

AUGUST 2024

QUALITY COACHING TOOLKIT

# Coaching for Performance in Life and in Sport

Canada

**coach,ca**  
Coaching Association of Canada  
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

## INTRODUCTION

Sport has immense power to bring people together, to contribute to the holistic development of young people, and to provide an important sense of achievement<sup>1,2</sup>. For these benefits to occur, participants need to feel safe, included, respected, and cared for<sup>3</sup>. With the growing awareness of experiences of maltreatment<sup>4</sup> in sport, questions have been posed about how to establish sport environments that are not only abuse-free but provide fulfilling experiences.

There have been several advancements to address maltreatment in Canadian sport including the establishment of Abuse-Free Sport, and Safe Sport Modules. However, many of these interventions focus on identifying and addressing behaviours that may be harmful for athletes with little focus on 'good' behaviours and strategies to optimize best practices. any of these interventions focus on identifying and addressing behaviours that may be harmful for athletes with little focus on 'good' behaviours and strategies to optimize best practices.

Just as the conduct of teachers and other professionals who work with young people has changed over the last 30 years, coaching conduct, similarly, has changed and will continually evolve. These changes are in response to evolving societal norms and expectations such as growing attention on equity, diversity and inclusion and children's rights. In addition, research on youth development has led to changes in teaching and coaching practices that are more child-centric<sup>5</sup> and use positive reinforcement<sup>6</sup>. Athletes' reports have demonstrated 'traditional' coaching methods (e.g., tough love, command and control) are not as effective and, if used continuously, can lead to long-term harm<sup>7</sup>. While it may have been accepted in sport in the past to lose your temper, yell, and scream in response to poor performance, just like in teaching, these behaviours are no longer best practice in coaching. As such, this toolkit helps to illustrate best practices as coaches seek to improve their methods.

### DEFINITION

**Maltreatment:** All types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and commercial, or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

### Safe Sport:

A sport environment in which people experience physical, environmental, relational safety, or psychological safety, and holistic development.

### Athlete:

Recreational sport participant, and/or participant in organized sport with a competition element, and/or elite athlete — these terms can be used interchangeably.

### Defining Safe Sport:

The model of safe sport below, from Gurgis and colleagues<sup>8</sup>, indicates the various components of a Safe Sport environment.

According to Gurgis et al. (2023), a Safe Sport environment encompasses **3 components**:

- 1. Environmental and physical safety:** a safe environment that is free from issues of physical danger from equipment and doping
- 2. Relational safety:** relationships that are free from sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychosocial abuse, or neglect
- 3. Optimising sport:** programs that prioritize positive development, rights of inclusion, accessibility, fairness, and safety

[Safe-Sport-Lit-Review.-FINAL.pdf](#) (sirc.ca)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safe sport continues to be a top priority in Canadian sport and reports from athletes have noted observations of slow progress and a shift towards prioritizing well-being over medal attainment<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, some researchers have focused on measures to prevent maltreatment in sport, including positive approaches. This toolkit was developed based on the findings of Erin Willson's doctoral dissertation. A research report, *Embracing Excellence*, describing these findings [can be found here](#)<sup>10</sup>. The research explored positive coaching styles in high-performance sport environments. To address behaviours of maltreatment, such as emotional abuse and neglect, positive coaching styles like autonomy-supportive<sup>11</sup> and athlete-centered<sup>12</sup> coaching have been proposed previously but these have not taken hold in the Canadian sport community likely because the connections between these positive styles and performance outcomes have not been demonstrated. Positive coaching styles can increase athlete satisfaction and retention but the connections between these approaches and performance outcomes have yet to be demonstrated. Until positive coaching styles are shown to increase performance success, coaches have reported being reluctant to adopt these styles, especially when their careers depend upon the performance success of their athletes or teams. Thus, research was conducted to understand the relationship between the achievement of international medals and positive sport experiences. Additionally, we explored the characteristics of a positive sport experience such as the behaviours, environment, coaching techniques that produce performance. The results from this research report were then used to inform the development of this toolkit.

In this research, interviews were conducted with 13 Olympic and Paralympic athletes, who had won at least one medal at an Olympic/Paralympic Games, World Championships, or Pan American Games, and 11 Olympic and Paralympic coaches of international medalists. Participants were purposefully selected for their medal success in a positive coaching environment.

Results indicated that medals could be won at the international stage in environments that supported holistic well-being. There were also additional benefits to a positive environment, including performance satisfaction, ease of training, resiliency, enjoyment, and longevity in sport. These benefits create a cyclical effect that further increases performance. In contrast, the participants who had previously been in negative sport environments or environments that only prioritized performance reported decreased performance, motivation, and well-being. Even when medal attainment was achieved in negative environments, participants specifically noted that performance attainment wasn't worth the negative outcomes; as such, many participants refused to stay in environments that embraced a win-at-all-cost mentality.

**Autonomy-supportive** coaching provides athletes with choices, rationales for tasks, integrates athletes' perspectives, and encourages athletes to act independently.

**Athlete-centred** coaching places athletes at the centre of their experience. Athletes are encouraged to take ownership of their learning through opportunities to make decisions and practice leadership.

**Four interacting attributes of a positive sport environment were discussed by the 24 coaches and athletes who were interviewed:**

- 1. Characteristics of the athlete
- 2. Characteristics of the coach
- 3. Characteristics of the coach-athlete relationship
- 4. Characteristics of the training environment

Finally, one of the most remarkable findings from this research was that the participants’ **definition of success** extended beyond medal performance. As such, a new definition of success is proposed that incorporates 5 elements of a successful sport experience:

<p><b>1. Personal performance metrics</b></p> 	<p><b>4. Enjoyment</b></p> 
<p><b>2. Personal development</b></p> 	<p><b>5. A desire to stay in sport</b></p> 
<p><b>3. Well-being</b></p> 	

In conclusion, the research provides evidence that athletes can succeed in positive sport environments. This is important because it refutes beliefs that coaches need to use abusive tactics, like yelling, belittling, and command and control

methods to achieve performance results. Findings from the high-performance athletes and coaches in this study indicate a preference for more positive sport environments, which contribute to performance success and personal development.

## ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit was developed for the Coaching Association of Canada based on the research findings found in the [Embracing Excellence report](#). The purpose of this toolkit is to provide tangible ways for coaches and sport organizations to implement within their sport environment. In particular, it aims to expand upon current definitions of success in sport and provide suggestions for coaches to implement more positive coaching strategies into their repertoire. We hope that this toolkit encourages all sport participants to consider their definitions of success in sport and the best ways to achieve this success.

This toolkit is designed to provide competitive coaches evidence-based suggestions for enhancing coaching practices to facilitate safe, inclusive, and welcoming sport environments. This toolkit can be used as a foundation for recognizing your strengths as a coach and identifying priorities for change. Although this toolkit was informed by research with Canadian Olympic and Paralympic athletes, the content may be applied in any competitive sport environment.

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## WHY ENGAGE WITH THIS TOOLKIT?

A positive sport environment has, to-date, been linked with athlete satisfaction, life skill development, and sport participation<sup>1,2</sup>; however, the connection with enhanced athletic performance has not been explored sufficiently. This toolkit and the [Embracing Excellence: Cultivating Success Through Positive Sport research report](#) provide evidence that a positive sport environment, including positive coaching methods, are effective in eliciting performance success while also promoting the physical, emotional, and social well-being of athletes.



