

Power

and

Ethics in

Coaching



By
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National
Coaching
Certification
Program

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Printed in Canada

ISBN 0-920678-80-7

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Acknowledgments

Writing a book is a team effort. Our team included an Advisory Committee:

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Several individuals involved in coaching also reviewed the book at various stages:

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Ken Shields, MPE, ChPC, president, Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development; former national basketball coach

Dana Sinclair, PhD, psychologist, clinical instructor, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia; former captain, national field hockey team

James Sleeth, MA, management consultant; former member, national canoe team

Susan Vail, PhD, associate professor, York University sport administration program; coach educator

Dragos Vujic, diploma in recreation facilities management; regional soccer coach.

We thank all team members involved in this endeavor.

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Preface

How to build healthy coach–athlete relationships is a central challenge for all people committed to excellence in coaching. This handbook explores the issue of power and leadership in these relationships. It is the second publication in a coach education series that focuses on current issues in amateur sport. The first handbook addressed gender equity.

Professional–client relationships are the subject of much discussion in society today. Of particular concern is the increasing number of cases where professionals such as doctors, teachers, psychologists, and coaches are being accused of using their power inappropriately and violating accepted ethical practices and the law.

This handbook supports the positive use of power in coach–athlete relationships in amateur sport and is designed to be used by experienced coaches, athletes, coach educators, and parents in a variety of situations. The interactive format provides opportunities for critical reflection—for coaches to learn on their own or in group situations.

The handbook begins with some background information about power and leadership in coaching, moves to a reflective activity about sources of power, and concludes with suggestions for skill development in using power positively. The Canadian Professional Coaches Association (CPCA) *Coaching Code of Ethics* is referenced throughout the book.

Coaches have a privileged position in the lives of athletes. The intimate nature of sport gives coaches entry into athletes’ lives outside the traditions, social structures, and conventions that come with being a family member, a longtime friend, or community member. This entry brings with it the potential to profoundly affect athletes’ lives and therefore an obligation to use power in an ethical manner.

It takes time to learn how to use power well and act ethically. This handbook is not intended as a quick-fix package—it is simply one step in that ongoing learning process.

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I

Power and Leadership in Coaching

What? (Background)

Unit I defines and outlines assumptions about power and leadership in coaching and examines the difference between *power-to* and *power-over*.

II

About Power

So What? (Awareness and Reflection)

Unit II raises awareness about various sources of power and asks coaches to reflect on their experience of power:

- What are the sources of my power as a coach?
- How do I use power as a coach?
- What can I learn from how I and others use power?

III

Using Power Positively

Now What? (Skill Development)

Unit III describes six areas where coaches can enhance their skills in using power positively with athletes:

- by staying centred
- in setting boundaries
- when talking with athletes
- through asking questions
- by thinking and acting ethically
- through applying a code of ethics.

This handbook grew out of the movement toward professionalism in coaching and the need to address the potential for abuse or misuse of power by coaches. The root of this issue—the ethical use of power—lies in the nature of sport, the role of the coach, and the close relationships that develop between coaches and athletes.

Coaches continually use their power through the choices they make about how they relate to athletes and others in sport. Although making these choices is an essential part of their leadership role, little has been written about the challenge of using power positively in sport.

Relationships with professionals such as doctors, teachers, psychologists, and coaches are based on trust that these professionals are

- competent:** they are well prepared and current in their discipline
- respectful:** they treat clients with respect at all times
- ethical:** they think and act in a morally responsible way.

There is a power imbalance in the very nature of these relationships. This power imbalance favors the doctor over the patient, the teacher over the student, the psychologist over the client, the coach over the athlete—and it is problematic for all professionals. The core challenge is to be aware of the dilemma presented by this imbalance and to live with it in the context of better values—values that enable coaches to use their power positively in their interactions with athletes. This is a key function of the coach as leader.

A Positive Approach

Because sport thrives on positive metaphors such as “you can do it,” positive visualization, practice makes perfect, etc., it can be difficult for some coaches and administrators to feel equally positive about looking at the day-to-day realities of conflict, self-interested action, egoism, misuse of power, unethical decision-making and so on.

Sport is also characterized by the pursuit of goals, a drive for excellence and personal achievement. Other goals, especially those related to the development of athletes as whole persons, risk being lost under the pressure to win or to achieve a best-ever athletic performance at any cost. Coaches’ reflections are often related to the achievement of these performance goals, leaving little room in the culture of sport for careful consideration of the nature of these goals and how they are achieved. The situation is also made more complex by goal-related pressures from parents, colleagues, volunteers, and sport associations.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

People design their behavior based on a similar set of four governing values: (i) to remain in unilateral control, (ii) to maximize winning and minimize losing, (iii) to suppress negative feelings, and (iv) to be as rational as possible, by which we mean laying out clear-cut goals and then evaluating our own behavior on the basis of whether or not we've achieved them.

The purpose of this strategy is to avoid vulnerability, risk, embarrassment, and the appearance of incompetence. In other words, it is a deeply defensive strategy and a recipe for ineffective learning. We might even call it a recipe for anti learning, because it helps us avoid reflecting on the counterproductive consequences of our own behavior. This approach assumes a world that values unilateral control and winning above all else, and in that world we focus primarily on controlling others and on making sure that we are not ourselves controlled. If any reflection does occur, it's in the service of winning and controlling, not of opening ourselves to learning.¹

This handbook is intended to be both positive and practice-based. It recognizes the reality of coaching—where coaches must balance their values against practical constraints, where they make trade-offs and compromises. Coaches do not always have time to reflect philosophically on what they do, but because they are practitioners they know something that philosophers don't know—they know the everyday reality of coaching practice.

As leaders, most coaches focus on coaching as it *is*, not as people wish it to be. If coaches look closely at the complexities of relating with athletes and striving for success in sport, they may see more clearly the ethical issues involved. This handbook doesn't offer solutions to these issues—it simply provides ways to reflect on them, to make them clearer. An important part of this clarity involves recognizing the extraordinary pressures on coaches today, particularly in the complex and demanding environment of high performance sport.

And so this handbook asks some tough questions that need to be addressed if coaches want to build positive and healthy relationships with self-reliant athletes. The goal is to help coaches become more thoughtful about the power they have and how they use it, more aware of the results of their decisions and actions and, hence, wiser in the leadership they provide to athletes. As British coach Frank Dick has said, “We are coaches of people—not disciplines and not sports—we are about people.”

What Is Power?

