

Welcome to inCourage

# PARENTS & COACHES PARTNERSHIP PLAYBOOK

**inCOURAGE**   
WATCH. LEARN. PLAY.

[incourage.com](http://incourage.com)



# WE ARE INCOURAGE

**Using this Playbook, parents and coaches will learn how to better cooperate, communicate and collaborate.**

We are a team of experienced athletic directors, coaches, educators, and sports psychologists working under the creative direction of an award-winning sports and business media leader.

We provide strategies and solutions to build a better youth sports culture and keep kids from dropping out of organized athletics.

We create engaging informative videos, programs and playbooks to help young athletes and adults improve the culture of youth sports

**We do this to keep young athletes playing sports. Too often they lose the love of the game because of overwhelming negative forces. Bullying, parental pressures, negative coaching techniques - they all take the fun out of the sport.**



**inCOURAGE**  
PARENTS & COACHES  
PARTNERSHIP  
PLAYBOOK



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**The Crisis in Youth Sports..... 5**

**Collaborating As Parents.....11**

Part 1: How to Communicate with Coaches.....12

Part 2: Do's and Don'ts of Communication ..... 15

Part 3: Develop a Communication Strategy ..... 17

**Collaborating As Coaches..... 20**

Part 1: How to Communicate with Parents..... 22

Part 2: Successful Meetings ..... 25

Part 3: Code of Conduct ..... 32

# WHY YOUTH SPORTS MATTER

## SPORTS ARE MORE THAN JUST A FINAL SCORE.

They provide:

- **Physical exercise**, which is good for the mind, body and spirit
- Lessons in **accountability**, **dedication**, and **leadership**
- A sense of **camaraderie** and **belonging**
- Development of **confidence** and **problem-solving skills**
- An appreciation for hard work **recognized** and **rewarded**





# THE CRISIS IN YOUTH SPORTS

## YOUTH SPORTS ARE STRUGGLING WITH AN IDENTITY CRISIS.

As parents and coaches, are we:

- **Living vicariously** through our children and selfishly acting in our own interests?
- **Trapped in our memories** of the past and trying to recapture faded glory through our children?
- **Squandering teachable moments** on pettiness and favoritism?
- **Focused on an unrealistic dream** of a future scholarship or professional career?