The coaches' and athletes' perspectives that formed the research report and toolkit noted significant benefits to performance in positive sport environments. A positive sport environment fostered enjoyment, motivation, resiliency, career longevity, personal development, and feeling cared for and about. All of these characteristics then resulted in increases in performance. Notably, the reverse was also true. Athletes in a negative sport environment noted a decrease in the same characteristics, which negatively impacted their performance.

### DEFINITION

**Performance:** "the pursuit of excellence where a sportsperson measures their performance quantitatively or qualitatively to move towards their desired goal."<sup>13</sup>

## KEY TAKEAWAY

Performance and a Positive Sport Environment are not on two ends of a continuum. Instead, performance is best elicited in a positive sport environment.

### Quote from Olympic Gold Medalist:



*"This isn't a theory of like, 'well, if you treat people better then they will do better.' No, it's actually tangible. We have evidence. I have a gold medal upstairs that shows you it can happen. So, let's get with the program and stop traumatizing athletes."*  
— Olympic Champion



## PART 1:

# CONSTRUCTING AN EXPANDED VERSION OF SUCCESS

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**Exercise 1:** If you ran into your athlete in the grocery store 10 years after the athlete retired, what would that interaction be like and what would you like to hear from them about their experience? What would you want them to say about your relationship or you as a coach?

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**Exercise 2:** Reflect on the following questions:

1. How do you define success as a coach?

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2. How do you think your peers (other coaches you work with, interact with, compete against) define success?

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3. What are some reasons that you coach? (prompts: why did you get into coaching? what do you like about it? what is the most fun part? what is the most rewarding part?)

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4. How would you describe your coaching philosophy?

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## DEFINITIONS

### Coaching Philosophy

A set of beliefs and principles that guide your behaviour. It helps you remain true to your values while handling hundreds of choices. A coaching philosophy will underpin the behaviours of the coach and can inform the specifics and particulars of practice.<sup>14</sup>

## ASPECTS OF SUCCESS TO CONSIDER

Many competitive coaches and athletes insist that performance is not their only definition of success:



*"Maybe our values shouldn't be that we need to produce Olympians, maybe it should be to find excellence and whatever that's going to be for you...My experiences aren't make or break because I get a medal or not... we need to redefine success"*

— World Championship Medalist

There were **five prominent** themes that coaches and athletes discussed when talking about success. As you reflect on their definitions of success, consider what you would add to your own definition.



### Personal Performance Metrics

Success is measured by individual potential and improvement rather than the competition results. Each athlete has their own performance potential and level of athleticism which should contribute to defining an individualized measure of success. This can include respecting individual potential, supporting individuals to develop at their own pace, understanding that goals can change with personal circumstances, and celebrating personal bests.



*"I think to me, winning or being the best isn't the goal, ever. It's more about being their best, and if they are trying to reach a certain target score or do a new skill..."*

— Olympic Coach



### Personal Development

Emphasizing the importance of "building better humans" as a metric of successful sport participation. This can include prioritization of personal development rather than performance-only, supporting athletes in their humanitarian initiatives, encouraging athletes to demonstrate sportsmanship, and having a desire to make a positive impact in an athlete's life.



*"My philosophy is that I want my athletes to do good, but more importantly, I want them to be good. If they are good, then they will do good."*

— Olympic Coach

### 3.

#### Ensuring Well-Being

Prioritizing athletes' and coaches' physical, emotional, and social well-being are prioritized. The pursuit of excellence should not come at the expense of well-being. Coaches are encouraged to move away from the 'win-at-all-cost' mentality.



*"So even if it's, I want to win a gold medal at the Olympics, that should be understood as, I want to be healthy physically and mentally and have my well-being taken into account AND win a gold medal at the Olympics"*

— Olympic Coach

### 4.

#### Enjoyment of Sport Participation

Athletes and coaches should enjoy their sport experience at all levels of sport. Creating an enjoyable experience can be prioritized while maximizing an athlete's potential.



*"I think sport at the high-performance level is the same thing as the grassroots level.*

*Why do young people join sport? Fun, friendship, fitness and the joy of participating in a group activity. There are so many personal reasons that people join the sport for."*

— Paralympic Coach

### 5.

#### A Desire to Stay in Sport

Success can also be measured by an athlete's desire to stay in sport (either as an athlete, or as a future coach or sport administrator). This included creating environments that athletes want to continue to be a part of, reducing the potential for burnout, and focusing on the long-term vision.



*"It's not just about having talent, but ensuring talent stays... It just wasn't sustainable growing into a young woman to be under that stress, pressure, and regiment... with my new coach I can still be my own person and do things and live a really normal, it's way more sustainable...I excelled in [positive and negative environments] but it was the sustainability"*

— Olympic Athlete



Hey Sam, it's time for our end-of-season review.

How do you feel the year went?

Honestly, I don't think it went well. I'm not as good as some of my teammates, and it's disappointing. I'm thinking about quitting because I feel like I'll never be at the top. I work hard, but it doesn't seem to be enough, and I feel like I'm letting everyone down. I love this sport and my teammates, but I just don't feel good enough.

Thanks for sharing. For me, success isn't about scoring goals, points or rankings—it's about personal progress. Every player has their own goals, whether it's managing stress before a game, improving a skill, or building team spirit.

Let's focus on setting and celebrating your individual goals. I've seen you make great progress this year, and your positive energy is invaluable to the team. Next year, we'll work on specific goals so you can really see your achievements!

Thanks, Coach. I'm really glad we talked about this.



*"Don't get me wrong, I am competitive, we like winning, winning is fun, we can't lose sight of that, but you can win without casualties. And I think most athletes like winning too and it is fun, but if that's the only thing? Of... the sport's too hard, you're going to get your [butt] kicked way too often. If you're entire self-worth is that tiny little time you win, you're going to be miserable. The Olympics is really important, it matters, but it isn't the only thing that matters."*

— Olympic Coach







**Exercise 4:** Take a moment to reflect on your coaching practices using this quiz:

On a scale\* of 1–3, rate the following:

1 = not often	2 = sometimes	3 = often	RAT- ING
<b>TOTAL</b>			

\* This scale was adapted from Empowering and Disempowering Motivational Climate Questionnaire (EDMCQ7 C)<sup>15</sup>

**Add all your scores together. If your score is:**

**<15:** You are encouraged to include more of the coaching styles described in the questions above (e.g., positive encouragement, empowering athletes, allowing for choices, encouraging athletes to ask questions, participation for enjoyment rather than performance) to allow for your sport participants/athletes to foster their confidence, independence, and feel cared for. The next section of this toolkit can help provide more suggestions to include in your practices.

**16–39:** You are on the right track and are encouraged to continue to include the coaching techniques in the questions above within your coaching style. Perhaps pick 2–3 items you scored lower on and think about how these could be integrated within your coaching practices.

**>40:** You are doing a great job of fostering a climate that is caring, encourages independence, allow athletes to make choices, and fosters internal motivation which allow athletes to thrive. Keep it up!

## SELF-REFLECTION

### Thinking about this exercise and your results:

1. What are some things you can think of including in your own coaching techniques? List them below:

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2. Going back through this list:

• What behaviours will you stop using in coaching practices?

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• What behaviours will you continue to use in your coaching practices?

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• What new behaviours will you start/add in your coaching practices?

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• Are there barriers that are making these changes difficult?

