

## **The transition thermometer**

**What:** this document offers practical knowledge for parents and coaches about the transition and development of their young female athletes and daughters.

**Why:** young female athletes are dealing with personal development issues throughout different phases depending on their age, that can be of influence on their performance as athletes. It is important that parents and coaches are aware of these developments to be able to prevent any unnecessary obstacles. For this we listed the most important transitions and focus on the following themes: athletic, socially, psychologically and academically.

**How:**

- Educate parents and coaches and share the information from this document with them, preferable through a plenary session that explains the DONA project in general, through a brochure with information or through one-on-one meetings with the parents or coaches.
- Offer the young athletes the three workshops that are designed for the DONA project. These workshops will discuss all the important challenges of the transition phases of the athletes.
- Are there experts in your team that can help with specific topics? Use them! Make sure those experts are available to consult parents, coaches and athletes when necessary. The expert will also be able to provide additional information and help with the specific topics.

**Important note:** the ages listed are general guidelines for your information. However, each athletes' development is personal and individual process.

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## A. Athletic development:

### 1. The body reaches puberty

It is possible that the body develops quickly in terms of grow and proportions, which can influence athletic performances. This could cause insecurity and frustration.

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**Focus:** education by an expert to young athletes, coaches and parents on the possible effects of the changes in the body, to instil their awareness and help deal with the changes. This could be done by a special additional workshop, an information brochure or one-on-one meetings.

### 2. Transition from junior to senior

Sometimes this transition proves some difficulties. Athletes are again the youngest out of a large age group and have to start from the beginning, which can be demotivating. Especially for the athletes that were performing at their best and all of a sudden that changes now they're senior, it can be a difficult transition.

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**Focus:**

- In this phase the athletes need more guidance and clarity about the importance of goal setting.
  - When they set clear short-term and long-term goals, their internal motivation strives, and it will be easier to keep their progress in sight. The workshop “goal setting” will foster this.
  - Involve experienced athletes as ambassadors. Experienced and older athletes can be seen as trustworthy and convincing and can provide that older athletes are willing to help the younger ones. Invite them to be part of a plenary session with parents and coaches or be part of the workshops. An excellent opportunity would be to set up one-on-one meetings with ambassadors and athletes, if this is suitable and within the possibilities.
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## B. Social development:

### 1. Growing involvement and interest within their age-group (comparison, etc.).

In this age category the young athletes pay a lot of attention to each other. They want to be better than their friends, from example. This can be motivating to perform better, but it can also be demotivating when their performance is worse than others. It is important for coaches to be aware of this, when evaluating athletes' performances.

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**Focus:** young athletes should develop a growth mindset, which teaches them to trust that their capacities are not stand-alone but will be able to develop with them. This will keep them motivated and sparks pleasure in the development process. The workshop “mental toughness” can be of guidance with this, or one-on-one meetings with the athletes.

### 2. New form of relationships with peers (going out, love-relationships):

Around this age the young athletes in general develop deeper relationships with their peers. Friendships grow closer and are valued more. As friends are going out at night, the athletes want to be part of this too. First love-relationships can be formed, which can be a distraction and planning-issues arise.

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**Focus:** develop more insight in self-regulation and time management will be important during this phase. If they want to pursue a successful dual career the athletes need to build discipline and be able to set priorities. The workshops “time and energy management” provides useful information on this topic.

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## C. Psychological development:

### Emotional independence (mostly in relation to parents)

Whereas younger athletes mostly listen to and act upon their parents' instructions, or look at what their friends are doing, this age group is developing their own identity, ideas and opinions.

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**Focus:** In this phase an emphasis must be put to the importance of their own identity, also besides their active athletic career. The workshop “identity and goal setting” is important as are the one-on-one meetings that will make a deeper discussion possible.

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**D. Academic development:**

1. Going to high school:

Compared to elementary school, high school will be of a slightly higher level. The commuting distance might also be longer, and the environment is new, as are the classmates. There will be homework and study time is needed for exams.

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**Focus:** time management and learning how to plan is important in this phase. Especially since both the training schedules and school investment will increase in the coming years. The workshop “time and energy management” will guide the athletes. To have the athletes be actively involved in their own planning and teach them the tools for this, will be valuable in the long run.

2. From high school to university / a job:

This is the phase where the athletes choose to continue their education at a (applied) university, or not. They will decide on what academic goals and interest they have, or if they would prefer a job. This can be a challenging time as it concerns more independence and responsibilities, and uncertainty of what to expect for the longer term. It often also means they will be leaving their parents’ home.

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**Focus:**

- To make the decision process easier, knowledge and awareness about oneself, their identity and interest is valuable Who are you besides an athlete? To make a conscious decision that they made themselves, is most important. No matter what the choice will be (pursuing further education or not), the athlete needs to be in support of this choice herself.
- For their independence and again a new level of performance, goal setting and time management are arising again. You can use the workshops for this.