

Coaching - Understanding children better

Children watch carefully to learn about life from people they love and trust. They need a village atmosphere, where they are surrounded by people they can trust and to develop people skills. A team environment is the ideal stage for the positive development of a child where there is lots of input. These experiences and mentoring will go a long way for them to become well-adjusted and balanced members of our society.

Children with good moods, confidence and positive expectations usually produce successful outcomes in school sports, making friends, and in life itself. The values, beliefs and habits you instil in the child will become the foundation they'll use forever. Both positive and negative patterns of thinking become well entrenched by the time a child reaches adolescence. Concentrate on the positive at all times.

Creating friendship qualities

Children learn their first lessons about making friends from observing us. Coaches can demonstrate the qualities and effort necessary to make new friends and keep old friendships going. Let children see what is required to have quality friendships. Let them hear you speaking to their parents about the game and other things. They will learn a lot from your good example. With your positive model, they will naturally begin to develop the attributes of a loyal friend.

Acknowledging achievements

Children thrive on encouragement. Any evidence of success, even just remembering to do the practices, is a reason to celebrate and acknowledge the child's effort. If we keep our comments honest and sincere, children will feel supported and empowered. Remember that we may be the coach but it is still the child's game. Children love to hear about their worth and abilities, especially spoken aloud by people whom they love and respect, e.g. "Well done, Johnny".

Children are naturally positive and upbeat about who they are, but criticism or ridicule from parents or coaches can make even a young person to doubt themselves. Children achieve countless successes every day; let us take the time to acknowledge them for as many of these successes as possible. Providing the praise is sincere. It's inconceivable that we could never acknowledge a child too much. Be careful though, children can sense when you are being dishonest, so if you don't believe the child has a particular quality, you are better to focus on other positive qualities that they possess. Acknowledging:

- increases motivation.
- improves a child's self-esteem
- gives children self-confidence
- teaches children to trust their decisions
- motivates children to seek goals
- develops responsibility.

Using positive instructions

Some children may build up resistance if they feel **pressured** to treat the exercises as "work" rather than "play". You may have to **relearn** some of the ways you give directions or ask for a particular kind of behaviour by paying special attention

to the words you use. For example: "Don't panic" is a signal to panic without any solution to the situation. "Panic" is the last instruction heard and is therefore the image, which will be retained. It would be best to say something like: "Johnny, look around and cover the defence" or "Jim, look up and play it forward". Providing a positive statement rather than a negative one.

Encouraging positive thinking

Children worry at times, and a negative child will often fall into the pattern of constantly worrying. The practice of eliminating negatives is a highly desirable process. Together, you will conclude that positive thinking is always better. It is easier and wiser to coach a happy, healthy child than to repair an adult.

An easy way to explain to children how to eliminate negative thoughts is to compare our mind to a garden. Children can easily understand this analogy.

'Our mind is like a garden. And in our garden are both flowers and weeds. Flowers are the positive thoughts and there are many different types of them. Just like there are many different flowers. Each one is different and looks different and smells different. The same applies to negative thoughts; there are many different types of these negative thoughts, and they are like weeds' and have to be eliminated.

Providing a solution

Children don't have to be happy all the time. If the truth be told, sometimes a good vent is the best for everyone. Often it clears the air and provides the impetus for change. Young children have a unique and powerful capacity to accept whatever "truths" we present to them with conviction and assurance. Every problem has a solution and opportunity within it. As the familiar adage says, "Every dark cloud has a silver lining."

Giving added responsibilities

Children are much more capable than we typically believe. Once a child has entered the preschool years, complete dependency upon adults is unhealthy and counterproductive to the child's further development. Children may **try** to feign dependency at times, as an excuse to have others do things for them. They may well see certain advantages in pretending to be less capable than they are. However, it is nature's design for children to assert their own independence. If you give children responsibility, they will almost always respond well. Children should be allowed to take risks, unless, of course, they are life threatening. They should be allowed to make mistakes too. Making mistakes is a part of life. In fact, "getting it wrong sometimes" (a better phrase than "failure") is a normal part of creativity. Failure, should always be looked at as something temporary, a stepping stone to any eventual success.

Coaching - Dealing with Difficult Children

Introduction

A coach is required to coach players from all walks of life and to transform them into a single unit - working together to achieve the same objective.

The players need to understand their responsibilities toward the running of the team and where the coach is coming from.

To this end, a set of rules (copy attached) has been established by the club. These rules must be discussed with the players before the start of the season. The need for discipline is to be used as a last resort.