For the purpose of this handbook, *power* is the ability to get things done, the capacity to act, or the ability to choose what will happen.²

Power is an integral part of leadership. In sport, where coaches have considerable power, this term is synonymous with action. The challenge for coaches is taking the right actions—actions that contribute to the all-round development of athletes, both while they participate in sport and throughout the rest of their lives.

The following points outline the assumptions about power and leadership underlying this book and the challenges coaches face in using their power on a day-to-day basis:

- Leaders need power to act—it is that simple. Great coaches are powerful coaches. Powerful coaches make critical choices that affect athletes' lives in significant ways.
- Because coaches have power, their relationships with athletes are often characterized by an imbalance of power, which leaves coaches open to doing great things as well as to abusing others in their care.
- The imbalance of power between coach and athlete is reinforced by a tendency on the part of many people to obey those in authority without question; e.g. parents rarely check a coach's qualifications.
- To act is to risk acting badly and doing harm. But even doing nothing may be harmful in a situation where one's position as a coach demands action.
- There is a strong tradition in sport to focus on winning and being a successful coach, often at the expense of other less tangible goals such as the personal and long-term development of athletes.
- People—coaches, athletes, administrators, volunteers, etc.—make sport what it is through their ideas and actions. They shape the morality of sport—a morality that is subjective and often backed up by enormous power. This means that coaches, as key players in sport, use their power to implement their particular visions for sport.
- Professional coaches have an obligation to use power responsibly by basing their actions on better values that compensate for power imbalances.³

Power-to, Power-over

One approach to understanding power draws a distinction between *power-to* and *power-over*.⁴

Power-to refers to the ability to perform or produce and implies the freedom and resources to do so. Because of the nature of their roles, coaches have the power to set up and implement training camps, practice schedules, and many other aspects of their work with athletes. A key aspect of *power-to* is that it can be used to facilitate the empowerment of athletes.

*[Power-to] is a radical term—a very different motivation than the concept of [power-over] upon which this world has operated. One example is in women’s traditional role, where they have used their powers to foster the growth of others—certainly children, but also many other people. This might be called using one’s power to empower another—increasing the other’s resources, capabilities, effectiveness, and ability to act. For example, in caretaking or nurturing, one major component is acting and interacting to foster the growth of another on many levels—emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually. ... The one who exerts such power recognizes that she or he cannot possibly have total influence or control but has to find ways to interact with the other person’s constantly changing forces or powers. And all must be done with appropriate timing, phasing, and shifting of skills so that one helps to advance the empowerment of the less powerful person in a positive, stronger direction.*⁵

Empowerment is often thought of as something someone does to someone else, e.g. “we need to empower our athletes.” In fact, the root word of power is the Latin *potere*—the ability to choose. One person cannot empower another, because to presume to do so would strip that person of the ability to choose.

Empowerment is something that happens in relationships when people work together to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals and to make their own choices; e.g. coaches facilitate empowerment of athletes by encouraging them to make their own choices as they become more mature, independent, and self-reliant.

*Coaches play a critical role in fostering and supporting the development of athletes. Coaches provide leadership and expertise in the areas of technical, tactical, physical and mental preparation of the athlete. In a coach-led, athlete-centred system, coaches strive to help athletes achieve their goals of self-development and winning and coaching decisions are based on long-term, holistic development needs of athletes. Coaches facilitate the empowerment of athletes by enabling them to become independent and self-reliant as they mature as athletes and as individuals.*⁶

In other words, coaches need to be powerful in ways that enhance, rather than diminish, the power of others.

Unit 1: Power and Leadership in Coaching

Power-over refers to domination and control. People who have power over, who are able to dominate, have much more power than their subordinates. A key aspect of power-over is the ability to name and define things, to give something a name and have it stick. Because of the nature of their roles, coaches have power over athletes—they can name athletes as being too big or too small for a particular sport, determine whether they have the right attitude or whether they will go to major games, and if they will receive funding from their sport associations. Some coaches use their power to determine how athletes eat, how much they should weigh, who they associate with, how they spend their spare time, whether they should attend school, and so on.

There is a tradition in sport to see the coach as using power over others, resulting in the stereotype of the aloof, authoritarian coach or the benevolent dictator.

*Power can also be defined as the capacity to impose one's will on others, accompanied by a willingness to apply negative sanctions against those who oppose that will. This translates into a "love of power," where the fact of having the power becomes more important, more critical, than what results from the use of that power. Any measure that is necessary to retain power is considered justifiable. Further, individuals who are being manipulated or controlled do not recognize these underlying dynamics, because we are thoroughly taught that the power structure, as it is set up, is the "only way."*⁷

Power-over is further complicated when athletes shape their behavior to be successful within that dynamic:

*As an athlete I put up with a lot to get what I wanted. I deliberately managed my behavior and played a role in the power dynamics that went on to make sure I got what I wanted. It was just another part of the game. We all did whatever was necessary. These are not good memories.*⁸

Although this handbook is oriented to help coaches maximize their use of power-to, it is also important to acknowledge and accept the benefits of power-over, e.g. through providing structure, clear tournament rules, punctuality, training regimes, and so on.

Many coaches use a subtle mix of power-to and power-over:

*We start with the athlete himself. Indeed, we try to put everything right for him or her; we help them as much as we possibly can. But at the same time we demand that the athlete takes on the responsibility for his own training, his own situation, his own life. We regard the athletes as human beings—not machines that can be taught to exercise automatic functions to perfection. In Norway we try to make the athlete go to the training to train and not to be trained.*⁹

Power and Ethics in Coaching

The central leadership challenge for coaches is to use their power positively in making choices based on their values.

Think about your experiences as a coach with respect to the distinction between power-to and power-over.

- In your leadership role as a coach, in what situations do you use power-to when working with athletes?

- In your leadership role as a coach, in what situations do you use power-over when working with athletes?

- What power-over situations could be changed to power-to situations? How would you accomplish this change?

I

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Sources of Power

Long-term success in sport requires that coaches do much more than focus on athletes producing medals and becoming champions. Coaches must make it a priority to work with athletes to ensure that they mature into independent, self-reliant individuals who are capable of making decisions both inside and outside sport. Experienced coaches can't do this alone. Putting this philosophy into action requires an active commitment from other leaders in sport, especially those who direct sport organizations.

Power is the ability to get things done, the capacity to act, or the ability to choose what will happen.

Becoming aware of your power and learning how to use it wisely is a leadership skill that helps build healthy coach–athlete relationships and enables athletes to perform better.

This unit is based on an activity that asks you to think about types of power, how you use them, and their impact on people around you. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the activity.

