

Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports Calls for Coaches Outline

Note: This is an outline for the complementary brief to the white paper that we have shared. The intended audience is parent volunteer coaches and the brief's goals are:

- *To help coaches, especially parent coaches, understand why youth sports is a great venue to develop social and emotional skills*
- *To provide strategies and best practices for coaches to adopt that intentionally name, model, and create environments to develop and practice social and emotional skills*

Introduction

Opening Message: The value of an athlete's relationship with a coach(es) to provide all the skills to be successful on and off the field

- Opening letter from athlete/coach
- Stories and quotes from athletes and coaches

Short summary of the white paper and framework of foundational skills for how we learn

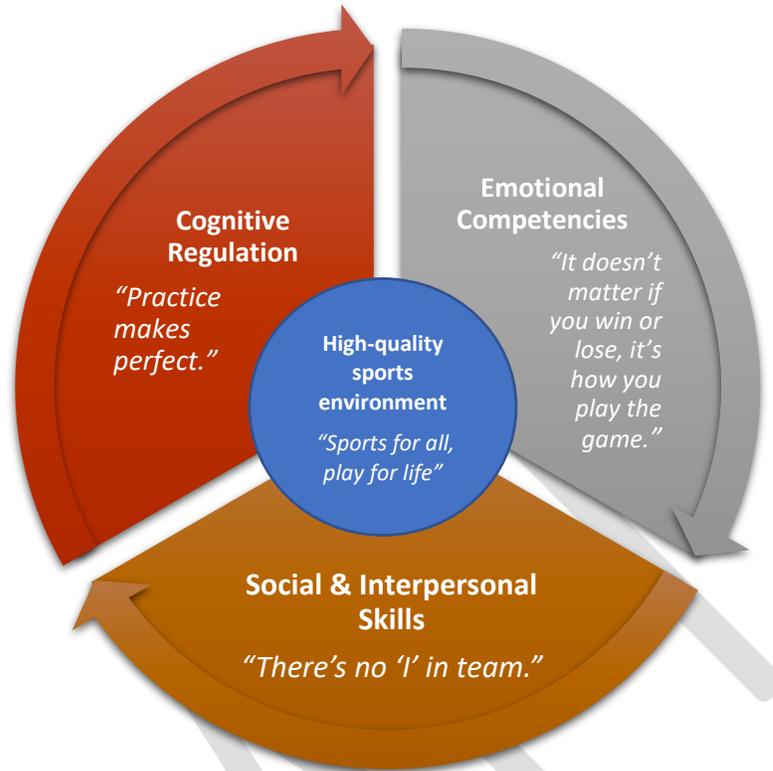
- Social and emotional learning refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling and other community-based activities, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship
- Sports and physical activities provide a promising context to build social and emotional skills:
 - Many children already participate in sports and physical activities, be it individual or team-based, structured or unstructured, and these contexts are filled with opportunities to build important skills such as teamwork and cooperation, empathy and prosocial behavior, planning and problem solving, just to name a few
 - Out-of-school time settings like sports and recreational contexts often enjoy greater flexibility in terms of goals and programming, tending to be less formal and structured than those that take place in classrooms or other school settings, providing increased opportunities to develop relationships and build social and emotional skills
 - Sports and other physical based activities also provide ample opportunities to build on positive youth development frameworks:
 1. Youth-Adult Relationships—positive sustained relationships with adults
 2. Skill Development—opportunities to develop and practice life skills
 3. Opportunities for Leadership—opportunities to use life skills as leaders in valued activities
- Given the considerable amount of time children spend participating in sports and other organized physical activities, and that these settings are particularly conducive to social and emotional skill development, sports settings represent an important context in which to

intentionally build these skills, alongside the development of the physical competencies to successful in sports:

- Physical activity requires the use of executive functions such as working memory, attention control inhibition, and planning (McClelland & Cameron, 2018; Daly, McMinn, & Allan, 2015)
- Important executive function skills are associated with long-term maintenance of physical activity participation (Mullen & Hall, 2015)
- Higher physical fitness is associated with improved performance and problem solving (Mullen & Hall, 2015; Lubans et al., 2016)
- Physical activity also provides youth with opportunities to build self-efficacy and perceived competence, which in turn, are associated with initiating and sustaining physical activity (Kipp & Weiss, 2013)

Foundational Skills for How We Learn

- *Cognitive regulation* can be thought of as the basic skills required to direct behavior toward the attainment of a goal. This set of skills includes executive functions such as working memory, attention control and flexibility, inhibition, and planning, as well as beliefs and attitudes that guide one's sense of self and approaches to learning and growth. Children use cognitive regulation skills whenever faced with tasks that require concentration, planning (including carrying out intentional physical movement), problem solving, coordination, conscious choices among alternatives, or overriding a strong internal or external desire;
- *Emotional competencies* are a set of skills and understandings that help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions, as well as engage in empathy and perspective-taking around the emotions of others. Emotional skills allow children to recognize how different situations make them feel and to address those feelings in prosocial ways. Consequently, they are often fundamental to positive social interactions and critical to building relationships with peers and adults; and
- *Social and interpersonal skills* support children and youth to accurately interpret other people's behavior, effectively navigate social situations, and interact positively with peers and adults. Social and interpersonal skills build on emotional knowledge and processes; children must learn to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions before they can be expected to interact with others who are engaged in the same set of processes. Children must be able to use these social/interpersonal processes effectively in order to work collaboratively, solve social problems, and coexist peacefully with others.



