6-4-6
A Sports Ethics Program

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Why 6-4-6?

In the Spring of 2001, Tucson Arizona papers’ headlines included the burning of a recreational vehicle by raging Arizona Wildcat fans after their defeat in the final four tournament for the National championship in basketball. An umpire in Boston got a broken jaw from a father who was unhappy with a call at the local Little League game (Thompson, 2000). A New Mexico high school football player charged a referee and left him unconscious because he had kicked the player out of the game for unsportsmanlike conduct. Post-game handshakes were banned in a Massachusetts hockey league for 10 year olds because of inappropriate behavior (Rathbun, 1997). Michael Costin supervised (hockey) stick practice for his three sons and some other boys when Thomas Junta, another father, was angered by Costin’s handling of some play. A fight ensued and Junta allegedly pummeled Costin until he was brain dead (Thompson, 2000). Football goal posts are torn down by the crowd after a close game. Parents scream obscenities from the sidelines. These are but a few incidents that point to increased concern among citizens regarding violence associated with sports regardless of whether it is initiated by coaches, players, parents or spectators.

There have been sports since ancient times. For example, the Olympics have been popular since 700B.C., medieval knights jousted, and even youth in pioneer days and before played marbles. However, practices of sportsmanship are as varied as the sports themselves. All too often, competition can and does bring out the ugly side of some people. Eliminating the negative aspects of sports all at once is not possible. However, we can impact knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors of our youth, one at atime. In this manner our actions over time will impact and improve our local communities. With almost 50 million youth nationwide playing some kind of sport (Tye, 1997), it is important to reach these athletes while we can reach larger numbers of children and before negative sports-related habits begin. Six for Six (6-4-6) is designed to promote the core values of sportsmanship to young athletes, their parents and coaches. The program aims to eliminate the spread of the negative attitudes and behaviors at sporting events.

Coaches are the best defense against unsportsmanlike conduct

Coaches are typically kindhearted people who generously give of their time. In most cases it is because they have a son or daughter who is interested in the sport and needs a coach to organize a team. While coaches give of their time, money and hearts, they often are not given the tools they need to help develop character in their athletes and parents of the athletes. Six for Six (6-4-6) is designed to provide coaches with the tools to promote sportsmanship, character, and citizenship.

The Goals of 6-4-6

The mission of this program, based on the Josepheson Institute of Ethics (2001), is to enhance character and uplift the ethics of our nation through sports. One way of doing this is to create a general set of values that can be adopted and practiced widely. The following are the goals of 6-4-6:

1) To reduce the incidence of violence at games,
2) To eliminate negative competition,
3) to counteract the effects of negative sports conduct from the media,
4) To raise the “fun” factor for youth and adults,
5) To increase positive behavior at sporting events.

The vision for 6-4-6 is based on the Josephson Institute program called Pursuing Victory with Honor. This national program is based on the six pillars of character in the Character Counts program, also nationwide. Using the qualities or pillars of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, a common vocabulary of ethical principals is expanded from common daily activities to the arena of sports.

Preseason

An introdutory meeting is held by coaches to allow him/her to meet with parents and their athletes prior to any practices taking place. During the preseason meeting a brain storming activity is a great way to open discussion among all participants about their expectations for the seaon. Brain storming encourages everyone to express their ideas without evaluating the merit of any idea. The goal is to get as many responses as possible in as little time as possible. Coaches ask the athletes and their parents, “What is the most important lesson for youth to learn from sports?” Participants then brainstorm their responses. They can work in small groups and write the ideas on a sheet of paper for later sharing with the larger group or call them out and someone writes the ideas on poster board. When completed, the group clarifies ideas as needed, disposes of duplicates and then votes on the most important expectations for the season. When the votes are counted, those that are most important are adopted into a framework for the season.
This activity will result in a lot of different responses, only some of which will be related to sportsmanship. It is to be expected that parents and youth will list athletic skills, teamwork, physical activity, positive uses of out of school time, and fun in addition to sportsmanship. If no sportsmanship related items are identified, the coach or facilitator should ask about the importance of sportsmanship. If there is no interest in learning about sportsmanship by parents or athletes it would logically be a time for the coach to educate about the need for and importance of sportsmanship.

