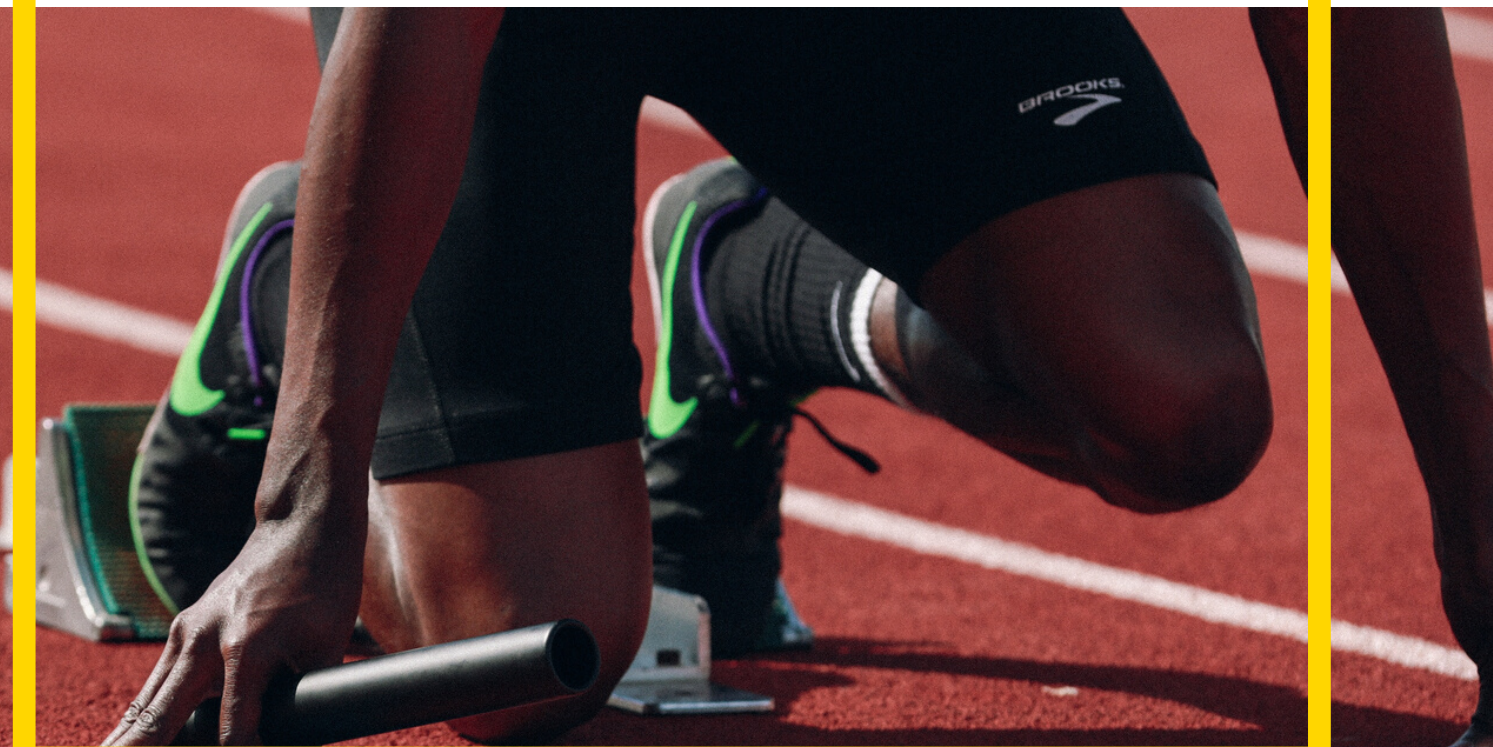


**A TOOLKIT FOR COACHES OF MIDDLE, HIGH SCHOOL, AND COLLEGIATE ATHLETES**



CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE  
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# **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) PRACTICES TO ENHANCE ATHLETE PERFORMANCE**



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# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome Coaches!

Thank you for downloading our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for Sport Coaches Toolkit. The purpose of this toolkit is for coaches to be able to implement core social and emotional learning (SEL) practices during practice sessions with their athletes in order to enhance athlete performance and provide athletes with a more rewarding athletic experience. The topics that are covered align with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) core competencies for social emotional learning. They are: 1) developing and strengthening relationships, 2) self-awareness, 3) goal-setting, 4) self-management, 5) responsible decision making, 6) connecting with community, and 7) reflection. For more information about the CASEL core competencies for social emotional learning go to <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.

This document provides an outline for introducing 7 key topics with your athletes. For each topic, there is an introduction, choices for team meeting conversation starters and activities for your athletes to complete to further support their understanding of the topics and how they can strengthen engagement with their sport. The topics that you introduce will help you as a coach develop a stronger sense of culture and camaraderie among your athletes.

The toolkit is best suited for coaches of competitive athletes in middle and high school as well as collegiate settings. However, all of the activities can be adapted for use with club teams, recreational leagues, and afterschool programs.



## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Think of the activities in this guide as a starting point. They are simply meant to provide an outline that can be implemented during the offseason, preseason, in season, or post-season. You can follow the 7-week plan in the order presented or you can introduce the topics as you wish based on the needs of your athletes. For example, you may feel as a coach that your athletes would benefit from having a stronger sense of self, so could start with that topic. Other coaches may prefer to begin with goal-setting. Your approach to the toolkit may vary based on the sport you are coaching, the gender(s), age range and the culture(s) of your athletes.

Each topic comes with a written overview, team conversation starters, and tasks for the week. You may choose to address one topic per week, covering the prompts and activities during practice sessions. Or you may decide to spread a topic out over several weeks, allowing your athletes time to practice the skills and engage in additional conversation. For the conversation starters, you might open it up for large group discussion or break athletes into smaller groups or pairs. You might also use journaling or writing at the beginning to get athletes comfortable with reflecting in this way. As your team members get more comfortable, you could ask them to lead the conversations each week on a rotating basis. Younger athletes may need more guidance and support through the activities while older athletes may be able to implement activities more independently.

Listen to your athletes and follow their lead for what is going to be most effective. Athletes need to strike a healthy balance between being prepared on the field of competition and within the field in their minds. The activities and pauses for reflection within this guide will give your athletes an opportunity to pause and look within themselves to see if their actions align with their goals.



# DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

WEEK 1

Parents, friends, romantic partners, teachers, coaches, colleagues, faith leaders, acquaintances—we all have a variety of different relationships in our lives. Figuring out how to start, maintain, and grow positive relationships is a key aspect of leading a happy and fulfilled life. People need positive relationships and it can take skills such as communication, cultural humility, patience, and effective teamwork to maintain them. Just as important is figuring out how to set boundaries and navigate conflict in relationships that aren't so positive.

## Team Meeting Conversation Starters:

- Think of one individual you have a positive relationship with. How did that relationship start, and what keeps it alive?
- Why are strong relationships important in sports/on teams? What can we do to build strong(er) relationships with each other?
- Invite athletes to bring a quote about relationships/teamwork that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"You don't inspire your teammates by showing them how amazing you are. You inspire them by showing them how amazing they are."* —Robyn Benincasa
  - *"We are not a team because we (play) together. We are a team because we respect, trust and care for each other"* —Vala Afshar
  - *"To build a strong team, you must see someone else's strength as a complement to your weakness, not a threat to your position or authority."* —Christine Aine
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. One video you may want to use is:
  - <https://www.keepgirlsinsport.com/1-the-power-of-relationships/a-introduction/>

## WEEK 1 - DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS (CONTINUED)

- **Reflection:** What have you learned about being part of a team? What have you learned about other people on this team? What have you learned about yourself?

### ***Task for the Week:***

1. **This or That:** Give athletes two options and ask them to choose their preference or response. Have them stand in one area if they choose option one and in a different area if they choose option two. Start light (do you prefer cats or dogs) and get deeper (college athletes should get paid, athletes have a responsibility to be role models, sports is not the place for activism, understanding the history of racism in sports in the US is important). After each prompt have them discuss why they chose to stand where they did. The objective of this activity is to get to know each other while discussing the importance of finding similarities and valuing differences.
2. **Interviews:** Positive relationships are an important part of being on a team. Let your athletes know that this week you will be focusing on really getting to know one another better. Randomly assign each player another person on the team. Each player will be responsible for interviewing their assigned person and then presenting information about that person to the team. You can give them time during practice for the interviews or have them do it independently and then present at your next practice. Encourage athletes to generate their own interview questions or use the Interview Questions contained in the supplemental activities.  
**Modification:** If you have a team that has older/more experienced players and younger/less experienced players, you could pair athletes up in a mentoring way and have these interviews be an early step in building that relationship.



# SELF-AWARENESS

## WEEK 2

Self-awareness is foundational to a person's social emotional development. It allows us to identify our strengths and weaknesses, think about what we need and what we have to give, and develop the mindful awareness of what our bodies and minds are doing in times of heightened emotion. Paying attention to yourself is not selfish, it is an important step in figuring out who you are and what you want your place in the world to be.

### Team Meeting Conversation Starters:

- Let athletes know that this week, we are going to focus on self-awareness. Ask them how they would define or describe self-awareness? How do people learn about themselves? For example: self-reflection, feedback from people we trust, assessments, new experiences, challenging and good times
- Ask athletes to reflect on and discuss the following: What drew you to this sport? Why is being a member of this team important to you? Have those interests or experiences ever drawn you to anything else in life?
- Invite athletes to bring a quote about relationships/teamwork that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"I always felt that my greatest asset was not my physical ability, it was my mental ability."* —Caitlyn Jenner (Olympic Decathlete)
  - *"Sports don't build character; they reveal it."* —John Wooden
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. One video you may want to use is:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKAEH\\_L-v98](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKAEH_L-v98)
- **Reflection:** What have you learned about yourself this week? What do you most love about yourself? What do you want to continue to work on?

## WEEK 2 - SELF AWARENESS (CONTINUED)

### **Task for the Week:**

1. **Self-reflection journal:** Give athletes time to reflect and journal in response to the prompts/questions below. Encourage athletes to be honest with themselves and let them know they do not have to share with anyone else. Depending on your team, you may want to give the option to share something they noticed, one thing that may be helpful for the team to understand or how it felt to reflect and journal.

