

# Coaching Girls - 4 Action Steps

*"Tennis and sports was the one area where I felt safest and most confident."*

- Lindsay Davenport

## About PCA

PCA believes that all youth can benefit from a positive, inclusive sports culture that develops social and emotional skills, molds character, and prepares them for competition and life. PCA ensures sports are 'done right' with programming that is research-based and designed to have impact at three levels in a youth sports organization or school:

**YOUTH:** experience improved life skills and character development.

**COACHES:** become more positive and increase their focus on using sports to teach life lessons.

**SCHOOLS:** see their cultures become more positive and everyone involved has more fun and stays involved.

Follow these four actions to foster a sport experience where every girl feels respected, included, and engaged.



## Culture: Safe and Inclusive

It is a coaches' responsibility to create and sustain a team culture where girls feel safe in the sport space. Do this by:

- **Supporting Gender Related Challenges** - consider gender-oriented challenges and advocate where needed (i.e. uniform colors and styles).
- **Supporting the Spaces** - ensure girls have a safe space - whether it's equal field time or an area in the weight room where girls have priority.
- **Using Inclusive Language** - call players by their preferred names; avoid using "guys".

**More Tips:** Consider how coaches, leaders, staff, and players can support one another across teams. Having boys' teams and coaches support girls' teams and vice versa helps increase inclusiveness. Coaches and leadership should also work to provide equitable mentions and promotions of girls' sporting events and endeavors.



## Compete: Effort and Progress

Many girls come to our teams facing overwhelming amounts of stress in their lives. Building opportunities for safe, predictable stress can help build resilience. To do this, consider:

- **Goals Motivate Girls** - collaborate to set achievable goals with players on your team.
- **Control the Controllables** - focus on effort instead of results and identify progress made.
- **Mistake Ritual** - encourage girls to use a mistake ritual to mentally reset in the moment, but also learn from mistakes through reflection.

**More Tips:** Given studies showing girls' interest in reaching new goals in sports, help players set goals oriented toward their specific skills and abilities. Ensure every girl on the team can track and appreciate her emerging accomplishments and is appreciated by the coaching staff regardless of aptitude.



## Connection: Friends and Fun

The research is clear that connection with coaches and teammates is key to a positive experience for girls in sports. Develop connections using:

- **Teambuilding** - be intentional about bringing the team together early in the season through off the field activities, team-led conditioning, or teambuilding games.
- **Girl Led Mentoring** - use veteran athletes to mentor and connect with younger athletes.
- **Winner's Circle** - bring the team together to give positive athlete to athlete feedback.

**More Tips:** Girls' motivations to play sports hinges a great deal on having fun (among other motivations). Coaches should assess the 'fun' factor of practices, games, and work-outs to ensure that fun is present and balanced while pursuing excellence. Competitive goals can help engage girls further in the sport and help them stay in the game longer.



## Collaboration: Voice and Choice

When girls have control over their experience, they feel more connected to their team. This is especially true for any girls who have experienced trauma. Provide opportunities to collaborate by:

- **Giving Athletes Voice and Choice** - give athletes the opportunity to voice their opinions about and/or choose certain activities, team mottos, etc.
- **Talking Less, Listening More** - start conversations with a question; listen to understand and not respond.
- **Inviting Your Athletes' Feedback** - model to girls that their voices and opinions matter by encouraging them to speak up and provide feedback.

**More Tips:** At the end of the season, check in with girls on the team regarding thoughts on their experience - both from a day-to-day and 'big picture' perspective. Find out what is working and what needs tweaking to help the experience be girl-centered and informed by girls' genuine input.

For more great tips  
on coaching and  
engaging girls,  
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