The intent behind the brain storming activity is to identify the needs of the players and parents as well as to establish their support for common goals. Never underestimate the power of involving people in establishing a common set of goals for the season. People who participate in setting team priorities are more supportive. For example, being supportive, when coaches play all the kids the last minutes of a close game, or benching an angry player for their attitude.

The next step in the preseason meeting is introducing, explaining, and signing codes of conduct by athletes, parents, and the coaches. Through the use of a written form that must be signed by participants, the coach is establishing a clear-cut behavioral expectation for all individuals. This coaches’ handbook includes a sample code of conduct for athletes, parents, and the coach. Each coach or team should revise statements if necessary. The codes provided in this handbook outline positive behaviors and are used nationally (Citizenship Through Sports Alliance, 2001). Many examples of codes of conduct are given on web sites for national sports organizations, but the final choice for wording needs to be the decision of the coach and the league administration. The athlete’s code should be posted where athletes see it at practice and on game days. For example, one could be laminated and taped to the team ice chest or posted in the locker room. The Parent/Fan code of conduct would be an excellent addition to game programs (if one is made), rosters, or any other information passed out to the spectators of the game. The coach’s code of conduct should be posted, with a copy in the athletic department coordinator’s files and a copy given to the officials of the game.

At the end of the preseason meeting, a series of postseason awards for positive behavior should be announced. The criteria for each award should be explained during the preseason meeting. Ideas for possible awards are listed in the post-season section of this handbook.

**During season**

During the season, the coaches use a “Give Six for Six” philosophy. Six minutes at the beginning of practice is set aside for an activity that involves one of the six qualities of character. The six qualities are respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness and citizenship. Each of the activities is designed to correspond with at least one of the six qualities, although most address many aspects of the character qualities. One brochure is provided for each of the qualities. Coaches pull out whichever brochure they select for the day and use the instructions and ideas explained in the brochure.

After the game/activity, practice begins. During practice, the coach uses the TEAM approach to Teach, Enforce, Advocate, and Model appropriate behavior (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2001). The game activity is designed to introduce, teach and remind players of the basic concept. The enforce and advocate steps are implemented when the coach praises the behaviors of the athletes when they show that quality to one another in their practice. For example, a coach teaches about trust by having athletes do a blindfold walk. Trust is enforced when coaches expect athletes to depend on one another. For instance, athletes that miss practice, contact another athlete to find out if any important team information was missed. Coaches advocate trust aspect of the sport when that point is reinforced during pep talks, sideline instructions and whenever he/she is talking to the athletes. Modeling comes from the coach’s behavior. The coach has to be worthy of the athletes’ trust in order to entrench the idea that trustworthiness is important. Trust is also modeled when the coach trusts that the official is doing the best job possible and his/her decision is respected and accepted willingly. At the end of practice, the coach and the athletes discuss/debrief the quality they focused on that day. This might be a good time for a thought for the day or famous quote to see how behavior on and off the field correlate.

Again, all activities, quotes and suggestions for teaching, enforcing, advocating and modeling are provided on one sheet of paper provided in the coach’s notebook. Six fliers contain the six lesson plans, one for each of the six qualities. The fliers also have ideas for additional activities that can be substituted or used in addition to the original six. The games suggested are designed to use the least amount of materials possible. Many other games and activities illustrate the six qualities but may require additional materials. The intent is to be able to achieve the objectives of the program with games that require limited materials or funds. However, some activities may not appeal to all coaches. Each coach is encouraged to use any other activities that more closely fit the comfort and activity level that is needed for his/her athletes.