- What are you hoping to learn and achieve this season?
- What are you most looking forward to?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- Who is someone you look up to? What key traits of theirs do you admire and want to embody? What would it take for you to embody those traits?
- How can you help your teammates be their best?
- How do you best receive feedback?
- How do you work most effectively with others?
- In what areas are you hoping to improve/grow this season (could be skills for your sport- or areas of communication, problem-solving, managing your emotions and stress, building stronger relationships, taking constructive feedback, etc.)?
- What have sports revealed about your character?
- What do you wish your coach and/or teammates better understood about you?
- What do you wish you better understood about yourself?

### 2. **Dice Race**

**Supplies needed:** two dice, one pen, one piece of paper for each participant

**Set up:** have participants sit in a circle around a table (on the floor/ground if needed). Hand each participant a piece of paper– place the dice and pen in the middle

**Goal:** Write every single number from 1-50 (or 75) on the paper in front of you; you can only write when you have the pen and you only get the pen by rolling doubles

#### **Directions for play:**

Explain to everyone how the game works.

The first person will roll the dice.

- If they roll doubles (same color or same number), they say 'PEN' and the pen is quickly passed to them. As soon as they get the pen, they start writing numbers
- If they don't roll doubles, the dice are passed clockwise to the next person in the circle who rolls.



## WEEK 2 - SELF AWARENESS (CONTINUED)

- Play continues until someone has all 50 numbers written on their paper.
- If you roll doubles and write numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 before you have to pass the pen to the next person who rolled doubles, when you get the pen back, you start where you left at, for this example at 8.

Choose the person who will go first (person with the birthday closest to today or person who was born farthest away from where you are).

### Discussion Questions:

1. Why did (winners name) win? Were they most intelligent? most athletic? most talented? (Keep asking until someone mentions luck- and then ask if a person could win if they can not write the numbers 1-50- remind them that preparation is key to be able to take advantage of lucky opportunities when they present themselves. How does this apply to sports?)
2. This week we are discussing self-awareness. During this activity,
  - a. What did you notice about yourself? (consider how you responded when you got doubles, when someone else got doubles, if someone took a lot of time to roll, when someone else was getting close to 50, when you didn't roll doubles, etc.)
  - b. What frustrated you?
  - c. What motivated you?
  - d. What helped (if anything)?
  - e. What made things harder?
  - f. What could you control?
  - g. What was out of your control?
  - h. What do you need to learn to let go of?
3. How can you apply this to sports, school, life?

**Note:** These self-awareness reflection questions can be used throughout the season--after practice, after a game, after a drill, etc. The more athletes reflect and grapple with these questions, the more self-aware they will become.



# GOAL SETTING

WEEK 3

Setting goals is an important part of self-management and responsible decision making – two core social and emotional competencies. Each athlete's goals will vary depending on the sport. Regardless of what we hope and aspire to achieve during the upcoming season, any goal without a plan is just a wish for something we want to happen. To achieve our goals, it is important for us to think about what it takes and what we are willing to do to meet them.

## Team Meeting Conversation Starter:

- Begin a conversation by discussing outcomes/ goals for the upcoming season, part of the school year, etc. Ask your athletes:
  - What do you hope the team can accomplish this season?
  - What do you want to accomplish for yourself this season?
- How do we turn our hopes for the season (team hopes and personal hopes) into goals? What is one commitment you can make to help our team reach our goal(s) and one commitment you can make to reach your personal goal?
- Invite athletes to bring a quote about goals/goal setting that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"The discipline you learn and character you build from setting and achieving a goal can be more valuable than the achievement of the goal itself."* —Bo Bennett
  - *"After setting a goal, you can either give yourself an excuse or a result."* —unknown
  - *"Dreams are free. Goals have a cost. While you can daydream for free, goals don't come without a price. Time, Effort, Sacrifice, and Sweat. How will you pay for your goals?"* —Usain Bolt

## WEEK 3 - GOAL SETTING (CONTINUED)

- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. One video you could use is:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sShpCbhkd9c>
- **Reflection:** Did you follow through on what you said you would do this week to reach your goals? What helped you stay motivated and committed? What got in the way? How might you adjust your goal(s) moving forward?

### ***Task for the Week:***

1. Find a physical representation of your personal goal for the upcoming season. For example, "my goal is to have good communication this season, so I am bringing in a walkie-talkie" or "my goal for the upcoming year is to win 1st place, so I am bringing in a gold medal." (If athletes don't have or can't get the physical object, they can create something or bring in a picture)
2. Ask your athletes to think about what they want to accomplish throughout the course of this season - what are one or two goals they want to be able to achieve? Have athletes answer the following questions to better give themselves an opportunity to achieve their goals.
  - What is the top goal or goals you want to achieve this season? Why is achieving these goals important to you?
  - What new skills might you need to learn in order to achieve your goals?
  - What sacrifices will you need to make in order to achieve these goals?
  - Who might you need to collaborate/work with in order to achieve your goals?
  - What obstacles will you need to overcome in order to achieve your desired goal(s)?
  - How can you make your goal(s) SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)



# SELF-MANAGEMENT

WEEK 4

Once we have developed relationships, explored our self-awareness, and set goals, we're able to start to figure out how to manage the things we might be experiencing. Self-management could include coping mechanisms for when we are stressed, overwhelmed, or frustrated. It could also include systems or habits we develop in order to work toward goals. Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation as well as setting personal and collective goals are key social emotional skills that help athletes succeed.

