

SPRING Forward: Balanced Eating, Exercise, and Body Image in Sport for Female Athletes



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Introduction

- SPRING Forward is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cofounded by Dr. Kathryn Vidlock and Catherine Liggett
- Goal: to provide an organized educational curriculum for adolescent athletes discussing approaches to sustainable eating, exercise, and body image in sport
- Increasing sports participation by female athletes
- Sport as an avenue to develop lifelong healthy lifestyle habits
- High prevalence of disordered eating/exercise and body dysmorphia amongst female athletes^{1,2}
- Positive outcomes with Female Athlete Body Project at the collegiate level³
- Adapted educational curriculum for female adolescent athletes

Objectives

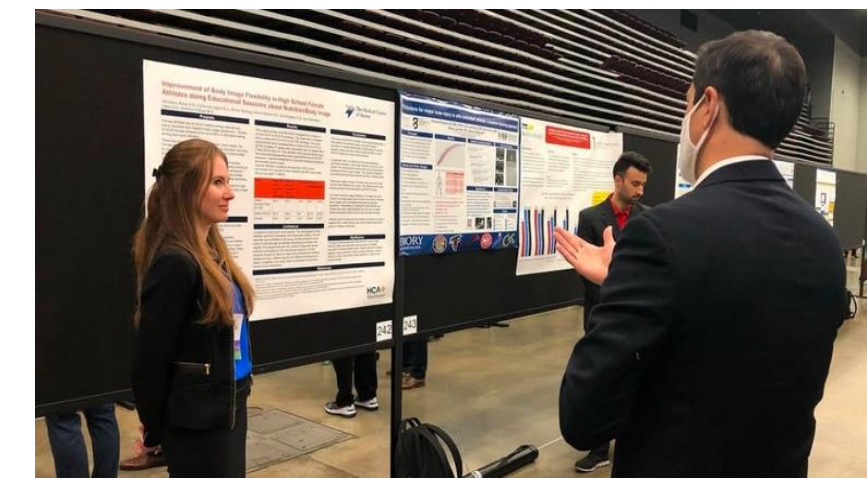
- **Mission:** to empower female athletes through education on body confidence, balanced eating, and lifestyle choices
- **Vision:** To develop a culture within female sport that prioritizes all aspects of health and creates a sustainable relationship with health for each and every athlete

Methodology

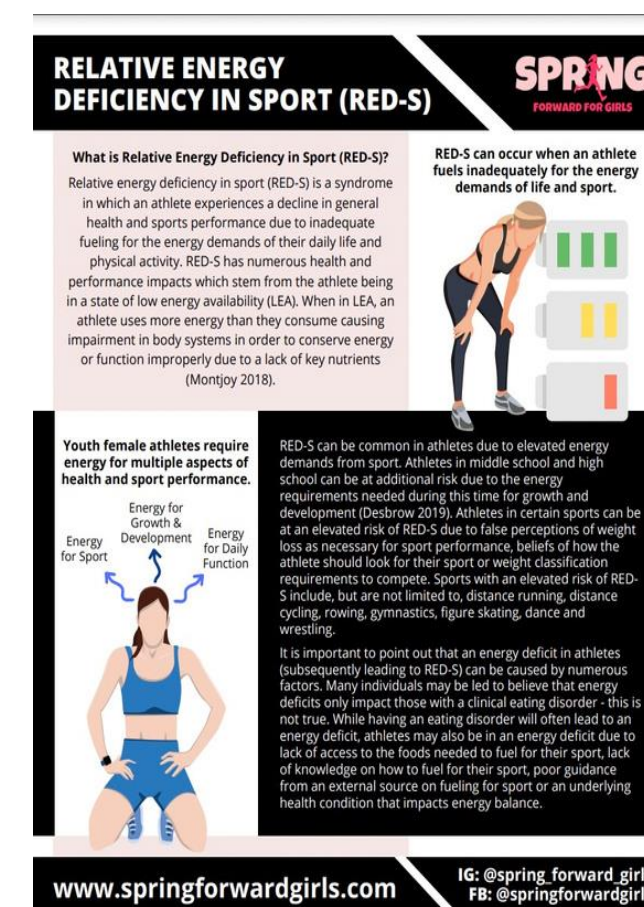
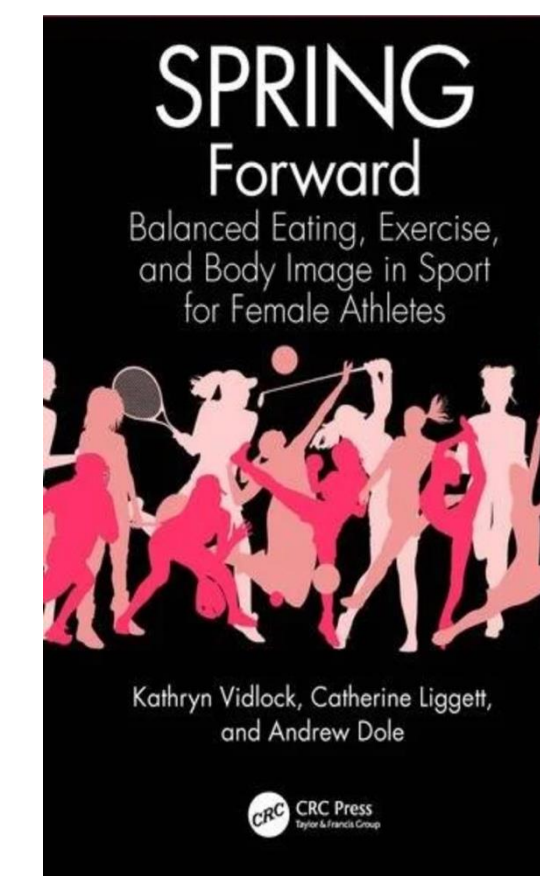
- **May 2020:** program/curriculum developed and initial sessions led with high school athletes
- **2020-2021:** pre-post study assessing body image flexibility in female athletes participating in the SPRING Forward 3-session educational program completed and published
- **May 2022:** SPRING Forward officially established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
- **April 2023:** SPRING Forward book published
- **August 2024/present:** expansion of SPRING Forward's Board of Directors team, updated curriculum, established website and social media platforms

