

10 TIPS FOR COACHES TO PROTECT ATHLETES

From Sexual Abuse



Positive Coaching Alliance thanks our trusted partner [Kidpower International](#) for teaming up with us to include their outstanding copyrighted safety curriculum in the following tips to help coaches protect athletes from sexual abuse and bullying.



1. Model and emphasize behaving respectfully

- Demonstrate what behaving respectfully looks like for your athletes by being intentional in your interactions with them.
- Make ‘behave respectfully towards each other’ a core value of your team and have athletes agree to doing this before every practice and game.



2. Step in to stop unsafe or disrespectful behavior

- [Immediately intervene](#) if you notice unsafe or disrespectful behavior that is making an athlete uncomfortable. Address the situation either in the moment or later with another adult present.
- Check-in with the athlete who was made to feel uncomfortable to ensure they feel supported.



3. Be clear about the consent and boundary safety rules for your team

- Remind athletes of The Kidpower Motto: "We each have the RIGHT to be treated with safety and respect - and the RESPONSIBILITY to act safely and respectfully towards ourselves and others".
- Use the [Kidpower Consent Checklist](#): "Touch, attention, or play for fun or affection should be the choice of each person, safe, allowed by the adults in charge, and not a secret."
- Give athletes [the tools](#) to identify when even the adult in charge may not be trustworthy.



4. Help athletes practice

- Dedicate 5 minutes once a week to give young people the opportunity to rehearse how to stay aware, set boundaries, apologize, protect their feelings, manage their emotional triggers, leave, and get help. Learning these skills will help to prevent and stop abusive behavior both from adults and from peers - and also to develop [safe and strong relationships](#).
- Practice speaking up and repeating in a calm, assertive voice simple phrases like, "Stop! That's not safe!... Excuse me, I feel uncomfortable... I don't keep problems a secret."
- Repeat safety rules such as, "Any kind of touch should not be a secret." Remind them that practicing with your body and voice will help you remember to use these skills in real life.

Kidpower can provide 5 minute Kidpower and Teenpower safety lessons for coaches and youth sports parents

[Inquire Here](#)



5. Commit to the Kidpower Founding Principle

- "Put Safety FIRST. Each person's safety and well-being are more important than ANYONE's embarrassment, inconvenience, or offense."
- Too often, fears of upsetting someone or of losing opportunities for success get in the way of setting boundaries to stop harmful behavior, of avoiding unsafe situations, and/or of getting help.
- Often people are afraid to report because they don't want to harm someone's reputation by being unfair or overreacting, and they also want to protect the reputation of their organization or school.



6. Recognize grooming behavior

- Potentially grooming behavior might not look like abuse at first. Abusers often cultivate a special relationship of trust and value with a family, an organization, or faith community in order to have access to young people. Then, they test a child's boundaries before doing something that is abusive.
- Teach your athletes about the Kidpower Safety Rules: "Don't keep secrets about problems, presents someone gives you, friendships, favors, photos or videos, any kind of touch, or anything about people and their private areas."



7. Establish safety rules against potentially grooming behavior

- Establish and uphold clear policies that will help to prevent abuse including NOT asking players to keep secrets and NOT being alone with individual players or giving them special favors. Follow the guidelines in: [How Can I Avoid Being Accused of Abuse](#).
- A fair amount of behavior that might be potentially inappropriate is accidental because someone is being thoughtless, doesn't realize the implications, or has poor boundaries. Unfortunately, sometimes behavior like this is the tip of the iceberg. Teach kids to speak up about any kind of behavior that makes them uncomfortable or that is against their safety rules. Check it out even if it seems harmless and keep paying attention even if the explanation or apology seems very reasonable and friendly.



8. Be a safe adult to come to

- Even if a complaint seems silly or inaccurate, listen with compassion and show them that you care about their point of view.
- As kids get older, they often find it harder to ask for help. Being a safe adult to come to means staying calm when you hear something, start the conversation with an open ended question, and provide the support the child may need - whether it's emotional support or getting a professional involved. Here are [7 Steps to Take When a Young Person Comes to You for Help](#).



9. Make the Kidpower Protection Promise to your athletes

- Even if we can't solve the problem directly, we can still provide support and resources in finding someone who can help.
- Discuss the Kidpower Protection Promise with your team: "You are very important to me. If you have a safety problem, I want to know - even if I seem too busy, even if someone we care about will be upset, even if it is embarrassing, even if you promised not to tell, and even if you made a mistake. Please tell me, and I will do everything in my power to help you." Coaches, imagine the impact we can have if we make this pledge to all the young people we work with!



10. Recognize the importance of following these steps

- While doing this can take a little extra time and work; when abuse has happened in an organization or school, it is devastating
- People in these situations say they would have done ANYTHING - spent any amount of time, effort, and money - to prevent the abuse