## **Team Meeting Conversation Starter:**

- What parts of your life do you most struggle to manage (Examples may include: time, emotions, motivation, stress, organization)? How do these struggles impact your effectiveness as an athlete? What strategies have you tried, if you have tried strategies? What worked? What didn't? What is one thing you could try this week to more effectively manage one area of your life?
- Together with your athletes, brainstorm a list of possible ways to reduce stress. Encourage them to think about stress in school, at home or in their personal lives, and in their athletic performance. You may need to help athletes generate a wide range of examples (e.g., meditation, listen to music, ride a bike, go for a walk, get together with a friend, dance, draw or color, etc.). Be sure to share your own strategies and make sure there is open space for all kinds of activities. Next, invite athletes to make a list of three things they want to try when they are feeling stressed. Ask them to practice those strategies during the week. If time allows, at the end of the week or in a future week, have them share strategies with each other and talk about how it went when they implemented them during times of stress.

## WEEK 4 - SELF MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

- Invite athletes to bring a quote about self-management that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"You must not only have competitiveness but ability, regardless of the circumstance you face, to never quit."* —Abby Wambach
  - *"It's going to be a journey. It's not a sprint to get in shape."* —Kerri Walsh Jennings
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. A couple options are below:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-uXupsgusU>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yloA5mKSFHs>
- **Reflection:** What did you notice this week? How does self-management connect to sports? How does it connect to other areas of your life?

### **Task for the Week**

1. **Control the Controllable:** On chart paper, a notebook, or a whiteboard create headers for two lists (In our Circle of Control, Outside of our Circle of Control). Invite athletes to consider what things/parts facets of our lives we have control over? Next, ask them to consider what we are not able to control? Compare the lists that are created. Discuss how we can put more energy into the things we are able to control.

**Modification:** Give each athlete their own 'Circle of Control' Document—with two concentric circles—one labeled "Circle of Control", one labeled "Circle of No Control"—and ask students to add at least 5 items to each circle. For example: I can not control a ref's call but I can control my response to the call.

2. **Helium Hoop:**

**Materials:** One unweighted hula hoop or super light dowel

**Goal:** Working together, lower the hula hoop all the way to the ground

**Directions:** Have everyone stand in a circle with their index fingers pointing straight out. Place the hula hoop on their fingers, about shoulder height. Before letting go of the hula hoop, make sure it is level and that all participants understand that everyone must keep their two index fingers touching the hoop at all times. If someone loses contact or loops their finger around the hoop, the group must start over.

## WEEK 4 - SELF MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

**Note:** This activity is called the helium hoop because the weight of the hoop is less than the weight of everyone's fingers and usually appears to float/move upward, especially at the start of the activity. Encourage your athletes to keep working together. Groups may need to start over several times. If you notice the group or a few individuals getting frustrated, you can take the hoop and give them a quick time out: time to breath and make a plan without the hoop before trying again.

### Debrief:

1. How did you feel during this activity? How did your feelings change throughout the activity?
2. Was it harder than you thought it was going to be? Why or why not? What made it difficult?
3. What needed to happen for you to meet the goal of lowering the hoop all the way to the ground?
4. What was most frustrating or stressful for you? How did you handle your frustration? Do you think the way you handled your frustration helped or hurt the team? Why?
5. How do you usually manage your stress and/or frustration? How does that impact others?
6. Why is self-management important in an activity like this?
7. When you come across other situations (in school, sports, work, home) that are/feel similar to this, what can you remember to help you navigate them?

(adapted from <https://guideinc.org/2017/08/21/team-building-activity-helium-stick/>)



# RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

## WEEK 5

As mentioned in week 3, responsible decision making is a key component of setting and reaching our goals. Making responsible decisions may put us in a better position for future opportunities. We also know that inequitable systems are at play and that it is not our decisions alone that determine our future. Making responsible decisions means considering the impact of your choices not just on yourself, but also on others, and working towards creating a more just and equitable world for all. It's very easy to get caught up in the mindset that we need to do everything ourselves, and that individualism is the most important quality we can foster. The truth is that we are stronger when we think about and support each other. Considering the impact of your decisions on others and asking for help when you need it are strengths that will serve you throughout your life. They are also critical for being an effective member of an athletic team.

### **Team Meeting Conversation Starters:**

- What does it mean to make responsible decisions? What is your process for making decisions? Do you think about your short-term and long-term goals when making decisions? Do you think about how your decisions may impact others? How do your values influence your decisions?
- Think about a decision or situation you have struggled with recently. What made it difficult? Were you missing any information that would have made a difference? Was there anyone you could reach out to for help or advice? Is it difficult for you to ask for help? Why or why not? Why is asking for help important in sports? Do you think your teammates see you as someone they can go to for support and/or help? Why or why not?