A player who violates the rules should be instantly spoken to by the coach and depending the severity of the incident:

1. Ask the questions as set out below and gain assurance the rules will be complied with; if no success,
2. Send the player to the Think Tank so that the situation can be thought through; or,
3. Suspend the player from team activities for a given period with a written report going to the Non Comp Junior Football Chairperson.

Any player suspended for more than one week shall have a right of appeal to the Junior Football Chairperson.

What is the Think Tank (TT)?

TT is an area set down near the field and near the location of the supervisor, where a player can go and reflect on why he was sent there. A responsible adult should be selected to supervise the player. The player, as well as the supervisor should be made specifically aware why he/she is sent to the TT. The player is required to stay at the TT until he has agreed to come to terms with the rules of the team. Once that has been agreed, through the supervisor, the player can resume activities with the team.

Procedure - dealing with difficult children

The most important point to remember when dealing with children is that they are, like all of us, human beings. They have their own wants and goals, they have created their own unique ways of perceiving the world, they plan and structure their ways of living so that their lives are the ways they want them to be, and they have their own specific priorities.

Lecturing children, telling them what they should be doing, making judgments about what you think is wrong with them - all these strategies have been tried for years and have never worked. They just make things worse! Any time you try to force children into a specific way of thinking or push on them in any way, you cannot guarantee how they will deal with you. And if they perceive what you do as criticism or abuse, you're in for a lot of pushing back.

The key in working with children is to ignore excuses, not encourage them. A question that should be avoided is "Why did you do it?" When you ask why, you are encouraging children to avoid taking responsibility.

Regardless of the why, the key to helping children take responsibility is to stick with the critical elements: what they did, the rules, where they want to be, and what will happen the next time they disrupt.

"Why did you do it?" often leads them to try to justify their actions. Then, all kinds of reasons and excuses will pour out as they attempt to avoid responsibility.

Remember to ask the questions in a calm, respectful, curious voice. Never yell, lecture, or tell; always ask. Stay focused, and stay with the sequence outlined below. This method is used around the world.

1. "What are you doing?"

Most always, this question should be asked first. Any time children

break the rules or don't conform to criteria or guidelines, the first focus of concern should always be the way they handle themselves, to become aware of their actions, and, more importantly, how their actions might affect others.

2. "What are the rules?"

To maintain mutual respect, you have to tie whatever they are doing to the rules and standards of wherever they find themselves. You are teaching them to compare what they are doing to the standards of their environment rather than what you want them to do. Then, you are more likely to be perceived as a respectful, interested party, and not as someone who is trying to control them. When you say such things as "do what I say" and "my rules are," students will see themselves as dealing with you, not the rules. It should be clear that they are dealing with the rules, not you.

Once they are committed to following the rules, you should be willing to help them create a workable plan to achieve their goals. That's what maintains mutual respect. When you yell, tell, argue, lecture, or insist on having your own way, they'll perceive you as controlling, and conflict will rear its ugly head.

3. "What happens when you break the rules?"

Here, you are simply getting them to reflect on the consequences of breaking the rules. If there are no consequences, or if they are inconsistently applied, this will work against their learning the purpose of rules and the responsible way of living. They must believe something will happen every time they break the rules or a growing respect for others will never develop.

4. "Is this what you want to happen?"

Now you are asking them to look within themselves and decide how they want to be as persons. You are really asking them if this is the way they see themselves and how they want to live their lives.

Most children look to consequences as something that will happen to them. This question brings home the fact that, indeed, this will happen to them - but it is within their power to make changes.

Once they decide to make changes in how they want to be as persons (which might take a short time or months on end), questions three, four, and five will no longer be needed. This will be apparent from the reaction you will get after asking, "What are you doing?" They'll throw up their hands or roll their eyes and say "Yeah, OK, I know." They've worked through how they want to be, and now they're learning to deal with being that way on a continuing basis.

5. "Where do you want to be?" or "What do you want to do now?"

This step can be used interchangeably with the prior one. The point here is to get closure as to what they really want.

6. "What will happen if you disrupt again?"

This question, along with the first, should always be asked, even with those children who have already reflected and decided to change how they want to be. It asks, in a different way, the same thing as question four.

Children who disrupt could be keeping other children from learning. They certainly can make it difficult for coaches who want to coach and keep their players on task.

What this process is doing is asking students to think about what they are doing in relation to the rules of wherever they are. This would include losing their right to remain where they are if they continue to violate the rights of others.