Outcomes and Discussion

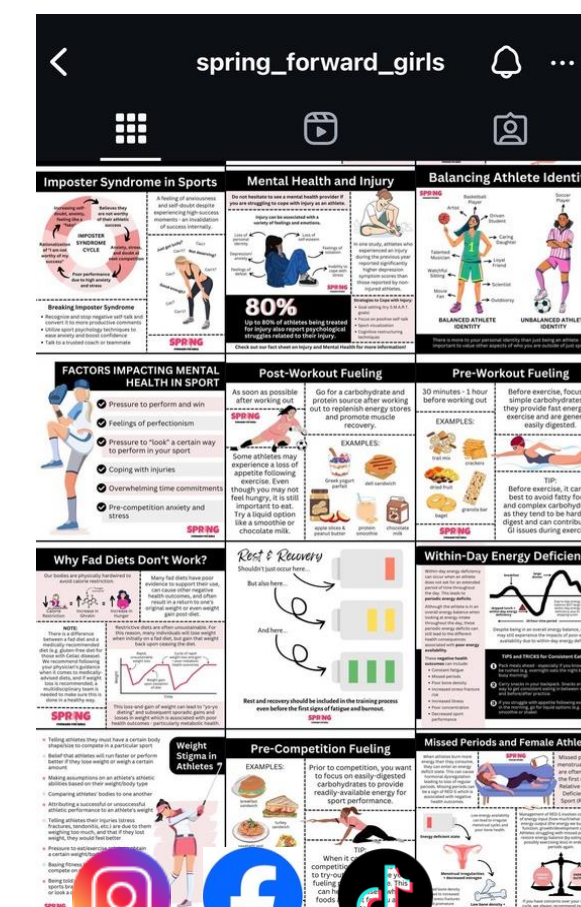
- **SPRING Forward research**
 - Prospective cohort study assessing body image flexibility prior to and following completion of all three sessions of SPRING Forward initial curriculum
 - BI-AAQ (Body Image - Acceptance and Action Questionnaire) pre-post survey
 - Overall scores improved from 43.6 to 54.1 or difference of 10.4 (p-value <0.01)⁴



- **SPRING Forward book**
 - Includes session manuals/worksheets in addition to relevant background information (e.g. basics of sports nutrition, disordered eating in athletes, RED-S) and session how-to's/tips
 - Intended to disseminate curriculum while still ensuring session leaders are educated and knowledgeable on content covered
 - Published with Taylor & Francis



Sample Fact Sheet



Social Media Platforms

Additional outreach

- Website
- Online Fact Sheet Database
- Social Media Accounts
- Parker Mayor's Day of Service
- AWLS Podcast Feature

Limitations and Barriers

- Research with small n-value, limited participant diversity, and lack of long-term follow-up
- Research completed on 3-session program – curriculum has since been updated to single program given participant retention for 3 sessions and thus need for updated research study
- Barriers to ensuring curriculum is accessible to diverse population of youth athletes

Future Applications

- Research on the updated curriculum including long-term retention of material and diverse participant pool
- Updated book with newly modified curriculum and more up-to-date research/understanding
- Create guides on how to approach RED-S as a PCP, athletic trainer, coach, and parent
- Expand the diversity of participants in our program and on our Board of Directors

Conclusions

- Educational programs regarding balanced approaches to eating, exercise, and body image in sport are desired and successful at the middle and high school level
- Awareness of concerns surrounding eating, exercise, and body image in sport at the adolescent level is needed

Disclosures and Acknowledgements

Financial conflict of interest for royalties received from Taylor & Francis for *SPRING Forward: Balanced Eating, Exercise, and Body Image in Sport for Female Athletes* book. We would like to thank the continual support of our varying volunteers and individuals who have shared their stories with us throughout this process.

References

- ¹Thein-Nissenbaum JM, Rauh MJ, Carr KE, Loud KJ, McGuire TA. Associations between disordered eating, menstrual dysfunction, and musculoskeletal injury among high school athletes. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2011 Feb;41(2):60-9. doi: 10.2519/jospt.2011.3312. Epub 2011 Jan 5. PMID: 21212503.
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