

## How to best manage your transition



Remember your life and self-worth are not defined by your gymnastics career.

### Plan:

If you have not retired yet then plan with your coaches, parents and friends. Establish goals discuss and research opportunities such as education and work.

### Find Focus:

Look for other things that give you joy such as hobbies and interests and pursue them. This can help to create a social network to move forward with.

### Keep Active:

Exercise can improve both mental and physical health. It produces endorphins and can keep your weight down so keeping a regular routine can lead to a happy retirement.

## If you need help



If you are finding the transition difficult or have other issues that need addressed or just need some pointers on where to go the following websites may be of use.

### Looking for a career in gymnastics?

Visit [www.british-gymnastics.org](http://www.british-gymnastics.org)

### Help with eating disorders?

Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Dealing with abuse?

Visit [thecpsu.org.uk](http://thecpsu.org.uk)

### Dealing with stress and anxiety?

Visit [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)

*Sports, hobbies and mental health:*

### Mindfulness

Visit [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

### Hobbies and sports to try

Visit [www.hobbyhelp.com](http://www.hobbyhelp.com)

Use this leaflet to educate yourself and others about moving on from gymnastics. Seek support from your friends, family and coaches and share with them your thoughts and feelings.

# Your Transition from Professional Gymnastics

Becca Stewart

Use your athletic experience to build a bright future

## What is Athletic Retirement?

Each athlete's retirement story is different but many of the challenges you face will be similar.

Gymnastics is perhaps all you have known from an early age and retirement from this can bring with it both physical and mental issues which you may need to address. Your identity as a person and an athlete has revolved around your sport and it will take time and effort to adjust to your new life.

Your retirement may be something you have planned or it may be due to circumstances beyond your control such as injury or deselection.

Voluntary transitions are often smoother as it is your decision to retire and will have been part of a reasoned debate involving yourself, your family and your professional coaches.

Involuntary retirement is likely to require more support from those closest to you due to its unplanned nature.

*This leaflet is designed to help you navigate through the process from athlete to retired athlete in the most positive and effective way possible.*



## Potential challenges of retiring

Some gymnasts can find the retirement transition difficult and stressful particularly if your retirement is involuntary.

Gymnasts can experience challenges such as delayed puberty, weight gain and loss of confidence. Along with this a common challenge is a loss of self identity as you move from one very familiar environment where you excel into a new and uncertain one.

In your career as a gymnast you will have built a reputation that you are proud of and a social network that will be difficult to leave behind. When retiring this can be lost and cause distress and upset.

A positive attitude to retirement is key, eat well, exercise and be healthy, find new hobbies and pass times, use your support network and look to a bright future using the skill set you have acquired during your time in gymnastics.

It is important to remember you are not alone in the retirement transition.



## Positive aspects of retirement

Being a professional athlete will have equipped you with an exceptional set of skills which you can use as a foundation for future success. The discipline, work ethic and mental strength it takes to succeed in a sport are transferable skills and will assist you in finding a career that suits you.

*Further benefits of retirement include:*

- ◉ Freedom to pursue other interests and develop relationships out with gymnastics
- ◉ Reprieve from the physical demands of professional sport
- ◉ A reduction in stress associated with performing at a very high level
- ◉ More time to spend with family and friends
- ◉ Being more in control in your life
- ◉ Look upon retirement as opening a new chapter rather than closing an old one.