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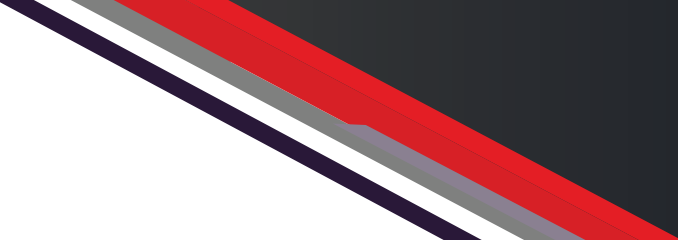
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3. What things do you need that will help you implement these changes?

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# HOW TO PROMOTE OPTIMAL SPORT PERFORMANCE AND WELL-BEING: THE HIGHER METHOD



## HIGHER COACHING

### CREATING A POSITIVE SPORT EXPERIENCE

#### The HIGHER method

There are 6 components of creating a positive sport experience that promotes optimal sport performance and well-being. You are encouraged to reflect on each of these six components and think about ways to integrate them into your own coaching practice.



## H

### Holistic

See each sport participant as a whole person with physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs and attending to all of these needs.



## I

### Individualized

Consider the unique attributes of each person you work with and tailor your coaching and planning to complement the person.



## G

### Good Governance

Ensure your sport organization's culture matches the vision and values you are trying to promote.



## H

### Healthy

Create a sport environment that is physically and psychologically safe for all sport participants.



## E

### Empowering

Use coaching techniques that allow athletes to be active participants in the learning of their sport (e.g., involved in planning, asking questions).



## R

### Respectful Coach-Athlete Relationship

Foster a relationship with your athletes that embodies mutual respect, trust, and open communication.



## HOLISTIC

### What is this and why is it important?

A holistic approach values each sport participant (coaches, athletes) as a whole being. This means understanding and attending to a person's physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs. Rather than viewing athletes as machines or raw material to be shaped and moulded, a holistic approach recognizes that athletes are people, with rights, autonomy and growth opportunities. Coaches are also unique individuals who bring their own attributes (e.g., personality, technical skills, experience) and needs which should be recognized as well.

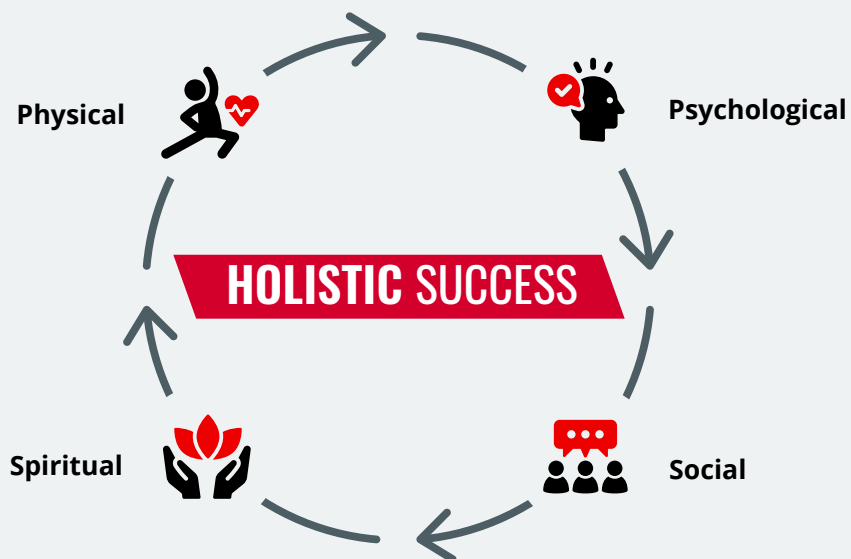
### What this looks like in practice

#### 1. Coaching the person as a whole

- Integrate the physical, psychological & social aspects of an individual
- Attend to the mindset of athletes
- Incorporate support for mental performance
- Encourage mental health support (if needed)



*"You've got the technical training, but a lot of your role is just trying to support athletes and making sure they're okay as people. If you're just a coach you're missing something, you're a little bit of a parent, a psychologist, a little bit of a friend, a little bit of a guide, a little bit of everything. Sometimes you need to delegate things, like to a nutritionist, but basically, you're there to support your athletes in any way that they need."*



**WHY:** An athlete's mindset can significantly impact their ability to train and perform. As a coach, if you're only focusing on physical performance, you are missing out on athlete's abilities to reach their full potential.

## 2. Encourage sport-life balance

- Foster athletes' identities outside of sport
- Encourage a healthy social life

**WHY:** Having sport life balance allows for athletes to have a balanced perspective on sport. This can help maintain a better mindset in training and lessen the pressure on themselves to succeed.

## 3. Emphasize life skill development

- Develop skills like teamwork, goal-setting, emotion regulation, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, work ethic

**WHY:** These skills can contribute to performance success at all levels of sport and to creating well-rounded athletes who are more adaptable and autonomous.

These skills also help develop 'better humans', contributing to their success in other walks of life.

## EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

1. Encourage work/school/volunteer engagement
2. Encourage athletes to have a social life
3. Provide opportunities for family engagement
4. Attend to athletes' mental health
  - Provide referrals as needed
5. Encourage teamwork and collaboration
6. Monitor physical health
  - Rest, recovery are important to holistic health

**Note:** This may also mean being flexible to accommodate athletes' multiple priorities (e.g., they may have a piano recital that will mean missing a training session).

## MYTH BUSTER:

Allowing athletes to focus on outside things enhances sport performance rather than taking away from it

## Additional Resources:

Game Plan: Common Mental Health Disorders Fact Sheets: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hVWnECcVUdXhxleGaotKIKIFRXIe89dt>

Game Plan: Considerations for finding a 'good fit' with a mental health professional: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g-pLe4OLDRkk-2w1KlygBoJ5\\_2cdyt9fu/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g-pLe4OLDRkk-2w1KlygBoJ5_2cdyt9fu/view?usp=drive_link)



Hey Coach, I wanted to check in about our training camp. My family is having an out-of-town reunion that same weekend, and I haven't seen most of them in years. Would it be okay if I went?

Thanks for the heads-up! We both know how crucial this camp is for our first competition, and I get that spending time with your family is important to your social and mental well-being so I support you going. How about we add some extra training sessions the week before so you're ready? Or, if you'd prefer, we can set up some workouts for you to do while you're away to keep the momentum going.



## INDIVIDUALIZED

### What is this and why is it important?

An individualized approach considers the unique needs of each individual you are working with and tailors coaching styles and techniques based on each athlete. Individualized coaching avoids a one-size-fits-all approach. This allows further opportunities for each athlete to thrive.



*"This belief that there's only one style of coaching, and that if you're not science-based, and making them do exactly what they should do every single day, in my opinion is ludicrous. We have to be able to read our athletes, to see what they need and identify specifically, what they require physically and mentally."*

### What it looks like:



*"So I've always described my job as, the actual coaching is the easy part. The understanding of the person and what makes them tick is the fun part of my job, and spending time with the athletes in different environments to understand who they are as people and how to support them"*

### 1. Recognize and foster the characteristics of yourself and your athletes.

- Common traits of successful athletes include being hard-working, goal-oriented, internally motivated, and often perfectionists.
- It's good to work with athletes' baseline traits. For example, if they are already a perfectionist, adapt your coaching style to reduce the stress they place on themselves. If an athlete is already motivated, they don't need to be yelled at as a way to 'motivate' them.