**Post-season**

Post-season banquets and activities give players a celebration to look forward to regardless of their personal performance or the team’s performance during the season. Awards ceremonies that acknowledge the positive achievements of the athletes, parents, and coach are a powerful tool in changing behavior. One of the rewards specifically designed for parents and fans is a “Fabulous Fan Award”. This award would be managed by a group of parents who volunteer to coordinate this activity throughout the season. During games the parent committee would be the watchdogs for positive behavior displayed by other parents and fans. At the completion of each game, each member
The parent committee would write the name or names of individuals that they recognized as “Fabulous Fans”. The criteria for what would be “fabulous fan” behavior would be determined by the committee. The criteria for the award would be disbursed among the parents at the first game of the season. The parental code of conduct is a natural start to the criteria, but to gain more “buy-in” from the parents on the team, their opinions and ideas should be included. Throughout the season, more and more names will be added to the “Fabulous Fan” box, or coffee can, or whatever would hold the nominations. At the end of the season, the individual(s) that get the most votes would win a prize. Perhaps a local business would create a t-shirt or hat with “I was caught being a GRRRREAT fan”, or “I am a Fabulous Fan”. This award could be gift certificate from a local business for something like a pizza or a bowling game. The award can be as simple as a certificate generated on a home computer. Depending upon the financial resources of the team and its sponsors, several of these awards would be suggested.

Awards for the athletes could include but not be limited to: “Most Improved”, “Most Inspirational”, “Best Citizen”, and “Most Caring” as well as other awards appropriate for the age and skill level of the youth involved. Again, the code of conduct for the athletes is a natural start for finding criteria for these awards.

The last award would be for the coaches’ efforts throughout the season to instill the qualities of character in his/her team. This could be called the “TRRFCC Coach” award. This acronym stands for trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Again, this award might be a t-shirt with “TRRFCC COACH” as well as the TRRFCC words. The philosophy behind this award is to take the emphasis off of winning and put it onto the life lessons that can be learned through sports. Not all teams can end the season with a winning record, but all coaches can be TRRFCC and all athletes can learn valuable life lessons whether they win or lose. Remember, awards are more about acknowledging someone than the size or cost of the award. Each team will have unique experiences and events that will naturally lend themselves to awards.

Conclusion

Six for Six (6-4-6) is not a new concept or a breakthrough in modern science. It is a simple idea to allow the very youngest of athletes to enjoy one of the aspects of childhood—play. While play may be a child’s work, a game of soccer on Saturday should not feel like work. Adult lives are very focused with work, why should we rush the few years one has as a child? The goal is not to eliminate competition, but to manage it in a positive way. When parents become aware of how behavior influences athletes, when coaches acknowledge the value of the overall life lessons taught, and when youth participate for the sheer joy of playing, then competition is managed in a positive way. Through the implementation of a training program for coaches, the groundwork is laid to be able to initiate positive change.

Amy Van Dyken, winner of four gold medals at the 1996 Olympics, sums up the entire program, “The most important lesson I’ve learned from sports is how to be not only a gracious winner, but a good loser as well. Not everyone wins all the time, as a matter of fact, no one wins all the time. Winning is the easy part, losing is really tough. But, you learn more from one loss than you do from a million wins. You learn a lot about sportsmanship. I mean, it’s really tough to shake the hand of someone who just beat you, and it’s even harder to do it with a smile. If you can learn to do this and push through that pain, you will remember what that moment is like the next time you win and have a better sense of how those competitors around you feel. This experience will teach you a lot on and off the field!” (Institute for International Sport, 2001).
Athletes’ Code Of Conduct*

I recognize that being a member of the community carries with it responsibilities and rewards, and that as an athlete in the community, I must not only embrace those responsibilities, but also conduct myself both on and off the playing field in a way which exhibits respect for myself and others. I therefore resolve to conduct myself with dignity as an athlete and as a citizen of the community, recognizing and accepting that I:

- Must accept accountability for my behavior and its outcomes.
- Must exercise self-control.
- Must be willing to be fair with others in my dealings on and off the playing field.
- Must take pride in myself and my accomplishments, but never at the expense of demeaning another person or group.
- Must respect the efforts of others.
- Must respect authority.
- Must play by the spirit, not just the letter, of the rules of the game and the rules of life.
- Must strive to make my community - whether that be the team on which I play or the community in which I live - better because of my contributions as a member and as a citizen.

