



PODCAST: Pitchford & Walker talk mental health & well-being

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What happens when an elite athlete is affected by mental health issues? That is the topic of our first #TowardsTokyo2020 podcast featuring Olympians Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker.

Released on Time to Talk Day 2020, the podcast details how two leading international players have faced difficulties which led to loss of confidence and motivation – and how talking about it was the first important step to getting through their tough times.

We also hear from mental health charity Mind, one of the organisations behind Time to Talk Day, about how any of us can get help if we experience mental health issues.

Mental health problems affect one in four of us, and elite sportspeople are no exception. Liam has spoken openly about his battle with depression before and during the Rio 2016 Olympics, while Sam has now discussed for the first time some issues around confidence which he faced last year.

Both are candid about how it affected their lives, as well as supportive of the idea of talking more about mental health.

As Liam says in the podcast: "At times, I didn't want to go to practice any more. I didn't really have a lot of motivation to do anything.

"The first step was being able to admit it and talk about it. It's not a nice experience and one you don't think you can ever come out of, but if you get the help and keep working on yourself and believing, you will get out of it."

Sam added: "I had a lot of problems this season with confidence and the pressure of everything, in terms of table tennis. I didn't deal with it well.

"With everything I was thinking about, I couldn't perform at my best. I kind of fell out of love with table tennis. I

wasn't enjoying it and wasn't motivated to do the practice."

Listen to the full podcast below and hear how two of our star players, with the right help and support, battled back to their best:

[Click here for more information about Time to Talk Day](#), including downloadable resources to help you start conversations around mental health.

Liam Pitchford and Sam Walker are supported by UK Sport's Aspiration Fund as they work towards qualification for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The #TowardsTokyo2020 podcast will continue during the build-up to the Olympics and will tackle a series of topics connected with the life of elite athletes. Future episodes include:

Training and competing on the world tour – the lifestyle of an elite table tennis player

Living abroad

Dealing with pressure

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