Given the wide variety of situations in which coaches are leaders and the evolving and often intimate social interactions in sport, power can be an elusive concept that is not easily described or classified. This instrument helps you gain an understanding of what power is and how you use it. It identifies nine sources of power. As you become more familiar with this activity, you will become more aware of how various sources of power relate to one another in specific situations.

For example,

- *Positional power* is often closely associated with *reward power*—a person's capacity to provide what others want because of his/her position.
- *Reward power* is often closely associated with *expert power* or *personal power*.

As you work through this activity,¹

- Think about how you see yourself in your coaching practice, rating yourself next to *Coaching* by circling *low*, *medium*, or *high* for each power source.
- Think of yourself with family or close friends and rate yourself by circling *low*, *medium*, or *high* for each power source.

Keep in mind that you are rating yourself as you *are*, not as you think you *should be*.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

1. Positional power

Your capacity to act and to influence others is based on the authority, rights, and privileges of your position as legitimized by a specific organization, e.g. sport club, municipal league structure, school system, coaching association, or university. Positional power can also come from age, gender, or social class. The compliance of others is expected and based on the authority invested in the role or roles you fulfil through your position, e.g. coach, teacher, professor, administrator, president, board member, and so on. Positions may range from those specified by formal job descriptions to those informally agreed upon by small, loosely structured groups.

Examples: your authority to make decisions about athlete selection, training and competitive schedules, the direction of practice sessions, the evaluation of athlete performance, tournament selection, tournament rules, dress and behavior codes, the initiation of sanctions against athletes and coaches who fail to follow established policies.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

2. Personal power

Your capacity to act and influence others is the result of influence we don't usually think of as power. People may respect your manner and your way of thinking and acting or see you as someone whom they can emulate, someone whose judgment they can trust. For example, other coaches may admire and adapt some of your coaching practices. Athletes may see you as a leader whose ideas they can identify with. Coaches may buy a book on training that you recommend because they respect your opinion. When any of these things happen, you have personal power because people identify with you in certain areas, and accept your influence without feeling manipulated. Personal power is sometimes called *charisma*, and its exact source is often a mystery.

Examples: being contagiously enthusiastic about your role as a coach, your ability to communicate your values clearly, a record of success, having a positive vision.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

3. Reward power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on your ability to provide something that others want or value. These rewards may be material or emotional. In the carrot-and-stick analogy, reward power is the carrot.

Examples: your smile of approval, positive verbal feedback, a cash prize, selection to a special team.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

4. Coercive power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on your ability to coerce others who have little or no possibility of escaping your influence. Coercive power can take many forms, e.g. telling athletes that they can't leave a practice until they have completed a series of conditioning exercises or else they will be dropped from the competitive team, telling coaches to adopt a no-holds-barred approach to competitions or face dismissal, telling committee members who don't conform that they may not be re-appointed. In the carrot-and-stick analogy, coercive power is the stick.

Coercive power may also be used in a less direct manner. Examples: emotional blackmail or inducing guilt through the withdrawal of smiles and affection, a parent who gets compliance based on "all I've done" for a child, a youngster who threatens to have a temper tantrum in the presence of others, an adult who uses strong emotions to achieve a goal, e.g. by reporting to others that the coach was "very angry." Coercive power can be associated with factors such as academic credentials, physical size, a winning record, wealth, an important position, a position of authority.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

5. Enabling power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on your ability to facilitate others in making choices for themselves. These choices are often related to a team's or group's mission and goals. Enabling power is associated with encouraging individual development and building an atmosphere of mutual trust. It involves the use of appropriate positive and critical feedback in working with others and celebrating the accomplishments of people with whom you live or work.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Examples: involving others in planning, listening to athletes’ ideas, developing mutually beneficial relationships with other coaches and clubs, fostering educational experiences focused on personal development. A coach who involves team members in establishing training schedules, a sport psychologist who enables athletes to build self-esteem through their participation as leaders in recreational sport programs, and a committee chair who facilitates a group in addressing a conflict successfully are using enabling power.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

6. Expert power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on your expertise in a specific area and your ability to communicate this expertise. Others depend on your expertise to do their work, solve problems, and address issues. They defer to you because of your expertise.

Examples: general coaching expertise or specialization in a particular area of sport, e.g. rules, strategy, strength training, sport psychology, ethics, skill development. Although expertise is usually associated with formal training, it is also associated with personal experience and insight—usually called *wisdom*.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

7. Information power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on information you possess or have access to. This information is valuable to others as it enables them to do their work. People who have a lower position in an organizational or social hierarchy can have significant information power.

Examples: knowing how to make travel arrangements, understanding the politics of sport, filling out request forms properly to get information, being up-to-date on issues affecting your position, meeting with people to share information and find out the “latest.”

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

8. Resource power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on access to a variety of resources—human, financial, technical, educational, networks, etc.

Examples: budget-signing authority, establishing priorities, having the staff to carry out projects, having access to key people who can help you accomplish your goals.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

9. Relationship power

Your capacity to act and influence others is based on your relationships with people, or “who you know.” Relationships may be with people who have sources of power different from yours, or they may be family or friends. Relationship power can flow from shared experiences, integrity, mutual contacts, common interests, or family connections.

Examples: coaching networks, a personal relationship with the chair of an advisory group in your organization, a family member in a field you want to learn more about.

Coaching	low	medium	high
Family/friends	low	medium	high

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Now transfer your scores (*low, medium, or high*) to the chart below.

Power Source	Coaching	Family/friends
1. Positional	_____	_____
2. Personal	_____	_____
3. Reward	_____	_____
4. Coercive	_____	_____
5. Enabling	_____	_____
6. Expert	_____	_____
7. Information	_____	_____
8. Resource	_____	_____
9. Relationship	_____	_____

The following questions ask you to think about the meaning of this chart with respect to your role as a coach.

Thinking about Power

Our ideas and the actions that result from these ideas are very much connected to ourselves, to our personal view of the world and to our values.²

- What stands out when you look at how you rated yourself in your coaching practice?

- Compare how you rated yourself in your coaching practice with how you rated yourself in your relationships with family and friends. What are the similarities and differences?

- What one or two sources of power have you developed most? How did you develop these sources?

Source	How developed
--------	---------------

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- What one or two sources of power would you like to develop further? How could you do this? Who could help you?

Source	How to develop
--------	----------------

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

- Think of someone in sport (athlete, coach, official, administrator, parent) who stands out for you. Go through the activity again and rate this individual's use of sources of power. Put an "X" through *low*, *medium*, or *high* to indicate your rating.