___________________________________

Signature

*The Athlete’s Code of Conduct was written by: Citizenship Through Sports Alliance, 23500 West 105th Street, P.O. Box 1325, Olathe, KS 66051-1325
The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student-athlete should be treated as though he or she were the coaches’ own, and his or her welfare should be uppermost at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFCA Board of Directors.

**The coach**

- shall be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student-athlete and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.
- shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. In all personal contact with student-athletes, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
- shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse.
- shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in contact with players.
- shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.
- shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to his or her team members. The coach shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.
- shall exert his or her influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs, and administrators.
- shall respect and support contest officials. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.
- should meet and exchange cordial greetings with the opposing coach to set the correct tone for the event before and after the contest.
- shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student-athletes special consideration.
- shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school athletic association.

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*The Coaches’ Code of Conduct was written by: Citizenship Through Sports Alliance, 23500 West 105th Street, P.O. Box 1325, Olathe, KS 66051-1325*
Parents’ Code of Conduct*

I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for my child participating in youth sports/activities by following this Parents’ Code of Conduct & Ethics.

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, and officials at every game, practice, or other youth sports event.

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my child ahead of a personal desire to win.

- I will insist that my child play in a safe and healthy environment.

- I will support coaches and officials working with my child, in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable experience for all.

- I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.

- I will remember that the game is for youth - not adults.

- I will do my very best to make youth sports fun for my child.

- I will ask my child to treat other players, coaches, fans, and officials, with respect regardless of race, sex, creed, or ability.

- I promise to help my child enjoy the youth sports experience by doing whatever I can, such as being a respectable fan, assisting with coaching, or providing transportation.

- I will require that my child’s coach be trained in the responsibilities of being a youth sports coach and that the coach upholds the Coaches’ Code of Ethics.

- I will read the National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) National Standards for Youth Sports and do what I can to help all youth sports organizations implement and enforce those standards.

___________________________  ____________________________  ______
Parent/Guardian Signature  Parent/Guardian Signature  Date

*The Parents’ Code of Conduct was written by: Citizenship Through Sports Alliance, 23500 West 105th Street, P.O. Box 1325, Olathe, KS 66051-13
Trustworthiness

Everyone on the team should be honest and play with honor. Athletes can have reputations as trustworthy or for being dishonest or for cheating.

Game: Blindfolded Tag

Group size: 10-50

Time: 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules and give out supplies, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants and to put away supplies.

Supplies: blindfolds, soft throwables

Setting: Gym or field; Keeping the boundary small assures more action.

Goal: Build trust and teamwork.

Teach

• Establish boundaries of play.
• Split group into pairs. Have pairs stand next to each other but not touching. One member will be blindfolded (or keep eyes closed), while the other person will be the “eyes” of the pair.
• Give each pair one blindfold and one throwable.
• The sighted member can not touch any of the throwables. With instructions from the sighted member, the blindfolded partner throws/kicks, retrieves and tries to avoid being hit by items from the other pairs.
• Unlimited verbal instruction can be given by the sighted person, but they can not physically help the blindfolded person.
• Objective: Each pair is to work together to throw/kick an object and hit the blindfolded player of another team. Hitting a sighted person doesn’t count. When a blindfolded person is hit, that blindfolded player then becomes sighted, and the sighted player puts on the blindfold.
• Debrief participants:
  --Did you have to trust your teammate to be successful in the game?
  --What events in this game made it hard to trust your teammate and how did you work through that?
  --How is this game similar to the games we play as a team?