*"If athletes don't have the desire to win themselves, or that competitive advantage or edge, sorry, they're not going to go and achieve success. The athletes I work with, they want to win. They want to be at their best. They want to deliver."*

- Successful coaches are typically described as being happy, chill, humble, willing to learn, and prioritize self-care

**WHY:** Focusing on an athlete's strengths while addressing their weaknesses is more efficient. If an athlete is already internally motivated, yelling and trying to control them can be a wasted effort, or worse, have the effect of decreasing motivation. Instead, it can be more efficient to have a conversation about their goals and use this as a reminder when they get tired or if you notice a dip in their effort.



## 2. Get to know your athletes

- Personality
- Physical capacity
- Motivations
- Stressors
  - How they react in stressful situations
  - Communication styles they respond best to

**WHY:** By getting to know your athletes on a deeper level, you can adapt a more effective training plan for them to succeed.

## 3. Respect individual capacity

- Every athlete has different potential, reaching that potential should be celebrated regardless of their performance result
- Celebrate athletes' accomplishments/strengths outside of performance

**WHY:** While some athletes may have more talent than others, all athletes should be respected for their determination, tenacity, effort, growth, and personal achievement. There are many reasons people participate in sport, and these should all be respected.

## 4. Recognize day-to-day capacity



*"I tried to be as flexible as I can, change what needs to be changed, a plan is good but it's the base for change"*

- Ask athletes how they are feeling
- Do you have a strong relationship and safe Environment so that athletes can be honest?
  - Seek to listen and understand their individual signs of fatigue/over-training
- Make adjustments to avoid injury/burnout
- Create a training plan that implements balance and rest

- If you notice a dip in athletes' motivation or effort, have a conversation to identify the underlying problem

**Note:** If the underlying problem is beyond your scope, be sure to refer the athlete to trained professionals.

**WHY:** The human body is not a machine so cannot be treated like one. The capacity of an individual changes every day and training should match this. A great coach will adapt training plans to ensure that athletes are maximizing their current capacity to avoid injury, illness, or burnout.

### EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

- Spend time at the beginning of the season to get to know your athlete
- Discuss expectations of one another, including about communication, before the season begins
  - For example: co-create a team 'charter' that outlines expectations for:
    - Communication
    - Commitment
    - Problem-solving
    - Ways that accountability is upheld
  - For example: what is done if an athlete is routinely late/missing
- Maintain open communication throughout the season
- Questions you can ask:
  - How is your day going?
  - What else is going on in your life?
  - How are you feeling?
  - How is your body feeling?
  - What things are going well for you right now?
  - Where is your stress level on a 1–10 scale?
- Learn how your athletes react to and cope with stress
- Use the training plan as a template that can be adjusted to meet the athlete's capacity

# ACTIVITIES

Attached are some activities to reinforce an individualized approach:

## 1. Get To Know Your Athlete Que-Cards

See [Annex B](#) for fillable card to highlight some of your athlete's qualities.

**ANNEX B: GET TO KNOW YOUR ATHLETE QUE-CARD**

Use this fillable card to highlight some of your athlete's qualities, use the third column to make any notes on how to cater your coaching style to them. You can fill one out for each of your athletes and keep them on file for your reference and add to it as the season progresses.

CHARACTERISTIC	ATHLETE	WHAT YOU CAN DO TO Foster THIS ADAPT TO THEIR NEEDS?
Name		
Age		
Grade in School		
Favourite subject in school (or what they want to study in university)		
3 favourite things outside of sport		
Do they engage in other sport/ physical activity?		
Favourite thing about their sport		
How does your athlete handle stress? (include triggers, reactions, remedies)		
What are their favourite and best favourite skills/traits?		
What are their short term goals? (e.g. what do they want to accomplish this year?)		
What are their long term goals in sport?		
What are their long term goals outside of sport?		

## 2. Weekly Practice Planning Guide

See [Annex C](#) for the calendar to map out your training sessions.

**ANNEX C: WEEKLY PRACTICE PLANNING GUIDE**

**Step 1:** What do you need to accomplish this week (suggest referring to annual and monthly training plans to complete)?

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## GOOD GOVERNANCE

### What is this and why is it important?

The context of your sport environment (physical and cultural) can have an impact and influence on the behaviours of the people within your organization. Having strong policies and procedures in place, clear cultural values, and opportunities for all sport participants (including athletes) to have a say in their organization's decisions helps to create positive sport experiences for all.

### What it looks like:

- 1. Vision, Values, and Commitment**
- 2. Organizational attitudes and behaviours**
  - Rewarding more than just performance attainments
    - For example: thank athletes for bringing music or positive energy, being on time, engaging in open communication, being kind to teammates
  - Celebrating other athletic contributions (for example: teamwork, leadership, most improved)

**WHY:** Athletes do sport for many reasons outside of performance. By celebrating other accomplishments, the win-at-all cost mentality and the negative effects of this mentality may be reduced.

### 3. Athlete-centred organizations

- Allow athletes to have a say in decisions being made within your sport organization
- Include athlete representatives in discussing some of the ideas/planning at the board or parent level

**WHY:** Allowing input from all members of your organizations ensures that you are creating the most optimal experience for everyone. Decisions should be made with our athletes, not for them.

### EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

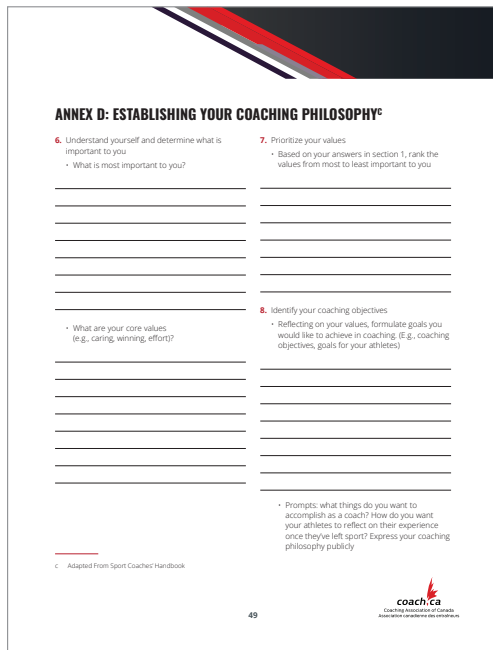
- Discuss your coaching philosophy with other coaches in your club/organization to see how they align
- Communicate your coaching philosophy with your athletes
- Set team expectations/standards within your club about how you expect your athletes to act, and what they should expect from you in return
- Have open communication and allow input from parents/board members/athletes when discussing operational decisions
- Create infographics of your coaching philosophy and put them on teamsnap or your clubs communication board

# ACTIVITIES

Attached are some activities to reinforce good governance:

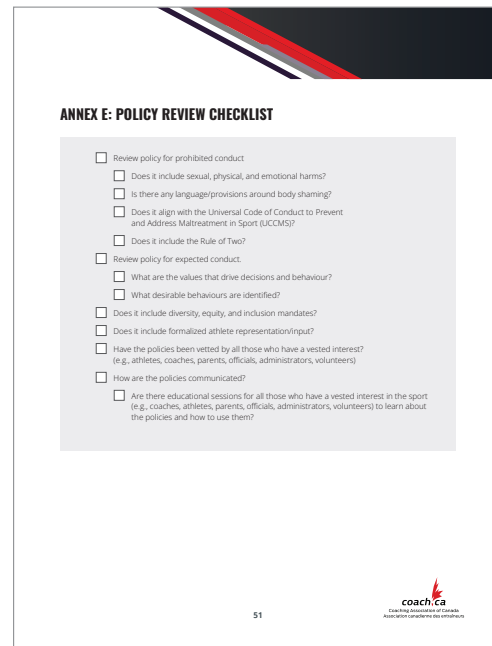
## 1. Establishing your Coaching Philosophy

See [Annex D](#) for set of questions to guide your coaching philosophy.