What could you learn from this person?

What might this person learn from you?

Power and Ethics in Coaching

- When do you feel disempowered—that you have lost your ability (i) to define what you need and (ii) to act on the basis of how you understand things?

How does this disempowerment happen?

- Have you used some sources of power more often than others at different times in your career, e.g. as a beginning coach, in certain parts of the season, in dealings with sport administrators?

- In summary, what have you learned about
 - how you use power?
 - how others use power with you?

- What is one change in relation to sources of power that you will work on over the next year?

I

Power and Leadership in Coaching

What? (Background)

Unit I defines and outlines assumptions about power and leadership in coaching and examines the difference between *power-to* and *power-over*.

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About Power

So What? (Awareness and Reflection)

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- by thinking and acting ethically
- through applying a code of ethics.

People are not born with the skills for using power positively; instead, they learn them through a conscious effort and considerable experience over a lifetime of successes and failures. This unit explores how to use power positively by staying centred, setting boundaries, talking with athletes, asking questions, and thinking and acting ethically.

.. By Staying Centred

How you feel in a situation has an enormous effect on how you act. Coaches often make this point with athletes.

Coaching can involve a wide range of strong emotions, from positive feelings of joy and success to despair and betrayal and all the other possibilities in between.¹ Coaches who have the skill and experience to stay cool during challenging times are more likely to make better decisions and take an appropriate action than those who don't. As one coach educator puts it,

It is difficult to make ethical decisions in a highly emotional state. For one thing, it is difficult to see and assess the various options that may be at your disposal if you are disturbed, highly excited, or too interested in some specific outcome. ... You will do ethics better if you cool out, that is, if you have the quiet and calm to look and see, to put at least some of your emotional involvement out of play, to reflectively review any obligations you might have, and to imagine the consequences of various actions on both yourself and others.²

Being able to stay centred—to control strong emotions such as anger, frustration, fear, disappointment, success, sexual attraction, and jealousy when you are in the centre of exciting and difficult events—takes practice and forethought. Coaches who learn to understand and manage powerful emotions can plan a constructive response to challenging situations rather than be victimized by less thoughtful impulses.³

Managing strong emotions

Although everyone gets emotional, how you deal with and express your feelings is affected by family background, experience, personality, gender, self-confidence, culture, and how much control you have over how and when you become off-centred.

For example, some coaches are slow to anger; others get angry frequently and almost seem to have been “born angry.” Some coaches get very angry but don't show their feelings due to fear of losing face; others show their anger as part of how they relate to others on a daily basis. Some coaches become angry in stages, with their feelings slowly building throughout an exchange. Others do nothing at first, then brood over their emotions until reaching a boiling point, and then explode. Some feel angry but deny or repress their feelings completely.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

There is a school of thought among some coaches that they need to “lose it” from time to time to demonstrate to their athletes that they care about what is happening, e.g. a controversial decision by a referee, a mediocre performance by team members. The assumption in this chapter is that if coaches truly lose it, they risk misusing their coaching power.

Think about a recent emotional episode in your coaching career—one you consider negative. With this specific example in mind, consider the following questions:

- How did you respond physically (e.g. tight muscles, headaches, tight chest, perspiration, face flushed, fast heart beat, dry mouth)?

- What went through your mind (e.g. blaming yourself, athletes, or others; explaining; making excuses)? Is this a typical thought pattern when you are upset?

- What feelings did you experience?

- How did you behave (e.g. withdrew, suppressed your feelings, became aggressive, lashed out)?

You may find it helpful to talk about these questions with another coach or a close friend whom you trust.

One way of measuring the strength of your emotional episode is through subjectively measuring your emotional arousal level using a 10-point scale.⁴ This emotional arousal scale (EAS) enables you to identify your emotions and to measure their intensity.

The scale runs from 1 to 10. If your emotional arousal level is between 1 and 3, you are very relaxed—to the point of being asleep. If your emotional arousal level is between 3 and 7, you are active and productive. In the 7 to 10 range you are probably in a highly emotional state and less likely to make “power smart” and ethical decisions. (For example, a tournament final can result in a level between 8 and 10 for many coaches.)

Not emotional										Highly emotional	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

Put an “X” to mark where you were on the scale during the emotional episode you thought about for the previous exercise.

- How did others respond to your strong feelings in this situation?

- With hindsight, if you could relive that situation, what would you do differently?

When you can name your emotional tension and give it a number, you can also learn to stay cool and reduce that number to a manageable level by

- accepting responsibility for your emotions
- becoming your own emotional expert
- staying calm
- out-thinking your strong emotions.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Accept responsibility for your emotions

When we blame others for how we feel, we are saying, “I am not responsible for my emotions,” or “It’s not my fault.” Another way we can distance ourselves from our strong feelings is by making excuses that make us seem less responsible: “I didn’t mean to hit her,” or “I can’t help myself, that’s just the way I am,” or “I’m sorry, I must have had too much to drink,” or “I didn’t know what I was doing; I was out of control.”

One of the first steps in dealing with strong emotions is to accept that *we are responsible for them and we can manage them*. When and how we get emotional is something we learn from interacting with family and friends, through our cultures and our society. Although strong feelings can be both positive and healthy, they can also be uncomfortable, confusing, and destructive. This is usually an indication that something needs to change. The challenge is to recognize strong feelings as a useful symptom that can lead to constructive changes in your approach to coaching.

What is learned can be un-learned and re-learned. Although you may have learned earlier that screaming at athletes or giving them the silent treatment is a powerful way to control them, you may want to let go of that tactic and deal with your feelings in a more constructive and respectful way. Although negative tactics may work in the short term, over the long term they destroy your relationship with athletes and may undermine an athlete’s self-esteem and emotional well-being:

Coaches have a tough job. Many of the tactics that win medals—and medals are what the system wants and pays for—can be harmful to athletes. The challenge is to use the skills that get you both medals and healthy athletes.⁵

Accepting responsibility for your emotions involves knowing when they are a problem. Strong emotions—whether positive or negative—can be a problem for you or those you are with when they

- interfere with personal relationships
- cause bad feelings in yourself or others
- begin to hurt you
- are too frequent
- are too intense
- last too long
- lead to aggression or withdrawal
- disrupt your work
- can’t be truly justified
- interfere with your ability to build an effective team
- cause unhealthy power dynamics in your coaching relationships.

An excellent way to take responsibility for your emotions is by using “I” statements such as “I think ...”, “I feel ...”, “I fear ...”, and so on. “I” statements (if not overdone) allow you to talk about your feelings without getting drawn into name-calling and blaming others.

