A Guide to Promoting Moral Development through Team Meetings

Play Like a Champion Today
2016 Baton Rouge Catholic Educators Gathering

Kristin Sheehan
Kristin.sheehan@playlikeachampion.org
THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH SPORTS

- It is estimated that over 40 million children between the ages of 5 and 18 play sports in the United States.
- Asked whether they have more moral influence in the classroom or on the ball field, 70% to 80% of teachers who are coaches say the ball field.
- Sports, which cannot be played without rules fairly enforced should offer a distinct opportunity to develop athlete morality.
DO SPORTS CONTRIBUTE TO MORAL DEVELOPMENT?

The Templeton group culture study shows that sports teams are the most powerful resource at our disposal for developing adolescents’ sense of social responsibility and concern for the common good.
WHAT IS CHARACTER?

Character includes:

- The virtues related to excellence – courage, effort, persistence
- The virtues related to **justice** - showing respect and playing within the rules.
- The virtues related to **prudence** - learning to make responsible decisions and to act on them.
SPORTS AND THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

☐ Prudence: Decision-making

☐ Justice: Right Relationships

☐ Fortitude: Courage

☐ Temperance: Keeping desires under rational control
OUR FOCUS: JUSTICE AND CARE

☐ Within the team: Building relationships among players and developing sense of responsibility for each other and team as a whole.

☐ Outside team: Focus on Fairness in treatment of opponents and referees.
THE COACH IS KEY

- Coaches can influence the conditions that promote moral development.
- Coach education is essential.
- Opportunities for coach education are limited – Should be promoted.

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STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT


Stage 3: Individuals put themselves in others shoes and apply the golden rule. Moral motivation – mutuality and being good for goodness sake.

Stage 4: Individuals take the perspective of the team as a social system and seek the Common good. Moral motivation – Upholding the moral order and reputation of group.
STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

COACHING

- Stage 1: Authority. “My way or the highway.”
- Stage 2: Exchange. “My way or else.”
- Stage 3: Trust and relationships. “My way because I know what is good for the team.”
- Stage 4: Law and Order. “The team’s way is the only way. There is no ‘I’ in team.”
- Stage 5: Justice and Contract: “We all make the rules according to principles of justice and respect.”
COACHING FOR MORAL DEVELOPMENT

- Transition from Stage 2 to 3 – wean players from extrinsic rewards and punishment to intrinsic and team-oriented motivation (Please teammates).

- Transition from Stage 3 to 4 – take the perspective of the coach, the officials, and the league administrators.

- Sports can help players to grow morally if coaches deliberately act as moral educators by:
  - emphasizing that moral values come before all else;
  - taking time before each practice and game to call attention to moral values;
  - taking time after each practice and game to evaluate how well the team lived up to its espoused values; and
  - helping players to develop their moral reasoning by discussing moral problems with players (e.g., Bill gave Jim an elbow under the basket. What should Jim do if Bill tries that again? Why? What is the right way for Jim to respond and why is that the right way?).

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THE GROW APPROACH

RELATIONSHIPS
(Justice)

GOALS

GROW

OWNERSHIP
(Prudence)

WINNING

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Promoting Moral Development

☐ Weekly Team Meeting - Essential

☐ The coach can only facilitate and point the way; the players do the work.

☐ Development occurs through problem-posing and solving.
THE PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION APPROACH TO MORAL EDUCATION

Three Goals

1. Promote moral reasoning
2. Promote moral responsibility
3. Promote moral identity
Topics for Team Community Meetings

A. **Discipline.** issues that have surfaced or are likely to surface:

*lateness, missing practice, lack of preparation for practice, lack of effort in practice, disruptive behavior on the team, teasing and verbal abuse, and alcohol and drug use.*
B. The Social and Academic Life

- Not disciplinary, but relationship oriented
- Tensions between males and females, blacks and whites, one clique and another
- Students/Athletes who are not accepted into the community and feel that they do not belong
- Commitment of group to *mastery* environment (distinguish from performance)
Discussion Process

A. Discuss; Don't Lecture or Exhort

• Key to success is student participation

• Typically coaches deal with issues by exhortation, that is, by reminding students of goals & ideals of the program or by appealing to students' good sense

• Coaches should do all they can to encourage student participation in the discussion; ask the students what can/should “we” do.
Discussion Process

B. Ask Sufficiently Open-ended Questions

- Coaches should avoid presenting their own analysis of a problem and then asking students to agree or disagree
- WRONG: Coming in late and missing team warm up is just foolish; isn't it?
- RIGHT: Is lateness a problem for us? Why or Why not?
Discussion Process

C. Make Sure Problems are seen as the Community's Problems

- Coaches should encourage athletes to "own" the problem *(Do others see a problem with X? Is X a problem for this community? Why or Why not?)*

- Remember that young people are typically used to having adults do all the "police work" for them.
Discussion Process

D. Use "We" and "Our" language

- May begin discussion with personal observations
- Quickly shift the discussion to whether this is a problem for **OUR** community and what **WE** are going to do about it.
- Students will be inclined to view problems in two-party terms, as between the coach and an individual athlete.
- Key to success is to help develop an awareness that athletes and coaches are part of a whole ("no man [or woman] is an island." “No I in Team.”)
Discussion Process

E. Encourage Role-taking

- An easy way of getting students to discuss disciplinary and life issues is to ask them how they would deal with an issue if they were a coach, the principal, or another student.
- This helps athletes stand “in the shoes” of another which is the heart of the Golden Rule.
Discussion Process

F. Frame issues in ways that arouse interest and differences of opinion

- For example, most young people will find the issue of whether slacking in practice is wrong to be boring because they all agree that it is wrong.

- On the other hand, asking young people whether it is fair to punish all team members for one person slacking in practice is likely to stimulate a spirited exchange.
Discussion Process

G. Give the Discussion Sufficient Time

- Don't rush a discussion so that there will be a resolution with a single team meeting.
- Most discussions will take at least two periods before everyone is prepared to agree on a specific resolution.
Discussion Process

H. Tie discussion to community action

- Students will quickly become bored with discussion that does not lead to action
- When bringing up an issue for discussion have in mind some specific response that the community might agree to at the end of the discussion so there is active closure.
D. Discuss Athlete Responsibilities for Enforcement. Ask athletes to commit themselves to encourage others to uphold the rule and to report violations of the rules to the community.

Can there be a difference between “reporting to community” and “ratting out” a peer?
Shared Decision-Making

E. Use Direct Participatory Democracy. All members of the community, students and coaches should have a vote.

F. Take Straw Votes. Straw Votes are used to poll the community before coming to a decision. Taking a straw vote can help identify the extent of disagreement in a group and slow down the process to allow for further discussion.
Shared Decision-Making

G. Try for Consensus. Ideally everyone in a community should agree on a policy before it is adopted.

H. Use Majority Rule. Realistically not everyone will agree. Eventually the majority will rule.

I. Act As A Facilitator and An Advocate. Coaches have the primary responsibility for facilitating the discussion process. They may also advocate a position as a member of the community. The rule for advocacy is that coaches should not coerce or browbeat athletes but rationally persuade. Coaches should not hesitate to be community leaders. However, they should always try to foster leadership among the students.
Shared Decision-Making: Conclusion

J. When you are as close to consensus as possible, end the discussion and take a vote.

K. Make sure all members of the team understand that their decision binds them as members of the team until they as a team change the decision.

L. Remind your team of “our decision,” “our agreement,” “our policy.”

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