**Sometimes youth sports can bring out the worst in adults.**

**We can be immature, selfish, and occasionally ignore the needs and concerns of our children.**

**Adults behaving badly can undo all of the good we want them to experience through participation in sports.**



**WATCH  
THE VIDEO**



# THIS IS A TEAM EFFORT

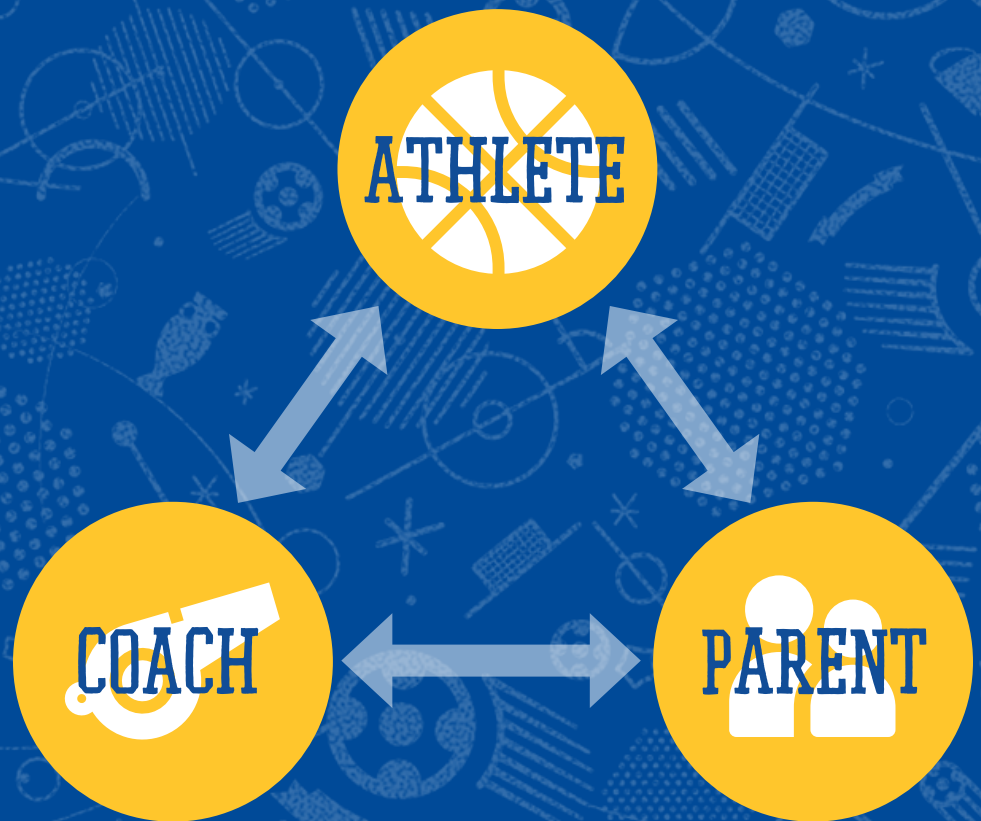
How can we, as coaches and parents, model in our own behavior what we want for our young athletes — feelings of success, affirmation through teamwork, and learning life lessons through sport?

**Our children should not have to be the voices of reason.  
We need to set a positive example for them.**

**WE CAN DO  
THIS THROUGH  
COLLABORATION  
AND COMMUNICATION.**

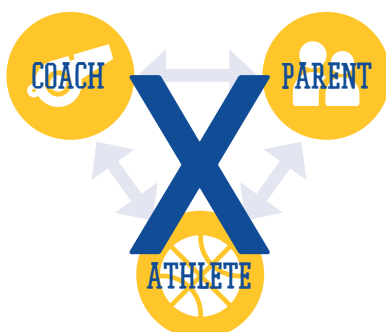


# THE ATHLETIC TRIANGLE



**The athletic triangle consists of the player, parent and coach. The relationships within this trio can have significant impact on each other and on the development of the player.**

In the right-side-up triangle, the coaches and parents are supporting the players, keeping the needs and interests of the young athlete as their shared primary goal.



In the upside-down triangle, parents and coaches allow their roles to take priority making it easy to lose sight of the needs and interests of the player.





## COLLABRATION AND COMMUNICATION

**Continuous collaboration and communication between the three parts of the Athletic Triangle allows for each group to work together to create a positive experience.**

Parents and coaches each come into this with their own philosophies, experiences and expectations. By being aligned on goals like discipline, work ethic, the importance of winning, determinants of playing time, what constitutes commitment, how skill improvement is judged, and their respective roles, parents and coaches can work collaboratively to help the child learn and have a successful experience as a youth athlete.





## THE 3 Ps THAT LEAD TO CONVERSATIONS

There are usually three areas that are the primary focus of conversations and confrontations between parents and coaches:

**P**ERFORMANCE

**P**LAYING TIME

**P**RESSURE



## THE 3 P TECHNIQUE

**Most of these confrontations can be avoided by utilizing these 3 techniques:**

### **PREVENTION**

Ensure that every person — child and adult — involved with the team understands what is expected of him or her.

### **PERSEVERENCE**

Address elements that don't correspond with the positive culture you are working together to create.

### **PRAISE**

People tend to do what gets rewarded. Praise players, parents and coaches who do a great job upholding the positive culture.



# COLLABORATING AS PARENTS

## PART 1





# HOW TO PRODUCTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH COACHES

FOR PARENTS

**Start out on the right foot with your child's coach by making early, positive contact with them.** Your role as a parent is to offer assistance where needed and to establish and maintain a positive connection with the coach.

