

# HOW COACHES CAN EMPHASIZE LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

*"If one of my coaches had the courage to say the words "gay athlete" or LGBTQ+" in a positive context, that would have changed my life. Saying those words creates an environment where athletes know they can trust their coach. This support would have made me a better player and affirmed me as a person."*

- **Wade Davis, Former NFL Player & Sports Inclusion Activist**

**POSITIVE  
COACHING  
ALLIANCE**

For coaches, respect and inclusion are key elements for any successful team. If you don't call out derogatory language and discuss the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) athletes, your team culture can quickly turn negative and unwelcoming. This means athletes will perform worse or even quit due to a lack of support.

**Below are steps you can take to make sure that all of your athletes feel included, supported, and motivated to perform at their best.**

## PREP WORK

- ✓ Don't assume that no one on your team is gay simply because no one has come out yet. Even for athletes who aren't gay, they may have LGBTQ+ family members and friends.
- ✓ Learn the general definitions of LGBTQ+ identity. We recommend you practice saying the words "lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer" (LGBTQ+) before speaking to your team.
- ✓ Acknowledge that, as a coach, you set the tone of respect on your team. Don't expect athletes to step up and call out derogatory language if you aren't doing so yourself.
- ✓ Language is one of the most crucial components for making your team a safe space. What you say and what you don't say has a huge impact on your team.
- ✓ Find out about the school's resources to support LGBTQ+ students. Have a point person you can connect with if an athlete comes out to you and they are in need of support. Meet with administrators and team captains to enroll them in your action plan [see below].
- ✓ Understand current issues, resources, and campaigns to support LGBTQ+ athletes on a national level. We encourage you to visit [www.youcanplayproject.org](http://www.youcanplayproject.org)



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## ACTION PLAN

### BEGINNING OF THE SEASON

- ✓ At your first team meeting, state your zero tolerance for derogatory language.
- ✓ Make sure to say the word "LGBTQ+" when laying out your ground rules. It's not enough to say "we respect everyone."

### THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

- ✓ Listen and call out derogatory language and behavior and monitor locker room behavior and other spaces considered to be "unsafe."
- ✓ Show your visible support with a button, badge, pin, video, t shirt, or a positive statement on social media.
- ✓ Schedule time to check in with athletes that seem distant or excluded to ask them how things are going.
- ✓ Evaluate your progress and team culture with an anonymous, mid-season team survey.

### END OF THE SEASON

- ✓ Continue to spread the word to other coaches and advocate for having the discussion at schoolwide, conference, or regional level.

We encourage you to educate yourself through the additional [You Can Play online materials](#) along with information about other related organizations and [resources](#) for LGBTQ+ youth, parents, coaches, and educators.

*This resource was produced in partnership with You Can Play.*



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