## WEEK 5 - RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING (CONTINUED)

- Invite athletes to bring a quote about decision-making self-awareness that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *“Unsuccessful people make decisions based on their current situation; successful people make decisions based on where they want to be.”* —Anonymous
  - *“Always go with the choice that scares you the most, because that’s the one that is going to help you grow.”* —Caroline Myss
  - *“Good decisions come from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions.”* —Anonymous
  - *“There are an infinite number of different situations within any one game and each situation is different than the one before. During the game, players must perceive the situation and then select what they believe is the correct decision and then execute.”* —Arsene Wenger
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn’t connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. A couple of options are below:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi0Jacu70dl>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsvB8XHoh34>
- Reflection: How did it feel to focus on making responsible decisions this week? How do you think our conversations and your self-reflection impacted your decisions this week? What have you learned about yourself and how you make decisions?

### **Tasks for the week**

1. Think about your day and write down all of the decisions you have made today. (Did you hit snooze when your alarm went off? Did you eat breakfast- if so what did you eat? Did you brush your teeth? What did you wear? Did you go to school? Did you participate in class? Were you on time for practice? etc.). Put a check next to the decisions you really thought about. Put a star next to the decisions you think were good choices. What do you notice? How do you make decisions- and remember not deciding is a decision? What impacts your decisions? Who do your decisions impact? Why is it important to make responsible decisions when you play sports? How do your choices impact your team?



## WEEK 5 - RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING (CONTINUED)

2. **How do I Make Decisions?** Ask athletes to answer the following questions. This could be done as a written reflection, pair share, in small groups or as a full team.
- How do you make decisions?
  - How would you break down your process into steps?
  - How do you think your process is working? Is there anything you could change for it to work better for you?
  - Who is someone you could go to if you needed help in figuring out an important decision?
  - One Decision-Making model is:
    - Identify the choice to be made
    - Explore different options
    - Think about the possible outcomes (consider the impact on you and others)
    - Choose (consider your values and goals)
    - Reflect on your decision and the actual outcome
  - Discuss when to use a process like this- every decision does not need such a detailed process, but it can be helpful to have a process you trust to work for you for choices with greater risks and/or potential for greater consequences/impact.

### **BONUS ACTIVITY:**

Give athletes scenarios or have athletes come up with scenarios/hypothetical situations and ask them to go through their decision-making process to make a choice. Some example scenarios are:

- You play a winter varsity sport and signed an agreement that you would not go sledding or skiing during the season. It's a cold Saturday night and you are pretty bored. A bunch of your friends, including one of your teammates, decide to go sledding. You really want to go, but worry about what will happen if your coach finds out.
- You and one of your best friends sign up for a community soccer league. You have never played soccer before but the information says the goal of the league is to have fun and learn. Soccer is a lot harder than you were expecting and everyone else on your team has played before. You are not having fun and the other kids on your team are getting frustrated with you. You ask your friend to help you practice, but they tell you they won't get better practicing with you and instead set up time to practice with the other kids. You know your family will not let you quit, but you really want to.
- You see a referee make a bad call, but it is in your team's favor. One of the players from the other team starts arguing the call and says that you saw what happened. The ref asks you if they made the right call.



# CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

## WEEK 6

All of us exist within a broader community. Understanding how we function within our community is an important part of understanding ourselves. Connecting with one's community is a key part of social awareness. When we can begin to show concern for and understand the feelings and experiences of others and recognize all of the resources and supports available within a community group, we are more effective in our own lives.

### **Team Meeting Conversation Starter:**

- What does community mean to you? What helps to create a strong sense of community? (Dictionary.com defines community as a social group whose members have something in common, such as a shared government, geographic location, culture, or heritage.) Would they consider this team a community? Why or why not? If not, what would it take to make it a community?
- On chart paper or a whiteboard, ask athletes to brainstorm all the different people that make up their school community (if it is not a school-based team, you may want to pick a different community- sports league, neighborhood-based community, etc.). Have them name as many different groups, roles, and individuals as they can (for individuals, think more of categories like "principal, security officer, front desk admin," and less of naming every single student or teacher.) The goal is to identify as many diverse stakeholders as possible. Then ask athletes to think about what each role/person does to grow or sustain the school community. Discuss why each role is important. (who may be missing from their list- families, alumni, surrounding community members?)

## WEEK 6 - CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY (CONTINUED)

- Invite athletes to bring a quote about community that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much."* —Helen Keller
  - *"Seeking the truth, finding the truth, telling the truth and living the truth has been and will always be what guides my actions."*—Colin Kaepernick
  - *"If we take time to care about people, we can transform whole communities. You never know how you can change someone's life by showing him or her how much you care."* —Rehema Ellis
  - *"After much thought I decided to opt out of the 2020 WNBA season. There's work to be done off the court in so many areas of our community. I do feel that now is the time and moments equal momentum."* —Renee Montgomery
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. A couple of options are below:
  - <https://www.ncaa.org/student-athlete-activism>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QM0EpMS6KMU>
  - <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/nfl-protest-athletes-social-inequality/>
- **Reflection:** How are you feeling about your connection to different communities after this week? Are there ways you want to be more involved in your community or more involved in activism? If yes, how could you use what you have learned in previous weeks: developing relationships, self-awareness, goal-setting, self-management (circle of control) and responsible decision making.