Remember that the coach spends a significant amount of time with your child, so it's important that you know their expectations and their staff so you can work together to meet your child's needs.

It's also important to positively reinforce and encourage a coach's best behavior.

- **Help enforce the coaches' parent expectations on the sidelines.**
- **Let your coaches know how much you appreciate their time and commitment.**
- **Let them know when you like their philosophy and approach.**

WATCH  
THE VIDEO



# WORKING THROUGH ADVERSITY

FOR PARENTS

## **Children will face adversities in youth sports.**

They will face issues with playing time, injuries, costly errors in athletic contests, or even personality conflicts with teammates or coaches.

Parents need to allow their children to make an earnest attempt at working through these matters with their coaches, while still monitoring the situation from afar.

Success in the midst of adversity breeds character and confidence.

**And isn't that why you have them involved in sports to begin with?**

WATCH  
THE VIDEO

# FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

## FOR PARENTS

### **As parents, you can control:**

- Getting your kid to practice on time and ready to play
- Teaching and enforcing positive values
- Modeling good behavior

### **You cannot control:**

- Other kids or their parents
- The coach's strategic decisions
- Trash talk by the opposition
- The weather, traffic, or any last-minute schedule changes

**By focusing on what you can control and keeping a level head, you can help your child develop and keep a healthy attitude about sports and competition.**



# 5 DOs OF COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES

FOR PARENTS

- 1 Know and follow** the coaches' communication expectations.
- 2 Choose the right time and place** to have the conversation and be respectful of the coach's time, energy, and family.
- 3 Have the talk in person** and remain calm, rational, and collaborative.
- 4 Discuss only facts** and share only information, not hearsay or gossip.
- 5 Know how your kid how feels** about a situation and what they want as a result of your conversation. Make sure you are making a stand for their needs, not yours.

# 5 DON'Ts OF COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES

FOR PARENTS

- 1 **Don't confront, ambush or interrogate** them for their decisions or actions. Respect is a two-way street.
- 2 **Don't come from a place of high emotion** when things can easily be said in haste. Leave your emotions on the sidelines.
- 3 **Don't go over the coach's head** until you have tried working with the coach first. This is about your kid, don't make it personal between the adults.



# 5-POINT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

## FOR PARENTS

No matter how proactive your communication approach is with your child's coach, you may still have a reason to have a serious conversation. Here are some tips and techniques to make it go as smoothly and productively as possible.

- 1 Request a private meeting** on a non-game day.
- 2 Spend quality time** gathering your thoughts.
- 3 Avoid comparisons**, hearsay, and rumors.
- 4 Initiate** a calm and rational conversation.
- 5 Listen carefully** and collaborate on a plan going forward.

# BEFORE MEETING WITH A COACH

## FOR PARENTS

**Contact the coach** using the designated method of communication (phone, e-mail, text, etc.) communicating that you would like to schedule an in-person private meeting on a non-game day.

**Be up-front and clear** about the purpose of the meeting and request for a date and time as soon as possible.

**Make sure you completely understand** and can clearly communicate your child's feelings, concerns, and frustrations.

**Establish reasonable goals** for the meeting that properly reflect the best interests of your child.



# DURING THE MEETING WITH THE COACH

## FOR PARENTS

**Thank the coach for their time** and begin to outline the purpose of the meeting.

**Use a concerned and constructive, and not confrontational, tone.** Remain calm, even when differences arise.

**Stay completely focused** on your child's best interests.

**Avoid accusations**, comparisons, hearsay, and rumors as well as name calling, yelling, and profanities. Always stick to the facts!