Calls for Coaches

These represent best practices that coaches can do to develop, model, and foster social and emotional skills. These build on practices that coaches often already do but strengthen their connection to the development of social and emotional skills. In addition, there are connections with other resources for coaches to learn more.

- **Know Every Kid's Story**

Build positive adult-youth relationships, building connection and meaningful relationships

- Be mindful of coach language and tone
- Reciprocal relationships that develop over time
- Provide opportunities for youth agency (voice and choice)

Practice Spotlight:

- Ask every kid what name he/she would prefer and call them by that name
- Allow athletes to serve as team captains
- Organize check-in meetings with your players throughout the season

Resource Spotlight:

- Search Institute [Ideas for Building Developmental Relationships](#)

- **Establish a Supportive Team Culture**

Create a safe space that supports social and emotional learning

- Characterized by support, safety, belongingness, respect, positive attitudes, caring behaviors, and effective emotion management

Practice Spotlight:

- Youth-led practices
- Create a team cheer
- Set norms/rules for practices
- Rotate leadership roles between team members

Resource Spotlight: Futures Without Violence's Coaching with Courage Training Module

- Futures Without Violence's Coaching with Courage Training Module (*forthcoming*)
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation's [Training Center](#)
- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments [Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms](#)

- **Celebrate Effort**

Embody effective leadership strategies that emphasize effort, autonomy, and learning

- Communal sense of learning and valuing/rewarding effort
- Treat all athletes equally
- Avoiding criticism or rewards to shape behavior
- Give sincere, earned praise using specific words

Practice Spotlight:

- Shout-outs at the end of the practice;
- Set clear expectations regarding social norm;
- Girls on the Run: 3rd-5th Grade [celebratory 5k completion](#)

Resource Spotlight:

- [Playworks RecessLab](#)
- [InsideOut Initiative](#)
- Positive Coaching Alliance [Positive Charting](#)
- Mindset Kit [Growth Mindset Toolkit](#)

- **Teach Social and Emotional Skills**

Prioritize social and emotional learning and provide opportunities for direct skill building and practice

- Integrate skill building instructions, practices, and application into daily routine

Practice Spotlight:

- Reflect on experiences/skills and how to use in other settings
- Encourage high-fives or handshakes for greetings
- The First Tee has [9 Core Values](#) that are introduced and incorporated throughout the program. Parents are encouraged to reinforce these behaviors by talking about them, what they mean, and what these behaviors can look like at home

Resource Spotlight:

- [Playworks Game Library](#)
- [SEL Thrive](#)

- **Be a Role Model**

Model positive behavior and social and emotional skills

- Model positive behavior in interactions with other adults, youth, and particularly when mediating conflicts
- Demonstrate and discuss difference between right and wrong

Practice Spotlight:

- Participate in drills with players
- Practice positive interactions that are encouraged of players
- *Practice self care, engage in reflection around your own social and emotional wellbeing*

Resource Spotlight:

- [Resources](#) from MENTOR
- SEL Thrive [Self-Assessment](#)

- **Be Coachable**

Seek opportunities for support, training, and professional development for adults

- Collaborate with other adults, especially for reflection and debrief
- Understand the foundational skills for how we learn

Practice Spotlight:

- Organize “coaching corner” socials with other coaches in the league or in the community
- Learn from players as much as they are expected to learn from each other and the coach

Resource Spotlight:

- USOC [How to Coach Kids](#) with Project Play
- [USOC Quality Coaching Framework](#)
- Positive Coaching Alliance [Development Zone Resource Center](#) – includes free resources for first time coaches, parent/coach conflict, and recruiting

- **Join Forces**

Seek opportunities to engage with families, schools, and other community organizations

- Collaborate with other coaches to design practice
- Align with language, framework, and strategies used in schools or at home
- Increase opportunities for high-quality sports experiences for all young people

Practice Spotlight:

- Offer family hour after practices or games
- Design a practice for families to participate in with their players
- Join community events, meetings and networks

Resource Spotlight:

- [Up2Us Sports Case Studies](#)
- Aspen NCSEAD [Building Partnerships](#)

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Checklist of specific practices

Acknowledgements including list of strategic advisors

Citations

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