Enforce

• During practices and games, give praise to those athletes who are “trusting” their teammates and working together.
• At the end of practice today, have the team talk about when they saw trusting during practice, such as: assists, passes, blocks, and any other actions that foster team trust

Advocate

• Point out the benefits of trusting to your team. Teammates who trust each other and cooperate achieve more.
• Communicate with parents about when you saw their child demonstrate trusting behaviors.

Model

• When setting up activities, drills or play, trust your team members to help.
• Tell players you trust them to set up for practice. Show your trust by letting them do it.
• Praise the player who trusts his/her teammates enough to try a new skill or to work on improving a skill
Activities to Build Trustworthiness

- **Group Sit**: Everyone stands in a circle, facing the back of the person in front of them. Grasp the hips of the person in front of you and gently sit on the person’s knees behind you. Once seated, you can wave, give back rubs or try a coordinated caterpillar walk.

- **Front Lean**: In pairs, face-to-face, arms straight up, clenched hands. One at a time, take steps back and slowly see how far you can go, trusting and leaning.

- **Debrief Participants**:
  - Why is trust important?
  - What are some examples of trustworthiness between team members?

The 6 Pillars Of Character

**TRUSTWORTHINESS**: Be honest. Don’t deceive, cheat or steal. Be reliable—do what you say you’ll do. Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal—stand by your family, friends, team, and country.

**RESPECT**: Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners and sportsmanship, not bad language or “trash talk.” Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.


**FAIRNESS**: Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

**CARING**: Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude; thank coaches and officials. Forgive others. Help people in need.

**CITIZENSHIP**: Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Stay informed; vote. Be a good teammate. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority.

Thoughts for the Day

“How many times do you get to lie before you are a liar?”
Michael Josephson, 20-21st century American Ethicist

“A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are.” Ara Parseghian

“Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to produce uncommon results.” Unknown

“The only way you can truly control how you are seen is being honest all the time.” Tom Hanks

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Respect

Treating teammates and competitors with respect poses a challenge to many athletes. This is particularly important in regard to players who are less skilled. It is also challenging to treat competitors with respect if they are not playing fairly or treating us with respect.

**Game:** Copy Talk

**Group size:** 10-50

**Time:** 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants

**Supplies:** none

**Setting:** Gym or field

**Goal:** Build an understanding of respect.

**Teach**

- Establish pairs.
- One person in the pair tells his/her partner his/her most exciting life adventure. As the person is talking, the other person in the pair repeats every word as quickly as possible. After a minute or two, switch roles.
- Objective: Understanding the importance of respect and that everyone wants to be heard

**Debrief participants:**
- When you were talking, was it easy to talk when someone else was talking at the same time?
- Did you find yourself hesitating?
- What is it like to try and copy the talker? Did it interfere with your comprehension?
- How does this activity relate to respect?

**Enforce**

- Have players commit to acting with respect and sportsmanship.
- Review with players before games that you expect them to demonstrate respectfulness and sportsmanship during the game.

**Advocate**

- Point out when you see respectful behavior during practice.
- Communicate with parents when athletes are demonstrating sportsmanship and when they are not.

**Model**

- Model respect in your interactions with players, coaches, referees, and parents.
- Model sportsmanship during practice and games.
Activities to Build Respect

- All Talk: Everyone stands in a circle facing counter clockwise. All at the same time, everyone tells the person in front of them about their favorite memory. Debrief: Does anyone remember what was said to them? Is it hard to talk to a person’s back? What would have been a more respectful way to do this?
- Target practice. Each person takes two turns throwing the throwable into the target. During the first throw, the other players boo and hiss. During the second throw, the other players make supportive comments.
- Debrief participants:
  - Which was more respectful?
  - How did the supportive comments impact their performance?

