

# ADDRESSING ATHLETES' BASE NEEDS

In order to thrive, young athletes have certain needs. Coaches can play an integral role in meeting these needs by intentionally creating an environment where athletes feel included, make decisions, develop competencies, and participate in meaningful activities.

## **B** BELONGING    **A** AUTONOMY    **S** SKILL-BUILDING    **E** EXPERIENCES

### ✓ **BELONGING** → The need to feel accepted and cared for by others

#### IF ATHLETES DON'T FEEL THEY BELONG, THEY MAY:

- Act out, cause disruption
- Show indifference towards others
- Be argumentative
- Instigate disruptive behavior or clash with teammates

#### TO CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING, COACHES CAN:

- Include a team check-in at opening circle
- Incorporate teambuilding and 'get to know you' activities
- Demonstrate fairness with all athletes
- Use grouping strategies to negate cliques and demonstrate that everyone is equal
- Emphasize respect for differences among the team

### ✓ **AUTONOMY** → The need to have choice and control of their own experience

#### IF ATHLETES DON'T FEEL THEY HAVE AUTONOMY, THEY MAY:

- Act angry at others
- Be uncooperative
- Be stubborn
- Not want to participate

#### TO CREATE A SENSE OF AUTONOMY, COACHES CAN:

- Ask athletes to voice opinions in a structured way
- Implement some of their athletes' suggestions
- Ask athletes to demonstrate stretches, skills or activities
- Give the space to try new ways of implementing a skill
- Offer opt-in and opt-out opportunities

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If the BASE needs are not met, young people can struggle and exhibit certain behaviors. On these pages are tips for what you might see if athletes don't have certain needs met and what you can do to meet those needs.

## B BELONGING    A AUTONOMY    S SKILL-BUILDING    E EXPERIENCES

### ✓ SKILL-BUILDING → The need to feel competency and a belief in their own ability

#### IF ATHLETES DON'T FEEL THEY ARE BUILDING SKILLS, THEY MAY:

- Stop trying when unsuccessful
- Say "this is stupid" about activities
- Stop participating
- Encourage others to not participate or distract them

#### TO CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING, COACHES CAN:

- Incorporate fundamental skill building that meets athletes' age and skill level
- Manage competitive games so athletes are not singled out for lack of skill
- Immediately respond to teasing around ability level
- Be specific with praise and encourage progress over performance

### ✓ EXPERIENCES → The need to participate in meaningful and relevant experiences

#### IF ATHLETES DON'T FEEL THEIR EXPERIENCE IS MEANINGFUL, THEY MAY:

- Act bored
- Show a lack of effort
- Have side conversations while the coach is talking
- Be off task

#### TO MAKE TEAM ACTIVITIES MORE MEANINGFUL, COACHES CAN:

- Incorporate appropriate activities based on skill level and age of athletes
- Provide leadership opportunities
- Ask athletes what activities they want to play
- Be enthusiastic to further engage the team
- Participate in activities alongside athletes