### **Task for the Week:**

1. Ask each athlete to think about an athlete or coach they admire who made a difference in their community- could be someone they know or someone they know of- you can give them a little time to do research- or assign it as 'homework' and ask them to be ready to share on Friday (or other specific day- but make sure if you are asking them to do it on their own time that they have enough time for it- considering all of the other things they are balancing in their life). Be prepared to share an example of an athlete/coach you admire- maybe even give an example when you are giving the instructions.
2. Athletes and Activism- Do you know of any athletes who were/are also activists? What were they standing for/against? What were they trying to change? What happened?

## **WEEK 6 - CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY (CONTINUED)**

### **BONUS ACTIVITY:**

**Taking Action:** What is something in one of your communities that you would like to change? What would you want/need to learn before choosing how to try to change it? Who would be important to include as a partner, advisor, mentor, etc? How can you center the voices of those who may be most impacted by the change? What is the history- what do you understand about the bigger context? What may be the unintended consequences of change?

Helping others and contributing to one's community has immense social and emotional benefits. It can build a sense of belonging and purpose as well as improve overall well-being. Consider pursuing a community involvement/service project this week or month as a team or encourage your athletes to do a project on their own. Make sure you frame community service as an important part of being a good community member - that is, being an active member of your community means contributing in some way. Be sure your athletes do not see the service project as "charity."

Service-learning is most effective when it is grounded in one's own community and when there is a real learning component. What type of project might the team want to take on? What are the underlying causes/systems at play for the need for this type of project? How can they learn more about the need? Who else should be involved? What voices need to be included? In what ways are service-learning and activism connected? Before the project, ask athletes to think about why it is important to be involved in positive ways in their communities and what those communities provide to them.

After the project, take some time to talk with athletes (or encourage them to write in a journal) about what they experienced, what they learned, how their project impacted their community, and what else they can do to be a contributing member of their community.



# REFLECTION

WEEK 7

Reflection is key to personal growth. There are always opportunities to reflect, think about experiences, and learn from the past in order to create the future we want. Reflection can help individuals to identify personal strengths, develop a sense of personal and social identity, make responsible decisions, and create a sense of purpose, all of which are essential for athletic performance.

## **Team Meeting Conversation Starter:**

- What have been your favorite moments with this team, for the season and/or in these sessions? What are the most important thing(s) you have learned? Why do you think those were most important? At the beginning of the season, were those the things you thought would be your favorite- or that you would learn? (If you had your athletes do the self-reflection journal as a part of the self-awareness topic, ask them to look at what they wrote at that time) Why is it important to take time to reflect?
- One way to reflect is to pay closer attention to how we spend our time. Share that they are going to practice being reflective by focusing on their use of time. For one week (or a shorter time span such as three days, depending on how much time you have with your team), ask your athletes to complete the Day-in-the-Life activity sheet contained in the supplemental activities section. You may want to give them enough copies, so they have it handy for each day. Tell them:
  - As you proceed/move through your day, fill in what you do during each hour.
  - When you are not in school or at practice, what types of activities are you participating in?

## WEEK 7 - REFLECTION (CONTINUED)

At the end of the week, have them reflect individually, with a partner, or in the larger group. Ask them to consider: Are your activities helping you move closer towards your goals? If not, what might be the cause of filling the time with less purposeful activities. Encourage athletes to be mindful and reflective on the time they have. Don't forget to share that it is important to build in time for fun, joy, peace, relaxation and connection. Balance is the key and time for recovery and reflection is critical. See the How Much Do You Get Out of an Hour activity in the supplemental activities section for additional prompts and discussion points.

- Invite students to bring a quote about reflection that speaks to them or ask them to reflect and respond to a quote you share. A few examples are below:
  - *"Develop an attitude of gratitude, and give thanks for everything that happens to you, knowing that every step toward achieving something bigger and better than your current situation."* —Brian Tracy
  - *"Don't fear failure so much that you refuse to try new things. The saddest summary of life contains three descriptions: could have, might have, and should have."* —Louis E. Boone
  - *"It's all about the journey, not the outcome."* —Carl Lewis
  - *"What to do with a mistake; recognize it, admit it, learn from it, forget it."* —Dean Smith
- Share a video with your team and ask them to share their response to the video and how it connects/doesn't connect to your team. They can share in pairs, small groups or as a full team. A couple options are below:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Ky-mKuhKgU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ky-mKuhKgU)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2MfNE91jLk>
- **Final Reflection:**
  - **Write a letter to yourself**
    - In what ways did I intentionally push myself outside of my comfort zone?
    - Who in my life made this season more memorable?
    - What knowledge did I gain through books, coaching, or classes that helped me become a better version of myself?
    - What did I do for the first time this season?
    - In what ways did I contribute and give back to help others this year?
    - What were my favorite moments this year in training and outside of it?
    - What are some important lessons I learned this season?
    - What do I have to be particularly grateful for about this year?