Become your own emotional expert

Knowing yourself helps you to manage your emotions effectively. Even though our reactions may vary slightly, depending on the situation and the individuals involved, each of us has our own emotional language or patterns.

Think about the following questions and look for patterns or typical ways that you respond when upset or off-centred. Answer each question yourself and then ask someone you trust to answer them for you to compare how you see yourself with how others see you. Then discuss how your responses are similar or different.

- How often do you get upset or off-centred?
- In what coaching situations do you usually become upset (e.g. athlete shows up late, assistant coach is unprepared, athletes don't do their best, volunteers are too involved)?
- How long do these feelings last?
- How intense are your feelings?
- Do your emotions develop in stages? If so, describe these stages.
- What do you do when you are upset (e.g. turn away, talk it through, yell, withdraw, ask for feedback, get another opinion, focus on how you are feeling, scold, get grouchy, cry)?
- How do you feel after?
- Are there other factors associated with your emotions (e.g. fatigue, irritation, frustration, injuries, stress)?
- How do you usually deal with your emotions?
- How do you usually calm down after an emotional episode?
- What other situations in coaching usually produce strong emotions for you?

Most of us have fairly predictable patterns for dealing with strong emotions. Managing strong emotions means being able to predict when you may get upset and then being prepared with ways to break out of that pattern.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

- Think of a specific coaching situation when you are likely to become upset—one with a high emotional arousal level. Describe it briefly in point form, i.e. setting, people involved, what usually happens.

- What is your typical behavior or response?

- How would you prefer to respond?

- What is your usual emotional arousal level in this situation?

- What would be your preferred emotional arousal level in situations like this one?

- What impact does your response usually have on the other people involved?

- What impact would you prefer to have on the other people involved?

- How would you like to react in the future in a similar situation?

- What steps can you take to achieve this behavior?

Knowing what makes you upset helps you examine your reactions. Once you have identified what makes you emotional, you can create strategies for dealing with those sources or create ways to avoid them. In this way you can prepare yourself for situations you find difficult.

Stay calm

Taking a time-out is a good way to calm a potentially difficult situation. Getting away helps to control strong emotions and provides time for taking a second look at what is happening. Recognize the need for a time-out and then say to yourself, “I’m beginning to feel emotional and I need to get away from this situation.” Then do it.

Admittedly, some situations are more difficult to walk away from than others. Here are two examples of ways to introduce a time-out graciously:

- “This is a sensitive issue for me. I think I’ll pass on this one.”
- “I need some time to think about this. Could we meet again later today or tomorrow?”

In summary, when taking a time-out,

- leave the situation for at least 20 to 30 minutes
- do something physical, such as walking or stretching
- don’t drink alcohol or caffeinated drinks such as coffee
- don’t take drugs, unless they are specifically prescribed
- until you feel less upset, try not to replay and analyse the situation in your mind.

During competitions, a time-out may be short and involve some deep breathing or positive self-talk to restore a calmer frame of mind.

When you have reduced your emotional arousal level, re-establish contact with the person or people involved and talk about what made you become so upset. Find out how *they* felt. Start a more productive dialogue. If the other people are not ready to talk, respect their feelings. Rebuilding trust takes time and energy.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Out-think your strong emotions

If you accept responsibility for your emotions, the next step is to develop ways to out-think them.

Positive self-talk is a key strategy used by successful, high performance coaches and athletes when they begin to feel strong emotions. By having a positive attitude toward difficult situations, you can support yourself in making changes in how you react.

<p>Cool thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Just stay cool. Getting upset won’t help.”• “This battle isn’t worth it. Take a few deep breaths and chill out.”• “These really aren’t interruptions; they’re my job. This is what I’m supposed to be doing.”• “I’m getting too emotional. I need to pause here and cool off.”	<p>Ultimate control and escape routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “My bottom line is that I’m in control of myself. I can always walk away rather than lose it.”• “It’s OK to take a time-out. I can move away and get my act together, then come back and deal with this.”
<p>Problem-solving thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “It’s OK to feel annoyed, but I really need a plan. What’s the first thing I want to do?”• “I’m really upset, but it’s not fair to judge all officials on the basis of one referee. I need a way to approach the referee to see what we can change.”	<p>Self-rewarding thoughts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Good, I’m hanging in there.”• “I feel great because I am coping with this hassle rather than screaming.”• “I can actually feel myself calming down.”

Humor is another strategy that works effectively in difficult situations. By looking at the absurd aspects of a situation, you can change your attitude and feelings and feel better about the incident. A word of caution: humor can be destructive, especially when it is used to put down others.

Thought-checks provide another way to out-think your emotions. What we think can effectively increase our strong emotions or reduce them. By changing your thoughts from *emotion-producing* to *emotion-reducing*, you can make a big difference in how you deal with emotions.

Emotion-producing thoughts	Emotion-reducing thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I deserve better than this.”• “She must be going under.”• “I really failed here.”• “How could you do this?”• “They’re not treating me right.”• “It’s just not fair.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Bad things happen.”• “How could we provide support here?”• “I can’t fight every battle.”• “I wonder how this happened.”• “How did this attitude get started?”• “What are my options? What do I really want to do with this situation?”

You get on your bandwagon or your pedestal and you yell and scream at times for no good reason and you learn along the way not to do that—sometimes you just have to eat it. So I guess my style has changed over the past 30 years. I’ve become much more conservative and I’m able to keep some things within myself without getting ulcers and so that’s become my style of operating—to be calm and conservative in some ways, but also to be definite.⁶

... In Setting Boundaries

As consumers become more aware of their rights, increasing numbers of stories about professionals who exploit clients are becoming public knowledge. Individuals in the caring and education professions are being charged with violating the ethical codes that exist to protect clients. Coaches are also making headlines.



With this increasing awareness, parents, coach educators, the legal system, and society in general are demanding that coaches be educated about the nature of the power they have and how to use it sensitively and ethically with athletes in their charge. They are expecting coaches to set and maintain clear limits to prevent the negative, long-lasting, and powerful effects of abusive relationships.⁷ Along with these demands comes the need for coaches and others in sport to educate athletes about their own responsibilities in setting and supporting these limits.

Because coaches have traditionally been asked to fulfil a wide variety of roles, setting these limits can seem to be a betrayal of the historical idea of the coach being all things to all athletes. Although this perception of the coach has been demanding and rewarding, it has also fed coaches' egos. Many gain considerable esteem from being involved indispensably in their athletes' lives rather than from building self-reliance in athletes through healthy partnerships where they work together interdependently.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

What are boundaries?

