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Assignment: Coaching for Performance: Understanding the Menstrual Cycle

Purpose

Future coaches must understand how the menstrual cycle affects athlete health and performance. This assignment challenges you to design an educational lesson that teaches athletes about the menstrual cycle, how training can support those phases, and the importance of wellness and restoration.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the phases of the menstrual cycle and how they influence performance, recovery, and training adaptations.
- Recognize the importance of proper nutrition, sleep, and hydration throughout the cycle.
- Identify early warning signs of Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) and amenorrhea.
- Recognize that every athlete's experience with menstrual health is unique; no two cycles or their impacts on performance are exactly alike.
- Practice designing educational content that promotes menstrual health without requiring personal disclosure from athletes.
- Develop effective communication tools for parents and guardians to foster support and understanding at home.

Assignment

Design and describe a detailed lesson plan to teach athletes about their menstrual cycles in a performance-centered way. Create a one-page parent handout summarizing key points and explaining what athletes will learn.

Part 1: Teaching Athletes About Their Cycles

Your lesson should be designed for athletes ages 13–18 and presented in a professional, educational format that respects athlete privacy. **Your lesson plan must include:**

1. Cycle Education:

- Brief overview of each phase of the menstrual cycle:
 - Menstrual Phase
 - Follicular Phase
 - Ovulatory Phase
 - Luteal Phase
- Explain how hormones fluctuate and how those changes may impact energy, recovery, mood, and performance.
- Create this in teenage friendly language, so it's easy for athletes to understand.

2. Training & Performance Application:

- Outline how physical activity and training can support each phase.
- Provide examples of training adaptations (e.g., lighter load days, recovery focus, strength emphasis).

3. Holistic Health Components:

- Importance of **nutrition** (fueling adequately before, during, and after training).
- Role of **sleep** in hormone regulation and recovery.
- Impact of **hydration** on energy and temperature regulation.

4. Awareness of Health Risks:

- Explain Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) and amenorrhea—what they are, why they matter, early warning signs, and who to turn to for help (medical professionals).

5. Cycle Tracking & Empowerment:

- Introduce at least three tools, strategies, or ideas athletes can use to track their cycles (e.g., apps, journals, performance logs).
- Emphasize that tracking is for self-awareness and performance, not for coaches to collect or monitor.

6. Safe Environment & Boundaries:

- Clearly state in your plan how you will present this in a way that:
 - Does not require athletes to share personal information.
 - Encourages private, voluntary conversations for those who want guidance.
 - Reinforces that cycle education is about empowerment and performance, not disclosure.

Part 2: Parent Communication Handout

Create a one-page handout or newsletter-style communication that can be sent home to parents/guardians before the lesson.

It should include:

- The purpose of the session (education, performance, wellness).
- A short explanation of what athletes will learn (cycle phases, training, nutrition, health awareness).
- Key messages about:
 - Supporting athletes' well-being.
 - The importance of normal cycles as a sign of health.
 - Encouraging open, age-appropriate conversations at home.
- Reassurance that:
 - Athletes are not required to discuss personal menstrual details.
 - The goal is to equip them with information to perform and recover better.
 - Coaches are available for private, professional conversations if questions arise.

Submission Requirements

- Lesson Plan– include objectives, outline, teaching methods, materials, and takeaways.
- Parent Handout (1 page) – professional, concise, and family-friendly language.
- References – cite resources used (e.g., scientific articles, professional coaching guides, Coaching HER® modules, etc).