**Ask the coach for recommendations** about how to improve the current situation and how you could be of an assistance.

**Collaborate on the next steps** going forward and maintain open lines of communication.

**No matter how pleasant or unpleasant the conversation, always leave on civil terms.**

# AFTER THE MEETING WITH THE COACH

## FOR PARENTS

**Send some form of thank you correspondence** to the coach (e-mail, text, note, etc).

**Highlight the key points** of the conversation as a reminder of the next steps.

**If necessary, set up another formal meeting** for a progress report on the next steps.

**Establish informal check-ins** at times convenient for all parties involved just to touch base.

**Carefully monitor** your child's progress and overall happiness.



# COLLABORATING AS COACHES

## PART 2





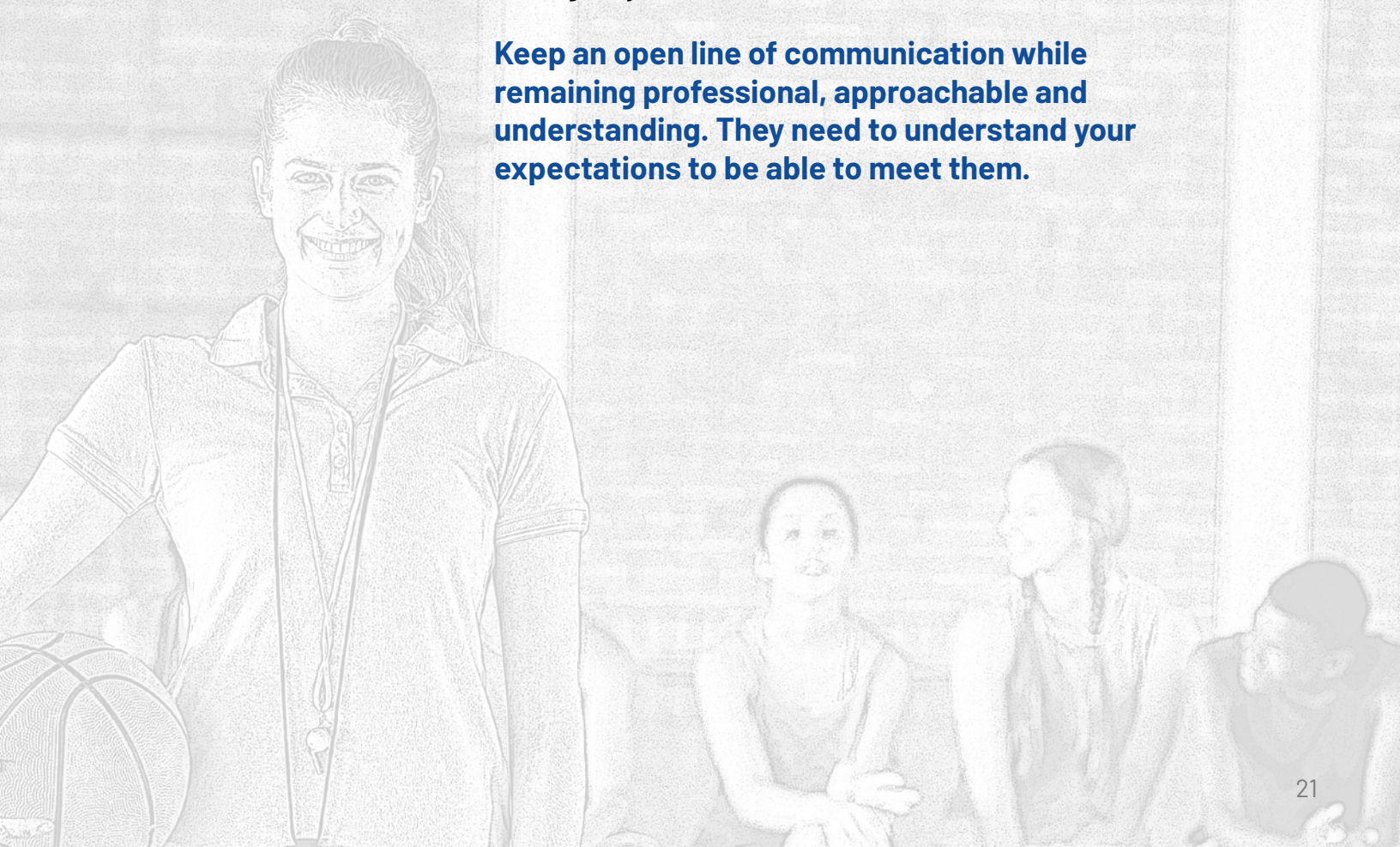
# HOW TO PRODUCTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS

FOR COACHES

**Today's sport parents have a much larger role in their child's life than in past generations.**

These parents are often referred to as being over-involved and over-protective, nicknamed "helicopters" or "snow plows". How do you as a coach manage their high expectations, the pressure they put on their child, and in some cases, acting as your unsolicited assistant coach?

**Keep an open line of communication while remaining professional, approachable and understanding. They need to understand your expectations to be able to meet them.**





# 5 DOs OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

FOR COACHES

- 1 **Share and reinforce** your personal and team requirements and behavior expectations.
- 2 **Make sure everyone understands** and supports your philosophy and goals.
- 3 **There are many ways to communicate** - find one that works for you and utilize it with your team parents.
- 4 **Any issues that need to be discussed with parents should be in person.** Remain calm, rational, and collaborative during these conversations.
- 5 **Discuss only facts** and share only information, not hearsay or gossip.



# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

## FOR COACHES

Examples of ways to share and reinforce your expectations include:

- 1 Distribute letters or a handbook** detailing your expectations.
- 2 Have players – and parents – sign a Code of Conduct.**
- 3 Send email reminders** of the philosophies and rules that were discussed during the pre-season meeting.
- 4 Share articles** showing examples of good and bad parent behavior.

The goal is total clarity on the expectations of behavior for parents and young athletes.

**You should immediately address issues that are negatively impacting the positive.**



# THE PRE-SEASON MEETING WITH PARENTS AND YOUNG ATHLETES

## FOR COACHES

Preparation for the start of the sports season is exciting, hectic and demanding. Welcoming hundreds of student athletes and their parents to any athletic program is a major undertaking. Many coaches and athletic directors host some type of pre-season informational meeting for student athletes and their parents. This is a great idea!

Here are recommendations for how to host your own winning meeting:

**Formally introduce yourself** and welcome them all to the team.

**Set a positive tone** for the season by identifying personal and team goals and establishing overall expectations.

**Describe your leadership style** and teaching philosophies about playing time, team strategy, and decision making.

**Review team policies**, rules, communication strategies, practice schedules, equipment requirements, etc.

**Define personal conduct expectations** for young athletes and parents regarding treatment of teammates, officials, coaches, opponents, and fans.

**Use this opportunity to initiate a positive relationship with parents and develop ways they can be involved and supportive during the season.**



