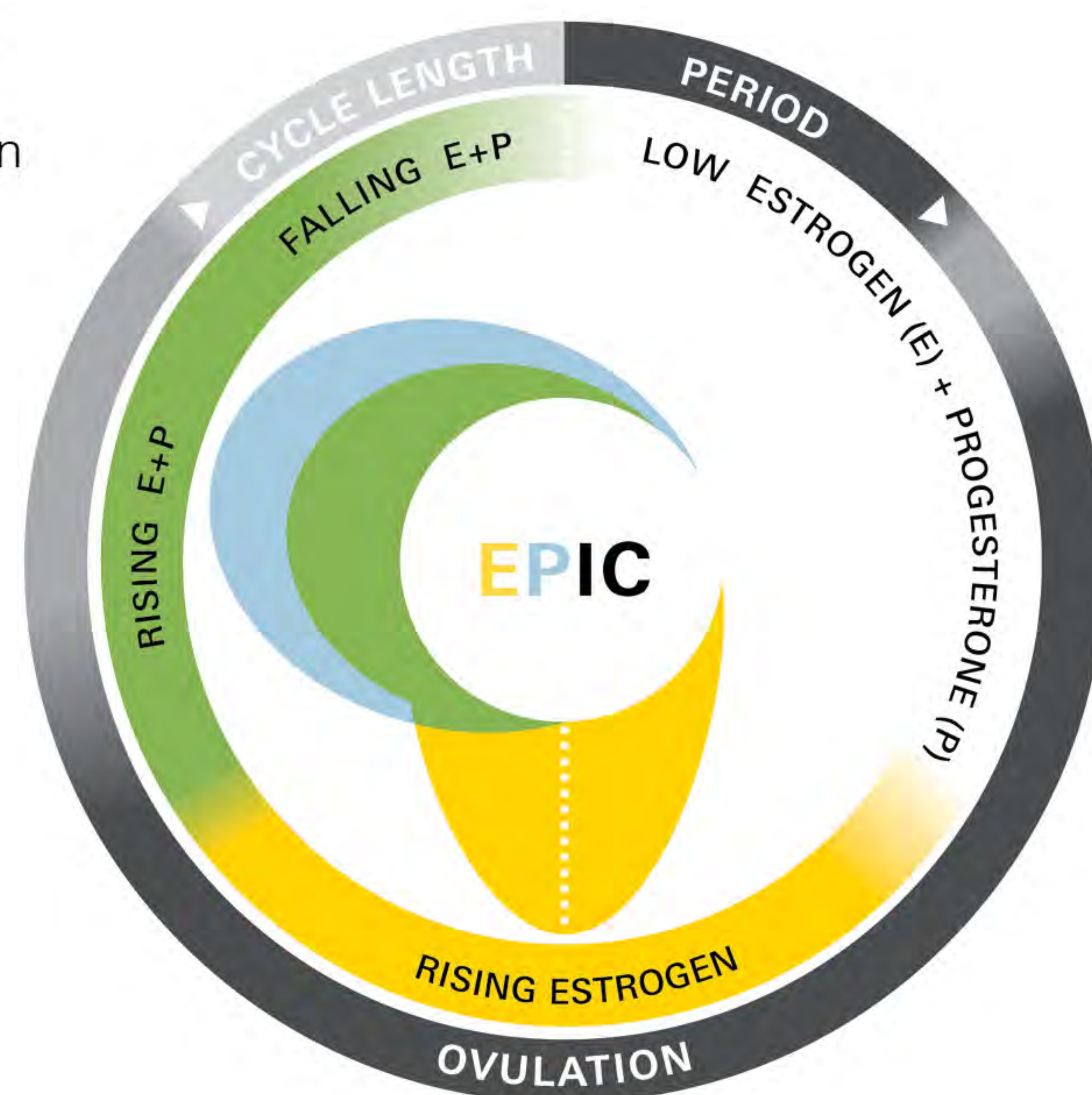
EPIC: Estrogen and Progesterone in Cycle

These hormones are essential to your health, positively influencing many body systems:

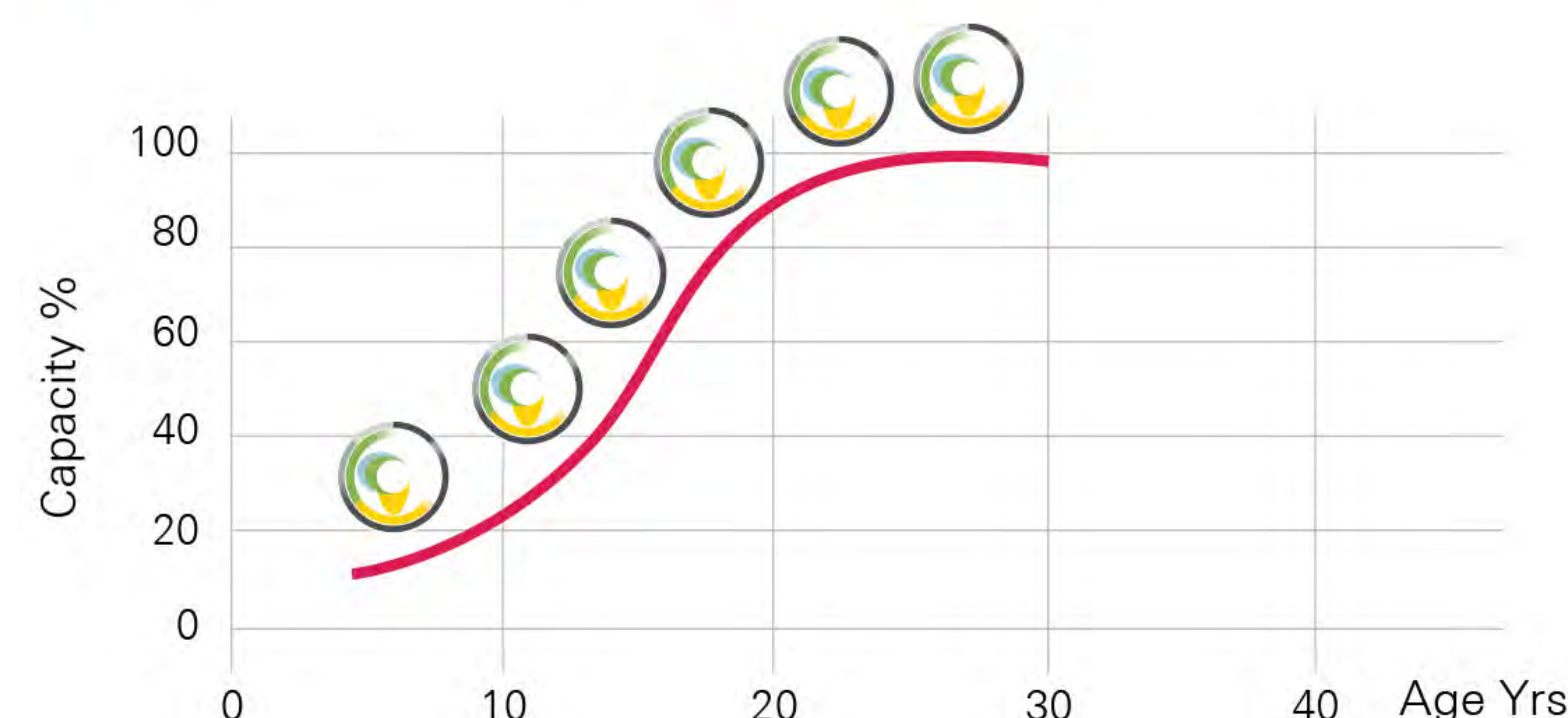
- Cardiovascular health
- Brain development, cognition and mood
- Digestion, hydration and metabolism
- Growth, development and repair of bone, nerves, muscle, ligaments and tendons

EPIC influences your:

- Health
- Recovery
- Training adaptation



Building cycle on cycle, year on year starting in puberty and progressing through your 20s and 30s, these hormones build your capacity and resilience.



Discover your normal

- **Start a diary** of your cycle – a simple mark on a calendar is a great start. Or try a period tracking app.
- Record each **cycle length** – simply count the days from the last mark to this one.
- **Keep track of signs** that seem to occur each cycle, like feeling strong, positive, full of energy as well as, discomfort, bleeding or mood changes.

If you have any symptoms affecting your daily activity, training, study, work or social time – talk about them and seek medical advice on what's right for you.

If in doubt, check it out!