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**FAIRNESS**: Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

**CARING**: Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude; thank coaches and officials. Forgive others. Help people in need.

**CITIZENSHIP**: Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Stay informed; vote. Be a good teammate. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority.

Thoughts for the Day

“Nobody will think you’re somebody if you don’t think so yourself.” African-American proverb

“Most people run a race to see who is fastest. I run a race to see who has the most guts.” Steve Prefontaine

“The most important lesson I’ve learned from sports is how to be not only a gracious winner, but a good loser as well. Not everyone wins all the time; as a matter of fact, no one wins all the time. Winning is the easy part, losing is really tough. But, you learn more from one loss than you do from a million wins. You learn a lot about sportsmanship. I mean, it’s really tough to shake the hand of someone who just beat you, and it’s even harder to do it with a smile. If you can learn to do this and push through that pain, you will remember what that moment is like the next time you win and have a better sense of how those competitors around you feel. This experience will teach you a lot on and off the field!” Amy Van Dyken

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Responsibility

Everyone on a team has a job. Some play offensive, some defensive, some are second string, but all are important to the goal of playing the game to the best of their ability. Try this game to see the different “jobs.” What is each person’s responsibility?

Game: Kangaroo Hunt

Group size: 10-50

Time: 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants and to put away supplies.

Supplies: Two hoops

Setting: Gym or field

Goal: Build a sense of responsibility.

Teach

- Establish finish line
- Divide group into two teams and form two lines.
- Give each team one hoop.
- The first person “kangaroo” hops out any distance toward the finish line.
- The second person must “hoop” the first person in order for the entire team to move to the spot where the first person is.
- The first person “kangaroo” goes to the end of the line and the thrower becomes the “kangaroo.”
- Repeat until a team reaches the finish line.
- Objective: Be the first team to reach the finish line.
- Debrief participants: Discuss how each person had to be responsible to the team by going a distance that the hoop could reach, but far enough to make progress toward the finish line.

Enforce

- While the youth are practicing, compliment those who are:
  - following directions,
  - demonstrating responsibility by being in the correct place on the field or court.
  - meeting the team’s expectations.
- When setting up practices and game schedules, communicate to the team that they are responsible for arranging rides, giving their schedule to their parents, being on time.

Advocate

- Point out that teams work best when everyone does their job. One player cannot accomplish all of the tasks for the whole team. Each player has a job and others depend on him/her to do that job. When everyone does their job, the group functions as a true team.
- Communicate with parents about when you saw their child demonstrate responsibility.

Model

- Demonstrate your responsibility by being on time for practice and games, and bringing necessary equipment.
- When you make a mistake, tell the youth you are taking responsibility for your actions.
Activities to Build Responsibility

• 3 on 1 tag

• Divide into groups of four. Three of the group members form a circle by joining hands. The member outside the circle is “it.” The “it” person chooses one of the individuals from the circle they will tag. The other two participants in the circle protect the “tagee” from the “it” person. When tagged, you switch places with the “it” person and choose a new person to be tagged.

• Debrief participants:
  – What were the “jobs” of each participant?
  – What is it like to be responsible for someone else’s well-being?

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RESPECT: Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners and sportsmanship, not bad language or “trash talk.” Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.


FAIRNESS: Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING: Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude; thank coaches and officials. Forgive others. Help people in need.


Thoughts for the Day

“Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Never excuse yourself.”
—Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe

“Excellence is not a singular act but a habit. You are what you do repeatedly.”
—Shaquille O’Neal

“I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something. But I can’t accept not trying.”
—Michael Jordan

“Sportsmanship for me is when a guy walks off the court and you really can’t tell whether he won or lost, when he carries himself with pride either way.”
—Jim Courier

Fairness

“It’s not fair,” seems to be the anthem of youth. Youth want to be treated equally, yet each child has different strengths and is unique. What causes one to accept responsibility, might enrage another. Fairness is a special challenge for coaches.