# THE MID-SEASON MEETING WITH PARENTS AND YOUNG ATHLETES

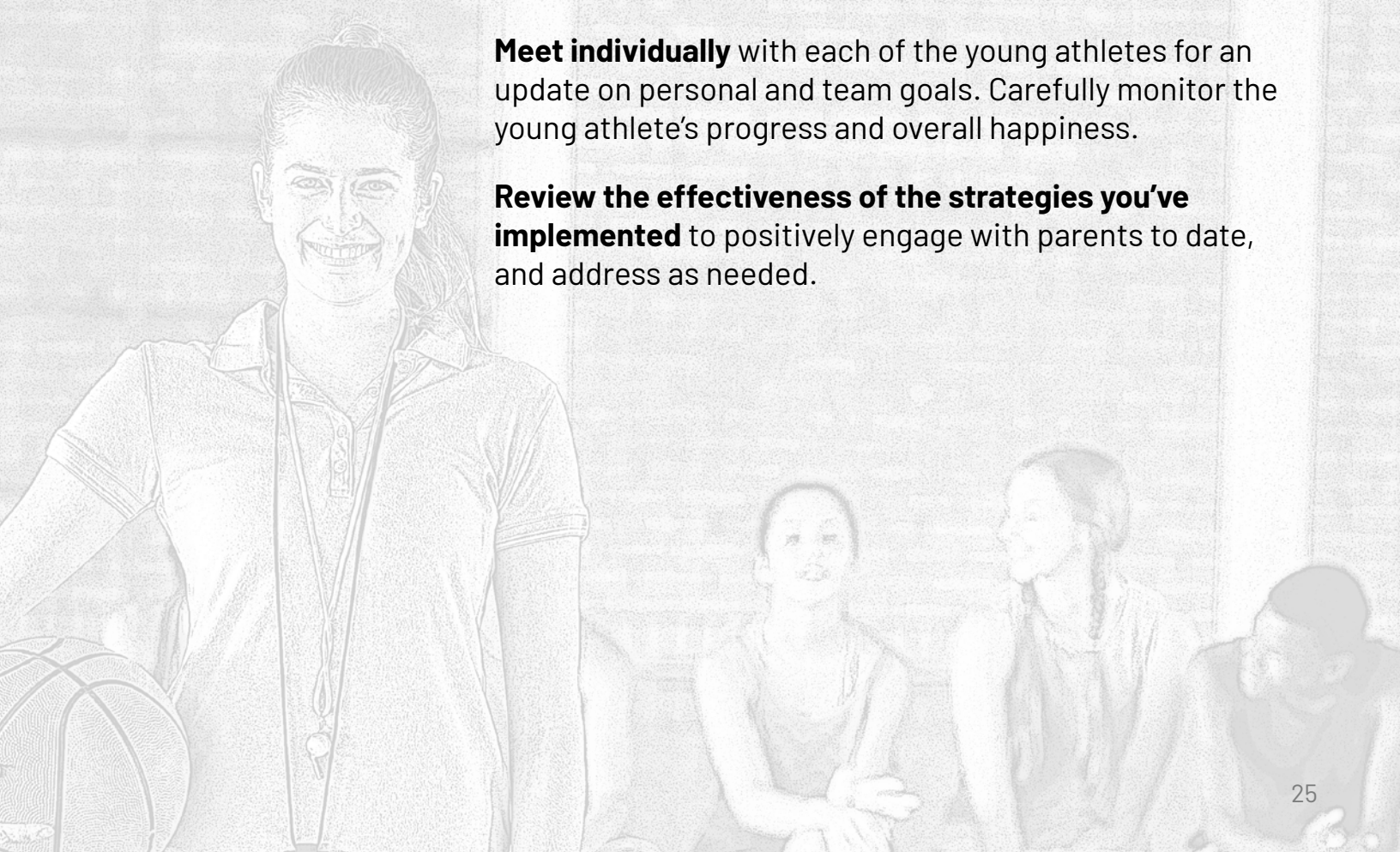
FOR COACHES

**Meet with parents and young athletes** in the middle of the season for a check-in about performance, achieving team goals, policies, rules, playing time, team strategy, and decision making.

**Provide an update** on communication strategies and personal conduct expectations regarding treatment of officials, opponents, and fans.

**Meet individually** with each of the young athletes for an update on personal and team goals. Carefully monitor the young athlete's progress and overall happiness.

**Review the effectiveness of the strategies you've implemented** to positively engage with parents to date, and address as needed.