## 2. Policy Review Checklist

See [Annex E](#) for the Policy Review Checklist.



## Additional Resources:

For more insights on creating a coaching philosophy, engage with the NCCP coaching module:

Coaching and leading effectively: <https://coach.ca/module/nccp-coaching-and-leading-effectively>



## HEALTHY

### What is this and why is it important?

Creating a space that is physically and psychologically healthy is critical to elicit the best sport experience and performance. You want to create a place where athletes enjoy their training and want to continue, which may differ based on each athlete's needs. Physical and mental health are prioritized over performance outcomes.



*"When athletes are in a good spot and happy, when they have a good support team around them, their mental wellness is in check... Man, their training is better and they get more out of it. I see a rhythm to the training and a flow to performance. It's just much better."*

### MYTH BUSTER:

creating a space that is healthy, fun, and enjoyable does not take away from working hard and pushing oneself to perform. Athletes in fun environments work harder and want to continue in their sport.

### What it looks like:

#### 1. Happy

- Creating an environment where your athletes laugh and smile



*"I need to be happy to perform well. I need a positive environment. When you have someone that cares about how you do and how you performed, it's really helped me and gives you that fuzzy feeling inside."*

## A HEALTHY SPORT EXPERIENCE



Happy



Healthy



Fun



Safe

## 2. Healthy

- Physical health
  - Monitor fatigue and injury levels
  - Focus on injury prevention
    - Implement prevention protocols (e.g., ACL strengthening)
  - Work with physiotherapists/physicians/sport medicine practitioners as needed
  - Encourage rest and recovery



*"We have to respect that rest is part of training, we need both physical and mental recovery. They can't be overloaded, if they don't have a clear mind when they come to training, I can get the best out of them. And when I need them to push they will, because it's balanced."*

- Mental health
  - Familiarize yourself with common mental health challenges that athletes face
  - Refer athletes to mental health practitioners as needed
  - Recognize that mental health and external stressors (e.g., family/friends/school stress) can impact performance



*"My coach has invested in my emotional well-being as much as he has in my performance. He would check in to say: 'how are you, how's the workout feeling after yesterday?' Like all that kind of stuff, he was actually invested in my emotional well-being."*

## 3. Fun



*"We have hard sessions, so having a bit of fun along the way, making jokes and stuff, I want to make sure there are smiles"*

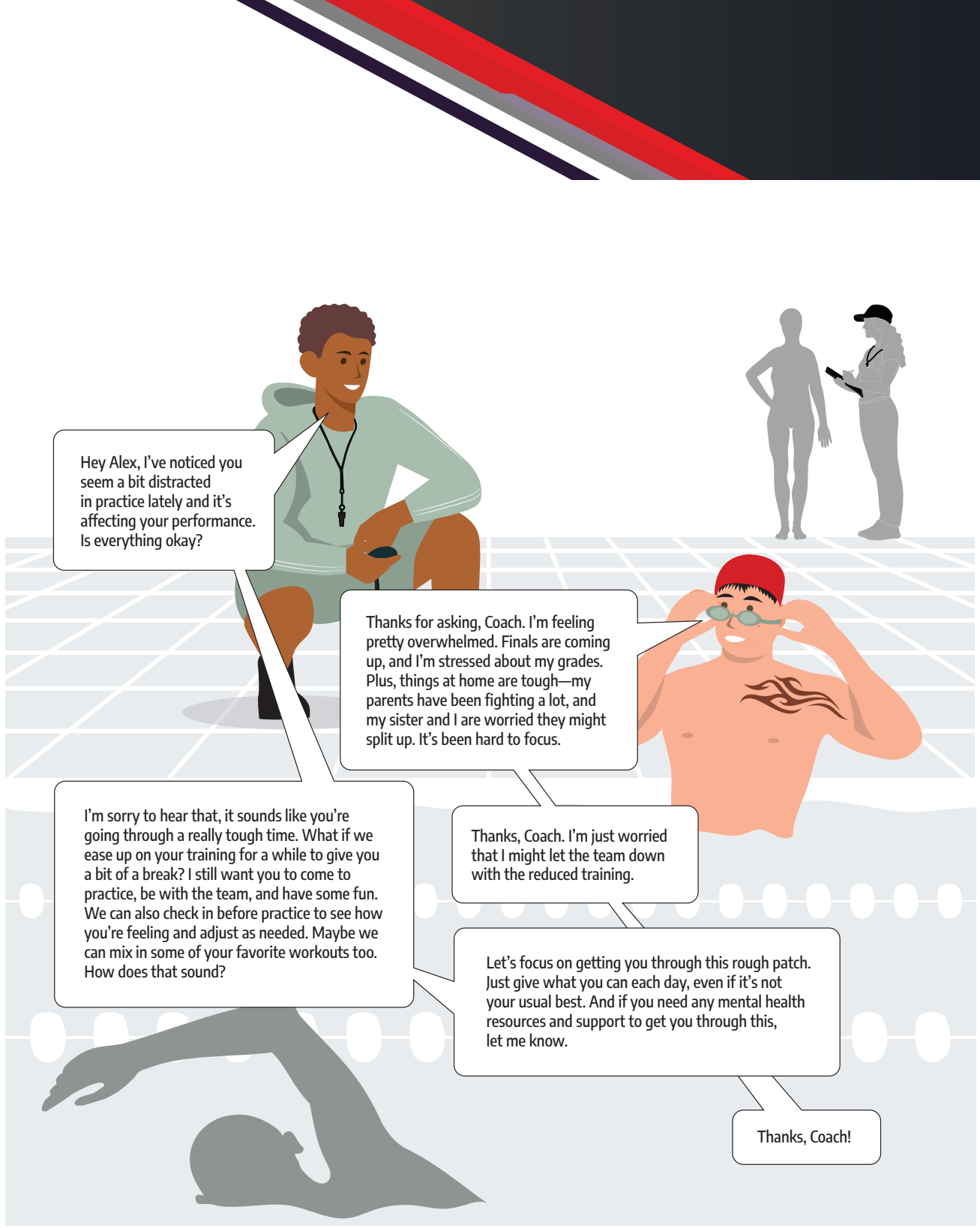
- Find ways to create an enjoyable space
  - E.g., play music, play games as a warm-up
- Encourage laughter amongst the team
- Try to find moments of levity during the hard training sessions.



*"there's music playing, we are having fun, we are dancing, but when it's your time to do your sprints, you're giving 110%, we are intense when it matters"*



*"if an athlete's happy or healthy it doesn't mean they aren't in a challenging environment, a happy environment can still be challenging."*



Hey Alex, I've noticed you seem a bit distracted in practice lately and it's affecting your performance. Is everything okay?

Thanks for asking, Coach. I'm feeling pretty overwhelmed. Finals are coming up, and I'm stressed about my grades. Plus, things at home are tough—my parents have been fighting a lot, and my sister and I are worried they might split up. It's been hard to focus.