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WHAT IS A HEALTHY MENSTRUAL CYCLE?

Track
your cycle



Discover
your normal



Your balance
report card

Healthy is...



Age

First period
8-16 years



Length of period

3-7 days



Length of cycle

21-35 days



Period

I feel comfortable
managing my
period



Abdominal cramps

Some abdominal
discomfort is common
in association
with ovulation or
your period



Pre-menstrual signs

Falling estrogen and
progesterone can cause
abdominal cramps, fatigue,
gut disturbances, mood
changes, muscle aches.

Everyone's experience is
different - discover your normal

Not having a period is
not normal, even with
hard exercise.



Simple checks Timing matters...

- ☐ My cycles (period to period) are often longer than 35 days
- ☐ My cycles are often shorter than 21 days
- ☐ My periods are a bit chaotic
- ☐ My periods are often absent
- ☐ My periods are very painful
- ☐ I feel stressed during my period and find it difficult to manage my blood loss
- ☐ I see large clots in my periods
- ☐ My bleeding often lasts longer than 7 days
- ☐ I get frequent or unexplained spotting

If you have any symptoms affecting your daily activity, training, study, work or social time – talk about them and check with your doctor on what's right for you.

If in doubt, check it out!



FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE MENSTRUAL CYCLE CHANGES

Menstrual cycle variability refers to changes in the length between cycles and changes in the frequency or amount of blood loss. While some variation is normal, a healthy balance of training, recovery and adaptation should not cause irregular or absent menstrual cycles.



Increased Stress/ Overload

Your menstrual cycle can be affected by all kinds of stress.



Age

In the first 1-3 years of your period starting menstrual cycles can be less regular but should become more regular with time.



Under fuelling/ Under recovery

Not enough food or low recovery with increased training load are common causes of hormone reduction and irregular or missed cycles.

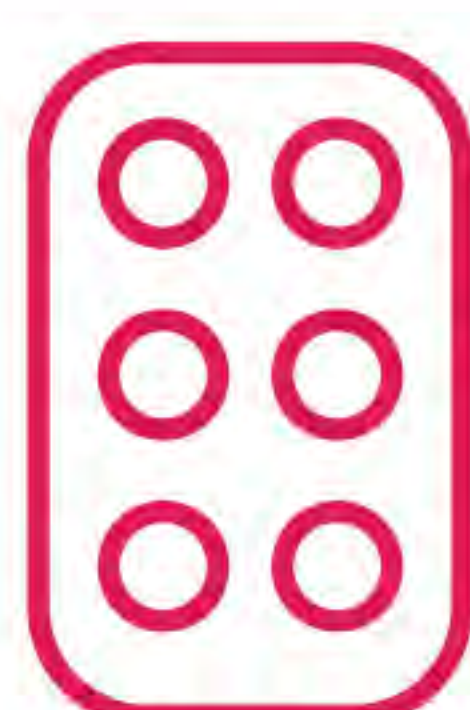


Medical

- Medical conditions
- Medications

Check with your doctor if...

...your periods are often irregular or absent



Hormonal Contraception

Many types affect your menstrual cycle often preventing ovulation. Withdrawal bleeds are not the same as natural menstrual cycle periods.

Starting, stopping or changing hormonal contraception can also alter cycle regularity and symptoms.

Check with your doctor if your period has not returned within three months of stopping hormonal contraception.



Pregnancy

The time during and after pregnancy, breast feeding, or a miscarriage can cause variability or absence of your menstrual cycle.

Period return after pregnancy is highly individual depending on weaning and other factors. Maintain a dialogue with your doctor.

If in doubt, check it out!

FINDING BALANCE TO SUSTAIN PERFORMANCE



FEMALE HEALTH ISSUES THAT CAN IMPACT PERFORMANCE

Do you know how common these issues are in performance athletes? You, your teammates, family and friends may be managing the challenges and symptoms of these issues. Awareness is the first step toward change.

In every group of 10 women



Know your iron status?

Is your diet keeping up with menstruation and training needs?

Ask your GP/ Performance Health doctor if a check is right for you.

If in doubt, check it out!

¹ Heather et al, Frontiers in Sport and Active Living 2021 *(undiagnosed symptoms)

² Pires et al, Journal of Human Kinetics 2020

³ Jager et al Journal of Science & Medicine in Sport 2024

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