# END-OF-SEASON MEETING WITH PARENTS AND YOUNG ATHLETES

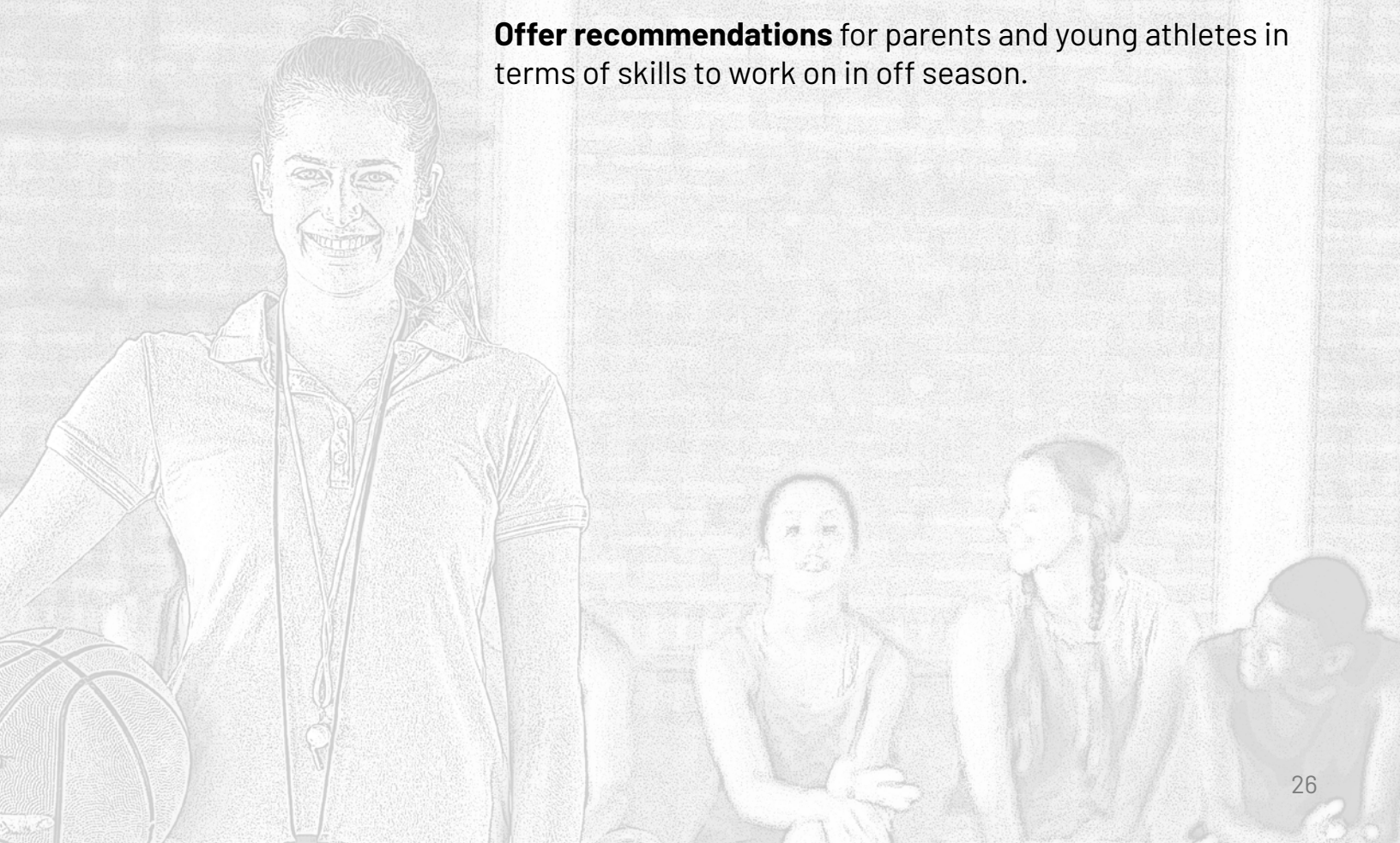
FOR COACHES

**Say thank you** to everyone and celebrate team accomplishments.

**Meet individually** with each of the young athletes and provide them with a final evaluation.

**Provide the same evaluation** to the parents and explain it to them in detail.

**Offer recommendations** for parents and young athletes in terms of skills to work on in off season.





# 5-POINT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

## FOR COACHES

No matter how proactive your communication style is with parents, you may still be approached with a serious conversation. Here are some tips and techniques to make these talks go as smoothly and productively as possible.

- 1 If a parent asks to speak with you, **schedule a private meeting on a non-game day.**
- 2 **Spend quality time** gathering your thoughts.
- 3 **Avoid comparisons**, hearsay, and rumors.
- 4 **Initiate a calm and rational conversation.**
- 5 **Listen carefully** and collaborate on a plan going forward.