I'm sorry to hear that, it sounds like you're going through a really tough time. What if we ease up on your training for a while to give you a bit of a break? I still want you to come to practice, be with the team, and have some fun. We can also check in before practice to see how you're feeling and adjust as needed. Maybe we can mix in some of your favorite workouts too. How does that sound?

Thanks, Coach. I'm just worried that I might let the team down with the reduced training.

Let's focus on getting you through this rough patch. Just give what you can each day, even if it's not your usual best. And if you need any mental health resources and support to get you through this, let me know.

Thanks, Coach!

#### 4. Safe

- Create an environment that feels safe for all participants
- Facilitate a space that is open to observation for parents



*"You want it to be welcoming, and inclusive, in the sense of having diversity around, and also if the parents want to come and watch, it's open and welcoming."*

- Prioritize physical safety in your environment (e.g., remove potential hazards)
- Create a psychologically safe environment (definition: athletes feel like they can take interpersonal risks, speak up, respectfully disagree, surface concerns)

#### EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

- Scan your environment every day to ensure there are no physical hazards
- Prioritize physical and mental health over performance
- Check-in with your athletes' daily about their well-being
- Encourage athletes to express their opinions, concerns, and different points of view
- Ask athlete's if they are having fun
- Play music during warm-ups/cool downs to lighten the mood
- Express that there are times to be serious but also times to have fun
- Don't be afraid to laugh with your athletes
- Games can be an effective warm up tool
- Encourage fun among your coaching staff





## EMPOWERING

### What is this and why is it important?

An empowering coaching climate encourages athletes to take ownership of their training and performance. Coaches should aim to foster autonomy, self-confidence, and allow for opportunities for shared decision-making between the coach and the athlete.

### What it looks like:

#### 1. Autonomy-supportive coaching:



*"It's deliberate that my athletes have a voice in what they're doing, there's a choice, having them be part of decision-making, when appropriate, is important."*

- Providing choice
- Providing rationale for tasks
- Acknowledging participants' feelings
- Providing opportunities for athletes to be independent
- Allowing athletes to ask questions and express different views

**WHY:** Fostering an autonomous environment allows athletes to take ownership over their training and performance. This type of coaching increases pride in the work, fosters intrinsic motivation, reduces the pressure on athletes, and ensures a balance of power between the coach and the athlete.



*"My coach would ask what my favourite things to do in training are ... she's more than happy to put that in the programs. It gave me so much confidence that all of a sudden, I was running the best I ever had and was at the top of my classification... when you have confidence and you're happy, that's super important."*

## 2. Using supportive language



*"We were talented and good at what we were doing, we just needed someone to kind of be there to support us, we didn't need [our coach] to be intense because we already were, he kind of helped balance out our stress and our intensity that we would just naturally bring ourselves. And that was really good for us."*

- Embracing mistakes as opportunities
- Using positive reinforcement
- Avoid controlling statements
- Comment on the behaviour, not the person
- Refrain from addressing physical appearance

**WHY:** Using supportive language can help build rapport and trust between coaches and athletes and reduce conflict and misunderstanding. It's also critical for enhancing self-esteem, motivation, and promoting learning and growth.

### EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

- Share your reasoning behind your training plans
  - For example: "we are building endurance this week, so we will need to do x, y, z to build your capacity"
- Share training plans in advance and ask if there's anything they want to add or adjust
- Ask athletes if they have any questions about their training plans
- Ask athletes how they like to receive feedback
- Provide feedback using the sandwich method
  - Start with complement/praise
  - Address area of improvement
  - End with encouragement
- If you're noticing a negative trend in performance, have a conversation with your athlete
  - Reassess goals to ensure they are still reasonable or attainable
  - Collaborate on a plan for how to improve/change the trajectory
- Provide options for training (can be done in advance)
  - "Would you rather do x or y today"
  - "We need to do x, y and z this week, what days would you like to do each?"



## RESPECTFUL COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

### What is this and why is it important?

A strong coach-athlete relationship is the foundation for a successful sport experience. Athletes have reported choosing their coach based on their personal attributes and relationship over their technical expertise because they believe these are more critical for success.



*"The relationship with the athlete is the most important thing, the relationship with the athlete is the base for everything. If not, it's just orders, there's no coaching, it's military. 'You do as I say' and that's it. The relationship with the athlete, the trust, is basically everything. It's the foundation on which you build everything else."*

### What it looks like:

#### 1. Trust and Mutual Respect



*"If you want your coach to respect you, you need to respect them as well. Everything is a two-sided street, it's never just one way. It's the coaches' job, they have a lot of knowledge... and having the respect towards the work they're doing to help you achieve your goal, and then vice versa, you want them to respect you as a person. You want them to respect your physical health, your wellbeing... for me it's having an open mind seeing it from the other person's perspective and having respect for the people around you."*

— 4x Olympian

- Built over time
- Demonstrate a match between your words & actions
- Demonstrate that you have your athletes' best interest at heart
- Demonstrate your intention to get the best out of your athletes without compromising their physical, psychological or social health
- Care for athlete's well-being and performance
- Continue to support your athletes when injured and after disappointing performances

**WHY:** Trust and respect are the foundation of a productive relationship.



*"I think the foundation of the environment needs to be one of trust, like I care about you, I see you as a person... I respect you but I'm going to call you out if I need to... in any productive relationship the foundation of trust and respect is there, but when things need to be addressed, it's absorbed and listened to in a much more productive way."*

## 2. Open Communication



*"It's open, honest, and hard conversations, sometimes, that are the most important part. To have the real conversations. Yea, being real and having tough conversations sometimes that are gut-wrenching for you, that you don't want to have as a coach or a human being. We all know what those are. They aren't fun. But then you can get to the real places. It's very easy to stay at the surface and it's very easy, I think, as a coach to say 'oh my job is just to coach you, I don't need to get into the next layer of you as a human.' But to have hard conversations, I hate the word honest, it's kind of that - but to me it's more real than honest."*

Be intentional about creating time/space for conversations with your athletes

- Talk through issues as they arise
- This can mean some tough conversations



*"We have to have hard conversations, but those are important to be able to move forward. It has allowed us to be a really really strong team because we can be on the same page."*

- Practice active listening
- Be aware of the language and tone used to communicate
  - Athletes can perceive a disconnect if coaches say they care but then lose their temper
  - Positive tone, respectful words, supportive, encouraging feedback, constructive criticism
  - Avoid yelling, screaming, belittling, berating,

insulting, embarrassing athlete in any situation and especially in front of their peers

- Positive instructional communication is *more effective* at eliciting performance outcomes
- Increases positive affect, increased desire to work and stay in sport, decreased negative work ethic

## 3. Balanced Power

- Focus on collaboration over control



*"I know a healthy relationship never involves the word control."*



*"My coach is like another teammate as opposed to an authority figure, and that's become much more productive."*



*"A good way to start is to say that I'm doing my best to help athletes on their journey and picture myself as more of a companion to help, support, and guide."*

## 4. Establish Boundaries

- A trusting and respectful relationship involves clear boundaries between a coach and an athlete
- You can be friendly without being friends



*"I'm not a mom to my athletes. I'm not a friend to my athletes. We even have this conversation, we can be friendly, I am going to be your coach and will guide you any time, but we are not friends. It's important to have that step away."*



*"My coach wasn't trying to be my friend either and I think it's really important for a coach to establish, like I'm a coach, you're an athlete. Because when you pass into becoming friends, especially at the start of the coach-athlete relationship, it leaves more room to like blur the lines. But it's also harder for them to be authoritative when they have to be."*



- Following the Rule of Two; one of the three pillars in the [Responsible Coaching Movement](#).