They aren't being threatened by the use of these questions. Rather, the children are being asked to look at the possibility of losing their rights and privileges by violating the rules.

Dealing with Children Who Evade Responsibility

Not all children are compliant. When asked "What are you doing?" some say nothing, some say "It's not my fault" or "He was talking first," and some defend their actions by explaining what they were trying to do. The key is this: when they avoid answering a question, repeat it. If they persist in not dealing with you, then ask "Do you want to work on this or not?" If they continue to avoid dealing with you, then say, "You need to go to the Think Tank." Once you have said this, never back down. If you back down, you are, in effect, establishing an additional time for disrupting.

Dealing with Those Who Disrupt after Settling Down

If children answer the questions and settle down but later begin to disrupt again, then ask "What are you doing?" and then "What did you say would happen the next time you disrupted?" This question gets them to look within themselves and reflect on where they themselves admitted they had to go.

You are not the "bad guy" but are simply asking them to reflect on how the system works. If they become angry, it is likely that they are mad at themselves for having created this situation. But it is important here to note that, as mentioned earlier, you must ask the questions in a calm, curious, and respectful way. When they answer that they have to go to the Think Tank, then the final question from you should be "So where do you need to go now?"

The Think Tank is where children go who need help in creating a plan that is designed to help them work through the problems they are having with following the rules and respecting others' rights. Once they've arrived at the Think Tank, they should not be pressured into making a plan. That decision should come from them. Some might sit for a while, angry at themselves, but that's acceptable.

They are struggling within themselves, and that's a healthy sign. Once they ask for a plan, they've accepted responsibility for dealing differently with the way they tried to achieve their goals, and especially for how they treated others. Then, ask them if they are willing to set a goal to work at solving their problems in that area. If they say yes, that is the first step toward their success in dealing with others. You are trying to determine if they are really committed to changing the way they want to be, and how hard they are willing to work to make that happen.

Negotiating Plans Is Important to the Process

A plan should never be ignored or refused. It should always be treated as a sincere commitment. Negotiating is critical to building player/coach relationships. Always use questions—they help to teach responsible thinking.

After Negotiating, the Player Is Readmitted to Team

Not all children think of their plans as ongoing restructurings of how

they deal with their difficulties. Some see plan making as a way of "playing the game to get people off their backs."

Many teachers have found that when children disrupt again after negotiating plans, the following questions are especially helpful:

"What are you doing?"

"Are you following your plan?" "Is your plan working?"

"Do you want to change your plan?"

Asking such questions provides opportunities for children to reflect on their plans and to relate them to any present difficulties they might be having.

Examples

She said she arrived home and found seven teenagers in her 15-year-old son's bedroom. He made a flippant remark about how all of his friends were staying the night.

She told me that instead of the usual yelling and screaming, she tried what I had suggested.

She asked her son what the rule was concerning children staying overnight, and he replied "You're only allowed one person to spend the night."

She then asked, "What's the rule about how late your friends can stay?" He replied "They're supposed to be out of the house by 9:30."

She said nothing more and went to the living room to read. About 9:20, she heard some noise in the hallway and asked what was going on. Her son replied "I'm walking my friends home and Christian is staying the night."

She told me "I couldn't believe it worked. No arguing, no fighting, it was great!"

"I went home over the lunch hour and my 15-year-old stepson, with whom I don't get along very well, was slouched in front of the TV when he should have been cutting the grass.

Usually we get into a big argument. This time I asked him what he was doing, just like you've been teaching us. He said he was watching TV. Restraining my anger, I then asked him what he was supposed to be doing.

He then got off his butt, turned off the TV, and went out and started cutting the grass. I call that a miracle!"

"No more yelling and screaming at my kids. I'm so relaxed. How great this is!"

Junior Players

The Rules of the Team

1. Attend all team training sessions and all team games;
2. Play by the laws of the game - play by the whistle;
3. Work equally hard for yourself, for the team and for the club;
4. Wear the club's approved strip at games (i.e. shirt, shorts and socks) and the appropriate strip at training - look like a player;
5. Pay attention when the coach is talking;
6. Co-operate with the coach, manager and team players;
7. Advise the coach or manager, well in advance, when you will not be attending to training or at the game;
8. Arrive early to training at least 15 minutes before scheduled start and at the game at least 30 minutes before start;
9. Treat all persons equally as you, yourself, would like to be treated;
10. Refrain from bullying others;
11. Bring your own water bottle and if you bring a ball to training make sure that it is pumped up;
12. Ensure that your boots are securely tied.