Questions from <https://drivenmindtraining.com/annual-reflection-questions-athlete/>

## **WEEK 7 - REFLECTION (CONTINUED)**

### ***Task for the Week:***

1. Invite your athletes to think about their experiences over the past eight weeks. You have collectively explored developing relationships, self-awareness, goal setting, self-management, responsible decision-making, connecting with community, and now reflection.
  - Ask athletes to identify one thing they have learned or changed in their lives based on the past 7 weeks.
  - Ask them to then think about one area in which they want to do more work, and set an actionable and achievable goal to achieve progress.Have athletes share their reflections and invite the team to offer appreciation, support, thoughts and feedback.
  
2. Tap the Shoulder Activity (not for every group, participants are asked to close their eyes and tap others/get tapped on the shoulder- know your athletes and their comfort level before trying this activity)
  - Arrange the room so all participants are sitting in a circle facing out
  - Explain that this activity is an opportunity to acknowledge people anonymously
  - Everyone will sit with their eyes closed or something over their eyes so they can not see
  - The facilitator will tap 3-5 participants on the shoulder (more if it is a really large group) inviting them to come to the middle of the circle
  - When you are in the middle you have the opportunity to acknowledge your teammates who are still sitting by gently tapping them on the shoulder when the facilitator reads different statements out loud. For example: 'Tap the shoulder of someone who makes you laugh'.
  - After a number of statements, the facilitator asks the participants in the middle to sit down and chooses new athletes to join them in the middle of the circle.
  - Everyone will have an opportunity to be in the middle to acknowledge others.

## WEEK 7 - REFLECTION (CONTINUED)

Sample statements: (Choose or create the right statements for your team)

Gently tap the shoulder of someone who:

- you look up to
- is a good listener
- cheers you up after a tough practice/game
- has supported you this season
- you would like to say 'thank you' to
- has helped you to improve this season
- you admire
- you would want to take a road trip with
- has a positive attitude
- never gives up
- you would like to be more like
- is courageous
- is a true leader on the team
- inspires you
- you trust
- has inner strength
- is someone you look forward to seeing
- you seldom hear complaining
- is self-aware
- you would seek out for advice
- makes your team stronger
- works well with different people
- makes practice and games fun
- pushes you to work harder
- makes a difference in their community

If *Tap the Shoulder* isn't the right option for your team, there are many ways to show appreciation: Give athletes opportunities to reflect on the season and appreciate their teammates, coaches and supporters. This could be done in writing, in a group exercise, verbally, with creative recognition- spoken word, videos, art, posters, awards, etc.





# SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES

## Interview Questions - (Week 1)

- Who is your favorite movie character?
- What do you love about our sport? How old were you when you started playing?
- Name two professional athletes you admire.
- If you could choose only one food to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- Do you have siblings? How old are they? Do you enjoy spending time together? What annoys you about them?
- Do you have any pets? What kind?
- What other activities do you do outside of school?
- In your opinion, what is the best way to spend a Saturday?

## **SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

### **Your Why (Purpose) Activity - (Week 2)**

You were made to strive to be your best, therefore, settling for anything less than your best is a misuse of the gifts and talent you have been given. Most athletes say they want to be great; they want to be the best. However, sometimes, their actions don't match their words. To be your best requires that your physical actions are in alignment with your mental desire to achieve your *telescope goal(s)* for the season. For some athletes, the ultimate goal may be to win a national or conference championship. For others, the goal may be to hit a personal best throw or meet a specific race time. A telescope goal helps us view our long-term goals. It assists in guiding us towards what we want to accomplish. It "peers" into the future, allowing us to see where we ultimately want to go. It unlocks a picture of where we see ourselves going in the next year, two years, or four years.

And an important part of achieving those goals, it to have the self-awareness to know WHY you want it. Purpose and power flow from your WHY and they inspire you to work with more passion and positive energy. When you know what you want and WHY you want it, you are driven by a passion for taking the necessary steps to make it happen.

Ask athletes to consider the following prompts to help them determine their WHY:

- Why have you decided to join this sport?
- Why do you want to be successful at it?
- Why do you want to achieve the goals you have set out for yourself?
- How does your telescope vision align with your commitments?

## **SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

### **Goal Setting Activity - (Week 3)**

Embarking on the beginning of a new season is when coaches and athletes begin to map out yearly goals. Your goals may vary between the indoor and outdoor seasons. For some athletes, the ultimate goal may be to win a national or conference championship. Whereas for others, the goal may be to hit a personal best throw. There are two types of goals that our athletes may embark upon during their upcoming season or multiple seasons.

The first type of goal they may decide to pursue is an outcome goal. An outcome goal is fixed, concrete, and has a number or specific result attached to it. For example, you may have a goal of throwing the shot-put 50' or hitting 75% of your free throws, or getting a certain batting average during the course of the season. Those outcomes are fixed. Either you achieve the results or you don't. It doesn't leave a lot of wiggle room, especially if the only outcome you are interested in achieving a specific number or percent. For example, if you don't meet your free throw percent, will you look upon your season as being successful or not? If you don't believe that is a successful season, why do you believe that to be so?