*"I've always been aware of the safe sport rules. I am able to build a trusting relationship without crossing the line. I don't have to put myself with an athlete behind closed doors to have a close relationship. I believe it's possible to have a good relationship with athletes without breaking any rules."*

## EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS TO IMPLEMENT

- At the beginning of the season, set time aside to build rapport with your athletes
  - Continue this through the season as well
- Show interest in your athletes as people
  - Engage in small talk
  - Ask about their day
  - Get to know their birthday
  - Ask about their family
- Take time to address interpersonal issues as they arise
  - Communication is key
- Ensure your actions and words match to facilitate trust-building
- Engage in mutual respect
  - Demonstrating respect towards athletes will help earn their respect in return
- Avoid conversations in private places
  - This helps protect both parties
- Set boundaries/expectations early in the season
  - Define what behaviours are accepted
  - Define which behaviours are not tolerated

## Additional Resources:

Support through Sport: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/support-through-sport>

Support Through Sport: Modeling Healthy Relationships: <https://coach.ca/module/support-through-sport-modelling-healthy-relationships>



Support Through Sport

### Foster Healthy Relationships in Sport Environments

Sport participants are going to be learning (consciously, or not) from your behaviour. How you interact with others within the sport environment represents opportunities for healthy relationships to be modelled and practiced.

Coach-to-Participant Relationship	Coach-to-Coach Relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide praise and positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Set reasonable goals</li> <li>• Ask for participants input and feedback</li> <li>• Provide choices and allow for decision making</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for participants to interact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek opportunities to develop and strengthen relationships with peer coaches</li> <li>• Demonstrate positive interactions with other coaches</li> <li>• Encourage diversity in coaching styles</li> <li>• Seek out other coach expertise</li> <li>• Support coaches who want to build their network</li> </ul>
Coach-to-Parent/Guardian Relationship	Coach-to-Official Relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and communicate clear values</li> <li>• Demonstrate clear and open communication in interactions</li> <li>• Refer to parents and guardians using positive language</li> <li>• Identify clear roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Identify appropriate channels for conflict management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control your emotions</li> <li>• Be empathetic</li> <li>• Use positive verbal and non-verbal language</li> <li>• Seek to clarify and understand a call first before challenging that call</li> <li>• Model acceptance that some bad calls happen in sport</li> <li>• Respect boundaries when questioning a call</li> </ul>

The Support through Sport eLearning series and resources educate coaches on how to model healthy relationships.  
Learn more at [coach.ca/SupportThroughSport](https://coach.ca/SupportThroughSport).

Financial contribution from





## CONCLUSION

### WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

This toolkit can be used to reflect on your coaching style, in particular, things you are doing well and things you want to add or adjust. Consider the exercises within the toolkit and select 1–2 priority areas that you are looking to integrate. We encourage regular reviews and tracking your progress to fully actualize changes you are making.

As a coach, there are many priorities that you face every day. Moving towards a positive sport environment cannot be done in isolation. Talk to your sport organization about how they can support a movement to ensure a safe and healthy sport environment.

This can include things like:

1. Reviewing what is rewarded and how this is demonstrated (e.g., winning, leadership, personal development, personal bests)
2. Creating posters and digital media to demonstrate your organization's commitment to positive sport environments
  - E.g., a poster of your organization's values
3. Fostering collaboration with all sport participants

We encourage you to check out the exercises and checklists below to enhance your learning.


Thank you for taking the time to engage with this toolkit.

# ANNEX A: INTEGRATING THE HIGHER METHOD



## PART 1:



### HIGHER METHOD


In this activity, you will reflect on the 6 components of the HIGHER method. For each one, identify things that you will continue doing (green light), things that you would like to start doing, adding to your current practices, or doing more often (yellow light), and things you think you could remove from your coaching practice because they don't align with the method (red light).

	GREEN LIGHT (CONTINUE)		YELLOW LIGHT (START DOING/DOING MORE OFTEN)		RED LIGHT (STOP)	
	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION
 <p><b>Holistic</b></p> <p><i>“See each sport participant as a whole person with physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs and attending to all of these needs.”</i></p>						



	GREEN LIGHT (CONTINUE)		YELLOW LIGHT (START DOING/DOING MORE OFTEN)		RED LIGHT (STOP)	
	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION
 <p><b>Individualized</b></p> <p><i>“Consider the unique attributes of each person you work with and tailor your coaching and planning to complement these attributes.”</i></p>						
 <p><b>Good Governance</b></p> <p><i>“Ensure your sport organization’s culture matches the vision and values you are trying to promote.”</i></p>						

	GREEN LIGHT (CONTINUE)		YELLOW LIGHT (START DOING/DOING MORE OFTEN)		RED LIGHT (STOP)	
	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION
 <p><b>Healthy</b></p> <p><i>“Create a sport environment that is physically and psychologically healthy for all sport participants.”</i></p>						
 <p><b>Empowering</b></p> <p><i>“Use coaching techniques that allow athletes to be active participants in the learning of their sport and in their personal development (e.g., involved in planning, asking questions)”</i></p>						

	GREEN LIGHT (CONTINUE)		YELLOW LIGHT (START DOING/DOING MORE OFTEN)		RED LIGHT (STOP)	
	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION	WITH YOUR ATHLETES	WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION
 <p><b>Respectful Coach Athlete Relationship</b></p> <p><i>“Foster a relationship with your athletes that embodies mutual respect, trust, and open communication.”</i></p>						

## PART 2:

### REFLECTING ON PART 1

1. List 3–4 things that would help you integrate the answers in your green and yellow columns within your sport practice.

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2. List 3–4 barriers that you think are standing in the way of integrating your answers in the green and yellow columns.

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3. What can you do to break down these barriers (e.g., social support, funding structures, engagement of other coaches/administrators).

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## PART 3:

# HIGHER CHECKLIST

Use this template to create a checklist of things you can incorporate into your coaching practices. Create a copy to review at **3 and 6 months** to track your progress.



### HOLISTIC

3 6

- I talk to my athletes about their hobbies outside of sport
- I ask about how school is going
- I ensure they have enough time outside of training for homework/family time
- I provide opportunities for my athletes to practice leadership
- I engage in goal-setting activities with my athletes
- I teach my athletes about sport psychology practices during training (e.g., talk about stress management, visualization, deep breathing, arousal regulation)



### INDIVIDUALIZED

3 6

- I spend time talking with each athlete
- I am intentional about opening up lines of communication
- I have learned 3 new things about each athlete
- I check in with my athletes before practice to see how they are doing
- I adapt my training plans based on my athlete's feedback (or what I am seeing in their performance)
- I plan rest and recovery activities within my weekly training plan



### GOOD GOVERNANCE

3 6

- I have spent time reflecting on my vision and values
- I have formalized a coaching philosophy
- I have communicated this philosophy with my athletes and organization
- I have reviewed my organization's policies
- I provide/facilitate opportunities for my athletes to be involved in the governance of my organization



## HEALTHY

3 6

- I do a quick scan of my training area daily to ensure there are no physical hazards
- I check in with my athletes about their physical health
- I check in with my athletes about their mental health
- I integrate fun activities into training
- I facilitate laughter once a session (or allow athletes to laugh with each other)
- I make adjustments if an athlete is injured/sick
- I make sure my athletes leave training smiling



## EMPOWERING

3 6

- I provide opportunities for athletes to ask questions about my instructions or feedback
- My athletes give feedback on their training plans
- I provide options for training activities (e.g., skills or drills) for my athletes to choose from
- I provide feedback in an encouraging manner
- I let my athletes lead a training session or plan a training session (with my feedback)
- When my athletes make a mistake/error, we talk about it and I help them generate their own solutions



## RESPECTFUL COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

3 6

- I take time to build rapport with my athletes
- I take time to have discussions about interpersonal issues (if they have arisen)
- I show respect towards my athlete
- I take steps to align my actions with my words to grow trust with my athletes
- I communicate my boundaries with my athletes
- I take time to discuss expectations for my athletes' behaviours
- I take time to listen to my athletes' expectations of my own behaviours
- I demonstrate compassion for my athletes
- I demonstrate care for my athletes

If you are interested, you can also have your athletes complete a similar checklist as a form of self-assessment.