Coaches can use their power positively by developing and maintaining clear boundaries to define their relationships with athletes and others in sport.

Boundaries are limits that enable safe and healthy relationships and may be physical, psychological, social, or sexual. These limits define what coaches can and can't do in their relationships with athletes:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male and female coaches may touch male and female athletes when helping them understand physical skills.• Male coaches don't walk into women's or girls' dressing rooms while athletes are changing. |
| Psychological | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches use sport psychology to prepare athletes for competitions.• Coaches are not psychiatrists; for complex psychological issues, coaches will discuss referral to appropriate professionals with the athlete. |
| Social | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches attend sport-related events such as awards banquets and annual meetings.• Coaches generally avoid socializing with athletes outside sport-related situations. |
| Sexual | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some coaches marry athletes after their coach–athlete relationship has ended.• Coaches don't have sexual relationships with athletes they are coaching. |

Some boundaries are clear, such as those based on fair play; e.g. coaches shouldn't abuse officials.⁸ Others are less clear and depend on the willingness of the coach to develop and communicate them; e.g. parents should not tell coaches how to do their jobs, coaches are not permitted to date athletes. Boundaries can also be unstated and wrapped up in cultural expectations, e.g. hugging or kissing athletes and colleagues whom you have not seen for a long time.

Establishing boundaries in coach–athlete relationships provides several benefits:

- clarity about roles
- comfort and predictability in coach–athlete relationships
- a safe and healthy learning environment
- fair and equitable treatment
- a supportive milieu for team-building.

Clear boundaries enable participants and observers to relax and enjoy the stimulating and exciting potential of the unique coach–athlete relationship. Parents of young athletes on trips away from home can feel more comfortable knowing that rules have been discussed and that these rules will be observed by the youngsters and enforced by adult chaperones. Older athletes can focus better when they know that their coach will not get involved sexually with team members regardless of the degree of sexual attraction. Similarly, athletes can relax and feel more comfortable with each other when they know that the coach is aware of their concerns about favoritism and is addressing them.

Developing, maintaining, and protecting boundaries is an ongoing challenge and a normal part of coaching.

Think about how you relate to athletes in your role as a coach.

- What boundaries or limits do you maintain in these relationships (e.g. physical, psychological, social, sexual)?

- Which of these boundaries or limits have you discussed and agreed upon with athletes?

- In what areas would you like to develop clearer boundaries?

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Boundary violations

In a boundary violation, a coach goes beyond acceptable limits for a safe and healthy relationship and compromises the high standards expected of a professional working with a client. This violation results in ambiguity about what is allowed, leaving both coach and athlete vulnerable. An extreme violation can leave an athlete physically and psychologically harmed.

Everyone in a position of trust and authority risks committing boundary violations at one time or another: a parent who doesn't believe in physical punishment spans her child; a teacher who prides himself on mutual respect loses his cool and humiliates a student; a counsellor who is committed to confidentiality reveals personal information about a client.

The expression *out of line* is commonly used to acknowledge that a boundary has been pushed too far. However, it is not always easy to know where these boundaries lie; sporting situations can present complicated dilemmas for coaches:

Violating the boundaries of the professional–client relationship is a common occurrence. Whether the violation is inadvertent or premeditated, the initial decisions we make about how to manage the relationship have critical ramifications. What we do can appear harmless. ... Often we do not see the danger until we are loudly awakened by the repercussions and aftershocks that occur.⁹

Boundary violations such as sexual intimacy between coach and athlete are obvious, and some countries and sport associations have clear norms and regulations about such behaviors. Other violations are more subtle and difficult to describe, such as those that may occur in weight management and career counselling, but their impact on the coach–athlete relationship is significant.

Boundary violations also occur when athletes exploit relationships with coaches or with each other, although this seems to happen less frequently. This handbook focuses on the coach's responsibility as a professional in building and maintaining appropriate boundaries for relationships with a team or with individual athletes.¹⁰

Following are five common types of boundary violations:

Role denial

When coach and athlete step outside their professional–client relationship, they blur the boundaries between them. This blurring may result in confusion about their roles and a denial of the need for these roles.

Due to the nature of their jobs, coaches can become much closer to athletes than teachers or other professionals, so it is important to be as clear as possible about the distinctions in roles and the power differences involved. For example, when coaches are drawn into inappropriate conversations with athletes, the athletes usually know immediately that the coaches are trying too hard to become friends or peers. In these situations, the coaches are denying their role as being distinct and having special powers that athletes don't have. With this power comes the responsibility to act within boundaries appropriate to the role of the coach.

Overlapping roles

I brought this athlete up as a son—he even lived with me for a time and we developed a father-son relationship. The cost to me has been enormous as he eventually needed to break away and develop his own life; it was impossible for him to do that without becoming very angry and rejecting me not just as a coach but as a person. We don't speak at all now. I will never get over the hurt of that time. I invested so much.—A provincial coach

Overlapping roles are often described as conflicts of interest. When a coach takes on additional roles with an athlete or team—parent, lover, or equipment supplier—a conflict of interest develops that affects not only the coach-athlete relationship but also the relationships between the coach and other team members and colleagues. How can a coach be perceived to be fair to other team members when the athlete who is living with him is on the team? How can a coach maintain a clear and responsible relationship to her team when she is selling the equipment they are using and is open to being accused of financial opportunism?

Hidden agendas

In healthy coach-athlete relationships, the central focus is on developing competent and successful athletes. When other less obvious agendas such as personal advancement of the coach, favoritism, sexual needs, or ego needs become paramount, boundary violations are likely to occur.

A club coach was having a conversation with an athlete who wanted to leave his team. The discussion became heated and the coach was heard to shout,

OK, fine, leave—but remember this: you won't amount to anything. I have made you everything you are today. You need me to make you successful, to get you off your ass. Without me you're nothing. You're going nowhere. You remember that!

Coaches who make athletes dependent on them may be fulfilling their own needs to associate with successful people or to enhance their own stature. These needs are detrimental to athletes' health and safety and can have long-lasting effects on how athletes feel about themselves.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Physical contact

I'm from a country where everyone touches everyone else, including male coaches and female athletes. When I came here I had an arm around one of my team members while talking to her about a play on the field. A member of the college harassment committee saw us and reported me, and I'm now up on a harassment charge even though my athletes have not supported the charge. This has had a devastating effect on my career. My good intentions and clean record have meant nothing.—A college coach

Clear boundaries protect both coach and athlete from becoming vulnerable to external pressures. Although it may seem silly to become concerned about friendly gestures, it is important for coaches and athletes (and parents of younger athletes) to discuss how they will relate to each other physically throughout the season.¹¹ Is it appropriate to kiss an athlete on the lips? Or to pat her bum after a good performance?