A second type of goal that your athlete may decide to pursue is called a process goal. A process goal is more focused on what you need to do in order to achieve your outcome goal. Process goals are 100% in your control. An example of a process goal might be to go to the weight room 4 times a week during the offseason and 3 times per week during the season to maintain your conditioning. Another example may be to spend 30 minutes on your mobility after a training session or to take an ice bath after training sessions each week. Focusing on process goals will help reduce your stress and anxiety during the course of a season because they are outcomes and results that are directly in your control. If you skip two training sessions during the week because you simply don't want to lift, you have nobody to blame but yourself. Working on what we have control over, in the long run, will better give you as a thrower an opportunity to be successful in accomplishing your goals.



## SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

### ***Goal Setting Activity (continued - week 3)***

Regardless of what we hope and aspire for during the season, any goal without a plan is just a hope. To achieve our goals, it is important for us to think about what we are willing to do to meet them.

***Ask Your Athletes:*** Before you establish your goal(s), it is equally important to decide what commitments you need to make to achieve your goal(s) for the season. Decide what you truly want to accomplish this season. What do you aspire and hope for? How much are you willing to sacrifice to achieve your goals? Are you willing to sacrifice time with your friends? Are you willing to sacrifice time attending social gatherings?

Instruct athletes to write their goals and commitments on the sheet below, in a journal, or on their computer/phone, and be as specific as possible. After they have written down their goals for the season, ask them to think about why that outcome is important to them. Why is it important to accomplish your specific goal(s) this season?

## SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

### A Day in the Life Activity - (Week 7)

What does a day in your life look like? In the space below, write out your current daily schedule.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<b>6am-7am</b>	_____
<b>7am-8am</b>	_____
<b>8am-9am</b>	_____
<b>9am-10am</b>	_____
<b>10am-11am</b>	_____
<b>11am-12pm</b>	_____
<b>12pm-1pm</b>	_____
<b>1pm-2pm</b>	_____
<b>2pm-3pm</b>	_____
<b>3pm-4pm</b>	_____
<b>4pm-5pm</b>	_____
<b>5pm-6pm</b>	_____
<b>6pm-7pm</b>	_____
<b>7pm-8pm</b>	_____
<b>8am-9pm</b>	_____
<b>9pm-10pm</b>	_____
<b>10pm-11pm</b>	_____
<b>11pm-12am</b>	_____

## **SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)**

### ***A Day in the Life Activity (continued - week 7)***

**Review your daily schedule from above. What do you notice about how you spend your time?** Now, if you are a middle or high-school athlete, a majority of the time from 8am-3pm will probably be spent in school. That is understandable. What you do from the time your school day is done until you begin your nightly routine will make a difference in how well you perform and whether or not you are going to achieve your goals. What did you include in your daily routine that could be replaced with some of the strategies you have already learned about? Where are you able to include a daily 10-minute walk of gratitude? Where are you able to include your reflective journaling? How much time do you spend on social media during the day—could that time be replaced with a daily 5 to 10-minute mindfulness, visualization, or meditation session? These strategies are what the best of the best athletes incorporate into their daily routine.

## SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

### How Much Do You Get Out of An Hour? Activity - (Week 7)

Success is all about the fundamentals. And the fundamentals are little, ordinary, and often boring to work on. However, in order to be the very best, you must master them. Also, you must become a master of the ordinary. In every act of greatness, whether in sports or academics, the best of the best accomplish extraordinary feats by doing ordinary things with extraordinary consistency, commitment, and focus. There isn't that much of a difference between the best athletes and the good to average athletes. They may have comparable training programs and access to similar coaches. The difference between the best and the good can be found in the mundane. It is in the mundane where you see greatness rise. The best athletes do little things every day a little better than everyone else. They take the time and energy to focus on small activities and actions needed to achieve greatness. Moreover, they don't just do the ordinary things when they feel like it - Instead; they do the ordinary simple things every day, without fail. The key is to practice and get a little bit better every day deliberately. Over time little improvements each week lead to big results next month and next year.

**Ponder:** Think about your daily rituals or routines. Do you have established daily routines that guide you throughout the day? Do you go to sleep at the same time every night? Do you wake up at the same time every morning? Or, do you mindlessly go through your day without any rhyme or reason to what you do? For example, your mundane task may be to make sure you complete all your weekly weight room sessions. Another mundane task may be to complete mindfulness activities before you go to bed every night or to complete visualization techniques every morning before you get out of bed in the morning.

As you strive to be your best, what actions do you need to take to remain focused on your mundane tasks? How will you take care of your body? How will you deal with other demands of life? What habits do you need to incorporate into your training and life to help you improve each day? For example, you may feel as though you are not getting enough sleep at night. Rather than getting 8-9 hours of sleep per night, you may be getting only 5-6 hours. What would you need to prioritize in your life in order to get more sleep each night? Would you need assistance and guidance with efficient time management skills, less time spent on social media, not wasting time during the day, etc.?

**Instruct Athletes:** First write down a few of your daily rituals if you have some - make note of whether you do these regularly or just sometimes. Next, think about 1-2 small things you might add into your daily routine that will help you accomplish your goals. Write those down and then begin practicing them for one week.



## About Whole Child Connection

The Whole Child Connection at Children's Institute works to facilitate a transformation in settings where children grow, learn, and play so that all adults intentionally foster the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills young people need to be successful. We do that through consultation, coaching, and professional learning experiences for individuals and systems across the education, health, and human services sectors.



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