

I am a 15-year-old girl who plays handball. I have just been through a long-term course of injury. This is really tough as an elite athlete, to sit on the sidelines, day after day. It is especially challenging to come back if there is no progress. As an injured elite athlete, there can be a form of stigmatization, you feel left behind, as an outsider of the team. For me it was important to show up to every training, every game, even though I couldn't play. In that way I still felt like a part of the team. The desire to get back on the field and perform slowly fades, and when the path back feels bigger than the desire to return to the field, negative thoughts can spiral into a reinforcing cycle. When negative thoughts run, it also amplifies the feeling of sadness over the body's inability to perform the way you want. But this is entirely normal during a rehabilitation process.

After sitting out with an injury, it is crucial to follow your rehabilitation program, even when facing setbacks. Along the way, it can be helpful to seek support and assistance from coaches, physiotherapists, and teammates who can help motivate and support you during your recovery. Additionally, setting realistic goals for yourself was very helpful for me. Start with small steps and gradually work your way back to your previous level. This will provide a sense of progress and motivation to continue.

You should also remember to take the time to care for both your body and mind. Rest, proper nutrition, and mental training can play a significant role in coming back with renewed enthusiasm and motivation. Although it can be challenging to return to the sport after an injury, where you've lost the desire, it's important to remember that it's a process, and it's okay to take it at your own pace. With patience and dedication, you can rediscover the joy of the sport and continue to pursue your passion.