## HOLISTIC

3 6

- My coach talks to me about my hobbies outside of sport
- My coach asks about how school is going
- My coach ensures I have enough time outside of training for homework/family time
- My coach provides me with opportunities to practice leadership
- My coach engages in goal-setting activities with me
- My coach teaches me about sport psychology practices during training (e.g., talk about stress management, visualization, deep breathing, arousal regulation)



## INDIVIDUALIZED

3 6

- My coach spends time talking to me
- My coach is intentional about opening up lines of communication
- My coach has learned 3 new things about me
- My coach checks in with me before practice to see how I am doing
- My coach adapts my training plans based on my feedback
- My coach plans rest and recovery activities within my weekly training plan



## GOOD GOVERNANCE

3 6

- I am aware of my coach's philosophy
- My coach has communicated their philosophy with me and my sport organization
- My coach has reviewed my organization's policies with me
- My coach has provide/facilitate opportunities for me to be involved in the governance of my organization



## HEALTHY

3 6

- My coach ensures my training area daily to ensure there are no physical hazards
- My coach checks in with me about my physical health
- My coach checks in with me about my mental health
- My coach integrates fun activities into training
- My coach facilitates laughter once a session (or allows me and my teammates/training partners to laugh with each other)
- My coach make adjustments if I am injured/sick
- My coach makes sure I leave training smiling



## EMPOWERING

3 6

- My coach provides opportunities for me to ask questions about instructions or feedback
- I am allowed give feedback on my training plans
- My coach provides options for training activities (e.g., skills or drills) for me to choose from
- My coach provides feedback in an encouraging manner
- My coach lets me lead a training session or plan a training session (with their feedback)
- When I make a mistake/error, my coach and I talk about it and helps me generate a solution



## RESPECTFUL COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP

3 6

- My coach takes time to build rapport with me
- My coach takes time to have discussions about interpersonal issues (if they have arisen)
- My coach shows respect towards me
- My coach takes steps to align their action with their words to grow trust with me
- My coach communicates their boundaries with me
- My coach takes time to discuss expectations for my behaviours
- My coach takes time to listen to my expectations of my own behaviours
- My coach demonstrate compassion for me
- My coach demonstrates care for me



## ANNEX B: GET TO KNOW YOUR ATHLETE QUE-CARD

Use this fillable card to highlight some of your athlete's qualities, use the third column to make any notes on how to cater your coaching style to them. You can fill one out for each of your athletes and keep them on file for your reference and add to it as the season progresses.

CHARACTERISTIC	ANSWER	WHAT YOU CAN DO TO FOSTER THIS/ADAPT TO THEIR NEEDS?
Name		
Age		
Grade in School		
Favourite subject in school (or what they want to study in university)		
3 favourite things outside of sport		
Do they engage in other sports/ physical activity?		
Favourite thing about their sport		
How does your athlete handle stress? (include triggers, reactions, remedies)		
What are their favourite and least favourite skills/drills?		
What are their short term goals? (e.g. what do they want to accomplish this year?)		
What are their long term goals in sport?		
What are their long term goals outside of sport?		



Use this calendar to map out your training sessions. Every sport is different, so adjust as needed to fit your type of training plan. This training plan should be a guideline rather than a prescription, things can be adjusted as the week progresses.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Task/ Objective 1</b>							
<b>Task/ Objective 2</b>							
<b>Task/ Objective 3</b>							
<b>Task/ Objective 4</b>							
<b>Other</b>							

**Step 2:** Use the above as a guide as you conduct a pre and post-training assessment of your athletes

**Pre-Practice:**

Note: this can be a quick assessment (e.g., on a scale of 1–10) or you can add some detailed notes.

Note: For team sports, you may not be able to ask every athlete. A suggestion would be to check-in with 2–3 athletes a day (and different ones the next day). Or if there’s an athlete you’re more concerned about, consider checking in with them more frequently.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
How is my athlete feeling physically?							
How is my athlete feeling emotionally?							
How did my athlete sleep last night?							
What is my athletes stress level?							
Anything else to note?							

- Based on this, what adjustments can I make in my practice plan for the day (if any)?

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- Questions to consider: Are my athletes good to go?

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- Is there anything I need to do to support them?

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- Can they push harder today if they are feeling good (e.g., moving a harder training to today)?

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- Should I flip today and tomorrow since they are fatigued?

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## Post-Practice Assessment

After each training session, make a quick note of your athlete's mental and physical state:

Note: this reflection exercise can also help track and monitor your athletes over time. If you are noticing a constant dip in their energy levels or their mood, it can help monitor this to indicate if future conversations or interventions are needed. It can also be helpful to correlate injury or illness with mental state to ensure training matches capacity/capability.

### TIP

You can also get your athletes to track themselves over time (as an added benefit, this can also foster autonomy and empower your athletes). Some coaches create a Google Form where athletes do this assessment once a week and submit it to their coach.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Were we able to accomplish everything we set out to do?							
How are my athletes feeling physically?							
What are my athletes stress levels?							
How was my athlete's mood through the session?							
Were my athletes coping normally?							
What can I adjust for tomorrow?							

# ANNEX D: ESTABLISHING YOUR COACHING PHILOSOPHY<sup>16</sup>

**1.** Understand yourself and determine what is important to you

- What is most important to you?

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- What are your core values (e.g., caring, winning, effort)?

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**2.** Prioritize your values

- Based on your answers in section 1, rank the values from most to least important to you

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**3.** Identify your coaching objectives

- Reflecting on your values, formulate goals you would like to achieve in coaching. (E.g., coaching objectives, goals for your athletes)

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Prompts: what things do you want to accomplish as a coach? How do you want your athletes to reflect on their experience once they've left sport?





## ANNEX E: POLICY REVIEW CHECKLIST

- Review policy for prohibited conduct.
  - Does it include sexual, physical, and emotional harms?
  - Is there any language/provisions around body shaming?
  - Does it align with the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS)?
  - Does it include the Rule of Two?
- Review policy for expected conduct.
  - What are the values that drive decisions and behaviour?
  - What desirable behaviours are identified?
- Does it include diversity, equity, and inclusion mandates?
- Does it include formalized athlete representation/input?
- Have the policies been vetted by all those who have a vested interest? (e.g., athletes, coaches, parents, officials, administrators, volunteers)
- How are the policies communicated?
  - Are there educational sessions for all those who have a vested interest in the sport (e.g., coaches, athletes, parents, officials, administrators, volunteers) to learn about the policies and how to use them?

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