Sexual intimacy

Because of the special vulnerability involved in physical intimacy, sexual relationships between coaches and athletes can be particularly damaging.¹² Consider the following perspectives:

For the athlete, [sexual intimacy] can have devastating consequences. Her focus shifts from herself and her goals to her coach. Rather than concentrate on her own increasing athletic ability, she questions her attractiveness to the coach. Rather than concentrate on upcoming competitions, she wonders what the hotel sleeping arrangements will be. When listening to his advice, she gets distracted by the color of his eyes. When criticized, she wonders if he will withdraw his “love.” Ordered to protect his secret, she becomes alienated from her teammates and parents.¹³

When I was living through being abused by [my hockey coach], the only people I ever trusted were younger kids. ... When you're a kid, you don't know who to turn to. If I told my mom, she'd make me come home. If I told a 15-year-old friend of mine, he'd think I was gay. As far as talking to the coach, it was the coach.¹⁴

In situations where a coach is entrusted with the care, nurturing, and development of an athlete, the relationship must be used solely to advance the best interests of that athlete and his or her team members. Under these conditions, where there is a power imbalance,

*sexual behavior is always wrong, no matter how willing the participants say they are. In the forbidden zone, the factors of power, trust, and dependency remove the possibility of a woman freely giving consent to sexual contact. Put another way, the dynamics of the forbidden zone can render a woman unable to withhold consent. And because the man has the greater power, the responsibility is his to guard the forbidden boundary against sexual contact, no matter how provocative the woman.*¹⁵

In many sports, sexual intimacy violates organizational policy; in most countries, it is against the law for athletes 17 years of age and under.

A Supreme Court of Canada ruling in May 1995 clearly states that consent is not an issue in boundary violations involving a person in a position of trust and authority such as a coach.

*A position of authority invokes notions of power and the ability to hold in one's hand the future or destiny of the person who is the object of the exercise of the authority. ... The nature of the relationship between an adult and a young person is such that it creates an opportunity for all of the persuasive and influencing factors which adults hold over young persons to come into play.*¹⁶

*Trust and authority are the very essence of the coach–athlete relationship. ... The adult in the position of trust has the responsibility to decline having any sexual contact whatsoever with the young person. That's an unmistakable direction, and it clearly applies to coaches.*¹⁷

Whether it is related to sexual intimacy, the use of illegal substances, overtraining, mutual respect, or personal privacy, when a coach crosses the line into a boundary violation, the basic trust that grounds this professional–client relationship is betrayed. One result may be that an athlete's ability to trust in a broader sense can be affected, sometimes having lifelong repercussions.

Preventing boundary violations

Coaches can stop boundary violations by

- reflecting on when and how they happen
- creating an atmosphere of trust through developing and maintaining clear boundaries for relationships with athletes
- recognizing the slippery slope that precedes boundary violations and naming issues as they arise
- supporting their code of ethics and acting responsibly to prevent boundary violations from happening.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Think of a situation in which you have stepped out of line in a relationship with an athlete or colleague in sport and then felt uncomfortable.

Examples: commenting on personal aspects of an athlete's life, instituting an inappropriate discipline measure, becoming too friendly with an athlete, pursuing sexual interest in an athlete, abusing an official. If you have not had this experience, write about a situation you have heard about or one you have observed.

- Describe the situation, i.e. type of boundary (physical, psychological, social, sexual), time of day, location, your energy level, what led up to the situation.

- How did you deal with the athlete or colleague following the situation?

- What was the impact on others involved, e.g. comments, reactions, body language?

Unit III: Using Power Positively

- How do you feel about the situation now?

- Given hindsight, what could you have done differently in this situation?

- What would you do to prevent a similar situation from developing in the future?

In a boundary violation, the person with the most power exploits others to meet personal needs, thus threatening the health and safety of the people involved.¹⁸ These personal needs may be related to ego, anger, esteem, sexual inclinations, or various other feelings.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Developing and maintaining clear boundaries

The best time to set boundaries is at the beginning of a season.

Use a part of your team meeting to talk about boundaries. (Involve the parents of younger athletes in these discussions.) Explain that boundaries are limits that enable safe and healthy relationships.

Ask athletes to write down what their boundary expectations are for you as a coach; explain that you will write down your expectations for them. For example, you may tell athletes that you want them to call you “Coach” and nothing else; athletes may tell you they want practices to start and finish exactly on time, with latecomers being aware of a clear penalty.

Compare the lists and come to agreement on boundaries for your relationship. Agreement means a positive answer to the question “Can you live with this?” rather than agreement on every single point. Further suggestions follow:

- Athletes may want to know the difference between a *ground rule*, e.g. a curfew, and a *boundary*. Explain that they can be the same thing but that *boundary* is a term usually used for clear limits intended to prevent difficulties from arising, e.g. the meaning of mutual respect, dating between coach and athlete, where responsibility for weight maintenance lies.
- Be clear that you want athletes to raise boundary issues when they see them. Let them know that you will address these issues as soon as they arise.
- Reassure athletes that they can raise boundary issues with you and that you will keep them confidential if they request it.

Instead of asking about expectations, you might ask athletes to write down what they think their rights and responsibilities are as team members. Once you’ve done the same, compare lists and come to agreement.

You can extract the boundary statements from their lists by explaining what a boundary is and then pointing to examples in their work. Add additional boundaries that are not included in the list that you think are important.

When both coach and athlete (and parents of young athletes) are clear about boundaries at the start of a season, they can recognize potential boundary violations in advance and prevent them from happening. Something essential and of great value is destroyed when the line is crossed.

Naming issues on the slippery slope

Most coaches know instinctively when they or their athletes are on a slippery slope leading to a boundary violation. Even when clear boundaries are set early in the season and athletes are encouraged to call violations as they see them, maintaining boundaries is an ongoing challenge for coaches.

One approach is to name the issue through a positive confrontation as soon as it becomes clear to you:

- “I’ve noticed that I’m spending more time one-on-one with you than with other team members and I like to keep my time balanced among all of you. How about if you team up with Ken on this skill?”
- “Thanks for the invitation, but I prefer not to go to athletes’ parties.”
- “I’m uncomfortable with all this joking about sex and dating—I’d like to keep our discussions focused on sport.”