Game: Relay Race

Group size: 10-50

Time: 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants

Supplies: none

Setting: Gym or field

Goal: Build an understanding of fairness.

Teach

• Establish a turn-around point and divide the group into two teams.
• For the race, a person on each team runs to the turn-around point and then runs back to the team, tags the next player who runs to the point and back, and so forth until the entire team is finished.
• For one of the teams, however, the person must do two push-ups at the turn-around point before they run back.
• The first team finished, wins.
• Objective: Each team has different rules. The goal is the same for both teams.
• Debrief participants:
  – Was the game fair? Why or why not?
  – How is this game similar to the game we play as a team when someone does not play fair or cheats?
  – Is there a sense of accomplishment if you win but the game was not fair?

Enforce

• Expect and reward fair play.
• Expect all players to follow the rules of the sport.
• Expect all players to treat each other fairly, on and off the field.

Advocate

• Point out when players take turns.
• Before games, emphasize that players above all else play fair and by the rules.
• Emphasize that there is more dignity in playing fair than winning.

Model

• Model fairness when talking to other coaches and referees.
• Show respect for fair calls by referees, even when not in your team’s favor.
• Demonstrate fairness, by allowing all athletes regardless of skill to participate.
• Praise each person’s unique strengths being sure each person is praised for something.
Activities to Build Fairness

- Balloon war: Two teams. Each person has a balloon tied to their leg. Each team tries to stomp the other team’s balloons. Give larger balloons to one of the teams.
- Debrief Participants:
  – What happens when two groups don’t play by the same rules?
- Alphabet Soup: Give each player a letter. Challenge the team to spell as many words as possible during the time allowed.
- Debrief participants:
  – The vowels were very popular. The letters “x, q, and z” may have felt left out. Discuss the importance of using everyone on the team.

The 6 Pillars Of Character

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RESPECT: Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant of differences. Use good manners and sportsmanship, not bad language or “trash talk.” Be considerate of the feelings of others. Don’t threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.


FAIRNESS: Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded; listen to others. Don’t take advantage of others. Don’t blame others carelessly.

CARING: Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude; thank coaches and officials. Forgive others. Help people in need.


Thoughts for the Day

“The purpose of any athletic endeavor is to challenge human limits both on and off the playing field.” Unknown

“Doing what is right, fair and honorable is more important than winning or losing.” Chick Moorman

Caring

A true team demonstrates the ability to care about the team goal’s and each other rather than focusing on the goals of one individual. Teamwork makes youth look beyond themselves. Caring makes youth look past themselves and to the needs of others.

Game: Blindfold Walk

Group size: 10-50

Time: 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules and give out supplies, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants and to put away supplies.

Supplies: blindfolds

Setting: Gym or field; Keeping the boundary small assures more action.

Goal: Build caring and teamwork.

Advocate

• Help athletes to forgive their teammates when errors occur.
• Talk about how being a caring teammate is more important than winning a game.
• Communicate with parents that you care about their child.

Model

• Demonstrate interest in players’ lives outside of the sport.
• Never accept the behavior of a player who is physically or verbally hurtful/abusive to another player (teammate or not)

Activities to Build Caring

• Blindfold Run. Blindfold one person. Have the rest of players stand in a U-shape, with the blindfolded person standing at the open end. The goal is for the blindfolded person to get to the person at the bottom of the U as quickly as possible. Players need to verbally guide the blindfolded person so he/she doesn’t fall and makes it to the target person.

Teach

• Establish pairs of two.
• One person is blindfolded and the other is the guide.
• Guides walk the blindfolded people toward the finish line. They show their caring for the blindfolded person by avoiding obstacles and helping them get to the finish line.
• Objective: Caring is shown through not letting the blindfolded person bump into something or fall.
• Debrief participants:
  – Did pair play as a team?
  – Did athletes take care of the person they were guiding?

