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The Positive Coach Mental Model

Mental models have power. They affect how people see, think and behave. Unlike law, medicine, and the like, coaching is a profession without a coherent mental model of what is appropriate, competent and ethical behavior. If one were to characterize the current coaching mental model it might be called the "win-at-all-costs" model.

The best training will be ineffective in changing behavior if those being trained believe their "job description" is incompatible with the behaviors being promoted in the training. A critical component of the Positive Coaching Alliance's strategy to transform youth sports involves a new mental model for youth sports coaches.

The PCA has developed a mental model for youth coaches called "The Positive Coach." We will promote it until it displaces the win-at-all-costs model and becomes the industry standard for youth sports.

While the Positive Coach Mental Model is consistent with the National Standards for Athletic Coaches developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), the PCA does not aspire to be a certification organization. Our goal is to win the minds and hearts of youth coaches so that they will incorporate the Positive Coach Mental Model into their coaching life.

A positive coach:

1) Puts players first: A positive coach wants to win but understands that he is first and foremost an educator will the development of his players his top priority. He understands that children go through developmental stages and uses age-appropriate coaching strategies. He values the long-term welfare of his players more than looking good as a coach. He avoids the trap of thinking the game is about him rather than for the players. Where winning is in conflict with the long-term benefit of the athletes, a positive coach has an unwavering commitment to what is best for the athletes.

2) Develops character as well as skills: A positive coach uses the crucible of competition as a virtual classroom. She seizes upon victory and defeat as teachable moments—opportunities to build in her athletes' self-confidence and positive character traits such as determination, courage, empathy and commitment. She wants to win, but even more wants to transmit lessons that will carry over into the rest of her athletes' lives. She is loyal to players and reluctant to "give up" on them, especially "at-risk" athletes who have the most to gain from participating in sports.

Transforming youth sports so sports can transform youth.

NOTES FOR BETTER COACHING

1. Be patient!
2. Try to improve one technique at each practice session.
3. Prepare them for the unexpected in the game.
4. Provide only one tip/suggestions on improvement at a time.
5. Permit the players to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes.
6. Encourage the player when appropriate.
7. Focus on individual improvement rather than comparing with others.
5. Encourage questions and discussions.
9. Urge the players to practice their technique for short periods each day (homework).
10. They will continue to participate if they are having FUN.

REMEMBER, EVERYTHING TAKES TIME TO LEARN.