**Parents only want the best for their kids, so keeping the lines of communication open helps the parent build a trusting relationship with you and helps them keep a healthy perspective on their kid's development.**

WATCH  
THE VIDEO



# BEFORE MEETING WITH PARENTS TO DISCUSS A CONCERN

FOR COACHES

**Encourage in-person and private meetings on non-game days.** Ask specifically the purpose of the meeting and try to accommodate a date and time as soon as possible.

**Identify all areas that could be of parental concern.** Ask yourself if you have acted in the best interests of the young athlete and if there are ways in which you can improve. Gather additional insight from the coaching staff.

**Review the young athlete's interactions** with teammates, coaches, fans, and officials to determine if they are adhering to the conduct expectations and team rules.

**Honestly assess the young athlete's performance** through key observations, facts, and statistical evidence. Revisit philosophies on playing time, team strategy, and decision making to make sure there aren't any inconsistencies.

**Establish reasonable goals for the meeting** that properly reflect the best interests of the young athlete.



# DURING THE MEETING WITH PARENTS TO DISCUSS A CONCERN

## FOR COACHES

**Lead an open and civil dialogue** with concerned parents.

**Begin the meeting by pointing out a success** the athlete has had, either in terms of performance or progress, to set a positive tone.

**Thank the parents for their time** and allow them the opportunity to speak freely.

**Listen closely to the parents' concerns** and use nonverbal cues in a positive manner. Never interrupt. Allow the parents to complete their thoughts and sentences.

**Once the parents have finished speaking, respond in a polite manner.** Directly address each of the parents' concerns in a thoughtful and honest manner based on facts and observations.

**Remain calm.** Don't respond emotionally to accusations, comparisons, hearsay, and rumors. Always avoid name calling, yelling, and profanities.

**Never reference another child or parent** in the meeting. Stay completely focused on the young athlete in question.

**If appropriate, ask the parents for their recommendations** on how to improve the current situation.

**Collaborate on the next steps** going forward and maintain open lines of communication.

**No matter how pleasant or unpleasant the conversation, always leave on civil terms.**



# AFTER THE MEETING WITH PARENTS, YOUR NEXT STEPS

FOR COACHES

**Send some form of thank you correspondence** to the parents (e-mail, text, note, etc.).

**Highlight the key points of the conversation** as a reminder of the next steps. If necessary, set up another formal meeting for a progress report on the next steps.

**Establish informal check-ins** at times convenient for all parties involved just to touch base.

**Carefully monitor the young athlete's progress** and overall happiness.

WATCH  
THE FULL  
VIDEO





## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

**We expect certain behaviors from our athletes, and the same is true of their parents and guardians.**

By establishing and enforcing a parent code of conduct, you can reinforce the attitudes and behaviors that are expected in all situations.





## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Implementation of a Parent Code of Conduct is one way to address adult misbehavior in youth sports programs. Using a contract that addresses coaches', parents' and players' behavior is another.

Instill positive character-building traits in youth, and reinforce it in adults through a code of conduct outlining your expectations for:

- **Good sportsmanship**
- **Respect and responsibility**
- **Fairness**
- **Conduct and consequences**





## RULE NUMBER ONE

# OUR KIDS' HAPPINESS MATTERS.

We shouldn't let anyone or anything take away the fun in sports — including our behavior.

If our kid's sports experience is being negatively affected by our actions, as their parents and coach we need to hear it, reflect on it, and change our behavior for the better.

They need to feel they can speak honestly and openly with us.

**Our youth athletes are working hard to make sure we are proud of them. Do the same and make sure your choices and behavior are making them proud, too.**





**inCOURAGE**  
WATCH. LEARN. PLAY.

[incourage.com](http://incourage.com)

COPYRIGHT © PERSONAL BEST MEDIA, LLC 2019