



Are You Aware of Your Coaching Emotions?

Football (soccer) can be a powerful evoker of emotions. But, as coaches, it's vital that we remain calm around our players and don't let emotional responses govern our actions. In the video below, coach and author David Mayer discusses the importance of emotional awareness, and how developing emotional control can help us to create better learning environments for our players.

<https://vimeo.com/888887729/15b1b42940?&login=true>

Being Aware of Your Emotions

In all walks of life, we can benefit from understanding, and knowing how to react positively to, our emotions. This is especially true in the coaching space, where our emotions don't just affect us, but can significantly impact the people we work with.

Crucially, having emotional intelligence does not mean pretending that our emotions don't exist, but trying to prevent them exerting undue influence over our actions or decision-making; it means learning to recognise them, accept them, and then react to them positively.

Appreciating the Value of Emotional Intelligence

The second step, Mayer says, is regulation: "That's the process of being able to suspend judgement — to think and understand — before acting on an impulse. If you can regulate, you're less likely to attack others or make rushed emotional decisions.

"Think about a leader," he continues. "Are they likelier to succeed if they shout at their team and make rash assumptions whenever they're under stress, or if they stay in-control, assess the situation, and then make decisions based on the information that they've gathered?

"In a footballing context, should we shout if a child gives the ball away? Of course not. Therefore it's essential that we become aware of our emotions and learn to control them."

Regulating Your Emotions as a Coach

The most obvious manifestations of coaching emotions are often seen on the touchline. In these instances, the ability to regulate can profoundly impact the experiences that we facilitate for our players. "When I watch games from the sidelines, I'll often *feel* emotions, but I'm able to act like nothing happened," says Mayer. "If the team scores a goal, I generally don't celebrate. And neither do I react when we concede. Why? Because it's not about *me*."

Furthermore, Mayer says, we must be aware of how our touchline behaviour can affect our players. "If I'm working with younger kids and they see my emotions from the sideline, it directly impacts them," he explains. "If they're concerned about my reactions, I'm taking focus away from what they're doing."

As coaches, we should also remember our responsibility to model good behaviour for the young people we work with. Players can mirror coaches — so if we want *them* to develop emotional intelligence and the ability to regulate their emotions as well, we must exhibit that behaviour ourselves.

An Emotionally-Aware Approach to Youth Coaching



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Ultimately, having a good level of emotional intelligence will help us to operate more effectively as coaches. This is perhaps clearest when we consider *why* we coach in the first place: we're here for the players; we want them to participate, *without fear*, and enjoy themselves.

"My priority is the kids, and letting them play," says Mayer. "We should also remember that if someone makes a mistake, they haven't made it on purpose; if a player gives the ball away, it isn't intentional; if they're out of position, it's probably because they don't understand, and that that's the best they know in that moment."

"That ability to have empathy — to suspend our judgement and think before acting — is crucial," Mayer concludes. "And it will vastly improve the experiences we give our players."

The Key Points

- As coaches, we should learn about emotions, and appreciate how they affect us and the people around us.
- Emotional intelligence means learning to recognise, understand, and react positively to our emotions.
- By effectively managing our emotions, we can facilitate better sporting environments for our players.
- We should endeavour to remain equable while coaching; our emotions should not distract our players or detract from their experiences.
- Our job is to provide empathetic, supportive coaching environments, where players can enjoy participating.

From an original article by Ajay Smith - a former football coach and lead writer for PDP