

HOW COACHES CAN BUILD SAFE, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

Building safe, trusting relationships with and amongst your athletes is the foundation for creating a positive sports culture. These relationships have many benefits, including helping athletes...

**POSITIVE
COACHING
ALLIANCE**®

- ✓ Make friends more easily
- ✓ Collaborate more effectively
- ✓ Perform at a higher level
- ✓ Experience improved mental health
- ✓ Feel safer
- ✓ Take on challenges without fear of failure
- ✓ Engage more fully in learning
- ✓ Increase their effort

TO CREATE THESE SAFE AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR ATHLETES, COACHES CAN:

✓ LEARN NAMES QUICKLY

Ask athlete their preferred name and call them by that name.

✓ GET TO KNOW EACH ATHLETE AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Be curious, ask open ended questions, and reflect on any personal biases that may be affecting your interactions.

✓ USE INFORMAL PRE AND POST-PRACTICE TIME TO CONNECT

Move around the space to connect with all athletes.

✓ REFLECT ON YOUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS

When evaluating athletes skills and areas for growth. Focus on behavior, technical skills, and process, versus the person.

✓ CREATE EMPATHETIC CONNECTIONS

Listen to understand your athletes' experiences.

✓ GIVE SPECIFIC, POSITIVE, AND INFORMATION-BASED FEEDBACK

Research shows that the amount, type, content, and tone of coach feedback can alter how athletes will perform and develop, both physically and mentally.

✓ BE CLEAR AND CONCISE WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Be aware of how your tone of voice impacts athletes, and when making corrections be sure to praise the athlete when you see improvement.

✓ SET CLEAR, COLLABORATIVE GROUP EXPECTATIONS

Set expectations about how athletes treat themselves, each other, coaches, opponents, and referees.

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HOW COACHES CAN BUILD SAFE, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS



✓ REACT QUICKLY

This helps prevent put-downs, bullying, or cliques.

✓ OBSERVE CONSTANTLY

Notice if any athletes are being excluded. Be proactive and create ways to include anyone feeling left out.

✓ PLAY WITH THEM

Laugh and smile. Show athletes that you want to be there.

TO FORGE CONNECTIONS AMONGST TEAMMATES, COACHES CAN:

✓ BEGIN A SEASON, OR A TRAINING SESSION WITH AN ACTIVITY THAT ENCOURAGES INTERACTION

Finding common ground, and inclusion.

✓ RUN TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Run activities that promote collaboration, communication, and trust.

✓ UTILIZE PERSONAL CHECK-INS

So your athletes know how their teammates are doing. For example, during the opening of practice ask your athletes to show a thumb up, sideways, or down to share how they are doing that day.

✓ USE A BUDDY SYSTEM

Pair up athletes, or create smaller groups. These buddies can provide support and encouragement.

✓ INCLUDE RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

Include these questions in your debriefing of a practice or game. For example you could ask "Who saw a teammate trying hard?" Or "Who saw someone else improve today?"

✓ TEACH PLAYERS HOW TO GIVE POSITIVE AND INFORMATION-BASED FEEDBACK

Ensuring they identify the specific skill and recognize growth and effort.

✓ USE POSITIVE TEAM RITUALS

Build camaraderie and team unity.

✓ KNOW WHEN TO GET OUT OF THE WAY

Know when to let athletes play with each other.

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