Enforce

• During team play, encourage players to show caring by helping each other with equipment and telling their teammates when they notice them doing something well.
• During team play, encourage players to ask one another if they are “o.k.” when they fall or get hit.
• Never permit athletes to intentionally injure another athlete.
• Egg Drop. Form teams of 2 to 4. Each team gets an egg, packing peanuts, plastic bags, straws and masking tape. The goal is to make a package/container for the egg. The container should protect the egg from breaking as it lands from a ten foot drop.

• Debrief participants:
  – How does a caring team differ from an uncaring one?
  – Why is caring so important?

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**CARING:** Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude; thank coaches and officials. Forgive others. Help people in need.

**CITIZENSHIP:** Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Stay informed; vote. Be a good teammate. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority

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**Thoughts for the Day**

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?” Martin Luther King, Jr.

“You are what you do.” Unknown

“A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are.” Ara Parseghian

“Ask yourself is it right or wrong and act accordingly.” Otto Graham, Jr.

“Doing your best is more important than being the best.” Shannon Miller

“The answers to these questions will determine your success or failure.

1) Can people trust me to do what’s right?
2) Am I committed to doing my best?
3) Do I care about other people and show it?

If the answers to these questions are yes, there is no way you can fail.” Lou Holtz

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Citizenship

Teaching youth that they are all a part of a team, sport, and community is important. Citizenship encompasses all of the other aspects of character. Good citizenship in sports is evident when we cooperate, follow the rules, respect authority (referees and coaches) and take care of the equipment and field.

**Game:** Blob Tag

**Group size:** 10-50

**Time:** 6 minutes; 1 minute to review rules, 3 minutes to play, 2 minutes to debrief participants

**Supplies:** none

**Setting:** Gym or field

**Goal:** Build an understanding of citizenship.

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**Teach**

- Establish boundaries and out of bounds area.
- One person is “it.” When this person catches another, they hold hands and work together to catch others.
- The Blob will continue to grow.
- Communication is very important to catch everyone.
- If a person runs out of bounds, they automatically join the Blob.
- Objective: Understanding the importance of working together
- Debrief participants:
  - What worked best when chasing others to join the Blob?
  - Why was teamwork important?
  - How does teamwork relate to being a good citizen?

**Enforce**

- Expect athletes to play by the rules.
- Have athletes assist with taking care of the field and equipment.
- Ask athletes how they can improve their citizenship.

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**Advocate**

- Point out that athletes are good citizens when they demonstrate caring toward other athletes, especially when one is hurt or another team has made a really great play.
- Talk with athletes about all the different aspects of citizenship.
- As a team and good citizens, complete a project for the larger community such as cleaning up a trail or park or doing something for a group of senior citizens.

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**Model**

- Model citizenship by taking care of community fields, locker rooms, equipment, etc., that the team uses.
- Demonstrate cooperation with officials and other teams.
- Involve parents and allow them to demonstrate citizenship by helping the team.
Activities to Build Citizenship

- Marble Pass\(^c\). Divide the group into two teams. Each team receives one marble and each player receives a piece of PVC pipe. One person “starter” puts the marble in the first PVC at the start line. The group moves the marble through each person’s PVC without touching it to the finish line. Rules: only the starter touches the marble; you are not allowed to block the ends of the PVC with fingers, etc.; and if anyone but the starter touches the marble or the marble falls out, the team must start over.
- Debrief participants:
  - Discuss how citizenship, cooperation and teamwork are related.

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Thoughts for the Day

“I can’t play being mad. I go out there and have fun. It’s a game, and that’s how I am going to treat it.”
Ken Griffey, Jr.

“Do not throw in the towel; use it for wiping the sweat off your face.” Unknown

“I’ve worked too hard and too long to let anything stand in the way of my goals. I will not let my teammates down, and I will not let myself down.” Mia Hamm

“Doing your best is more important than being the best.”
Shannon Miller

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