Another approach is to review the boundaries set at the beginning of the season and ask athletes to rate how they think they are doing:

- Distribute an anonymous form (like the sample on page 42) and have the captain collect the responses to equalize some of the power differential if the coach averages the forms.

“At the beginning of the season we set some boundaries for how we would conduct ourselves as a team. I would like to spend some time now thinking about this. Please take a few minutes to rate how we are doing on these guidelines now. The captain will collect the forms and come up with an average for each one, and we will discuss this at our next meeting. You can drop your completed forms in the box at the front as you leave.”

- Address low scores and remind athletes that all teams have issues; the problem occurs when the issues don’t get named or discussed.
- Be prepared to discuss issues openly and to look for ways to address them as a group.

Because coaches spend most of their time with athletes in training situations, most boundary violations happen during training. The first step on the slippery slope may be quite small, simply because it happens in the day-to-day context of training. It may be the temporary use of an illegal substance because an athlete is injured, or a seemingly small infraction of a social norm. Prevention rests on a solid foundation of clear boundaries.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Thinking About Boundaries

How are we doing on the boundaries we set at the start of the season? Circle the appropriate number and then explain your choice in the space provided.

	Poor				Excellent
1. Fair selection processes for competitions	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					
2. Punctuality for practices	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					
3. Mutual respect between coach and athletes	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					
4. Mutual respect among athletes	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					
5. No performance-enhancing substances	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					
6. Equal coaching time and resources for team members	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/> <hr/>					

Acting ethically

Several standards in the CPCA *Coaching Code of Ethics*¹⁹ refer specifically to the development and maintenance of clear boundaries in coach–athlete relationships to ensure the health and safety of athletes.

<i>Beneficence</i> ²⁰	2.5	Coach in a way that benefits athletes, removes harm, and acts consistently for the good of the athlete, keeping in mind that the same training, skills, and powers that coaches use to produce benefits for athletes are also capable of producing harm.
<i>Sexual relationships</i>	2.17	Be acutely aware of power in coaching relationships and, therefore, avoid sexual intimacy with athletes, either during coaching or for that period of time following coaching during which an imbalance in power could jeopardize effective decision-making.
	2.18	Abstain from and refuse to tolerate in others all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes either or both of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">the use of power or authority in an attempt to coerce another person to engage in or tolerate sexual activity. Such uses include explicit or implicit threats of reprisals for noncompliance or promises of reward for compliance.engaging in deliberate or repeated sexually oriented comments, anecdotes, gestures, or touching, if such behaviors<ol style="list-style-type: none">are offensive and unwelcomecreate an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working environmentcan be expected to be harmful to the recipient.
<i>Honesty</i>	3.1	Explore mutual expectations with athletes in an honest and open manner, giving due consideration to the age and experience of individuals.

By sharing with athletes the parts of your code of ethics that relate to boundaries, you can clarify your expectations for your own behavior as well as that of athletes.

Ask athletes, “What do these parts of the code of ethics mean to you?” Ask for specific examples of what behaviors would be appropriate or inappropriate. Discuss openly how you see your own behavior conforming to this code and what your expectations are of athletes in the same areas.

Setting and maintaining safe and healthy boundaries protect both coach and athlete in a number of ways. By discussing boundary issues with team members, coaches not only help to build healthy relationships with their athletes, they also set a positive tone for working together in a relationship that is built on trust.

*To be betrayed under conditions of trust destroys trust itself.*²¹

.. When Talking with Athletes

Coaches spend a lot of time talking with athletes. The words they use and how they use them indicate their values about power. The challenge in using language appropriately is to focus on effective, positive, and power-smart communication.

Assertive communication is using power positively. It is based on an “I’m OK, you’re OK” stance and focuses on an acceptable outcome for everyone involved. Not all assertive communication ends up with all parties winning their point of view, but it should result in all parties feeling that they have been heard and that the outcome is fair.

Understanding power is an essential element in effective communication. Each of the 20 communication strategies in this chapter is built on power-smart communication that benefits both coaches and athletes in the following three ways:

- **encourages straight talk:** builds focused, clear, and positive communication that is not manipulative
- **builds partnerships:** develops relationships with athletes that are based on interdependence and self-reliance rather than dependence
- **focuses on empowerment:** encourages individuals and teams to take responsibility for how they practise and perform by building a strong sense of personal power and confidence.

Becoming an excellent communicator is a lifelong task of striving for improvement—trying things out and then reflecting on what worked and what didn’t.

When you work at it, it works.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Read the initial statement in each communication strategy, thinking about what you do as a coach. Then put a check (✓) beside the level of priority you will give this communication strategy in the future.

Praise cleanly

I give positive feedback cleanly. I avoid giving it in conjunction with negative remarks, sarcasm, or teasing, e.g. “Not bad, Cathy—I guess you’re finally doing what I have been telling you,” or “That was OK. You know I’ll never give you a perfect score.”

A mixed message creates anxiety and wastes time while the person who received it tries to figure out exactly what the person who sent it really meant. When you want to praise an athlete, be clearly positive so that she doesn’t receive a mixed message, e.g. “Good stuff, Cathy, you really came through on that one,” or “Nice work—best I’ve seen so far.”

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Critique cleanly

I give critical feedback cleanly. I don’t make feedback “sandwiches” (a positive statement, then the negative filling, then a positive statement again) for athletes when I want to provide critical feedback about something they are doing.

Most athletes know when someone is feeding them a feedback sandwich, so they discard the bread and only pay attention to the filling, which leaves a bad taste in their mouth. When you want an athlete to change something she is doing, there are several other approaches that you can use:

- Be direct: “That didn’t seem to work too well, how about trying this ... ” or “Here are your results over the past two weeks; looks like you need a little more effort on turns.”
- Ask the athlete, “What did you think of that?”, and then get her to comment on changes she could make; add your ideas during the conversation that follows.
- Build a positive atmosphere through fair, ongoing feedback so that athletes expect you to praise and critique cleanly. They won’t be tempted to second-guess what you really mean or take behavioral criticism personally.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Avoid blackmail and threats

I avoid blackmail and threats. I don't threaten or bribe athletes, e.g. "Do it now or you know the consequences," or "Improve your output or you're off the team."

Threats and blackmail are manipulative and rarely work over the long term. By communicating through more positive approaches that build personal responsibility on the part of athletes, coaches can help athletes to reflect on and take responsibility for their actions, e.g. "You don't look too enthusiastic today, what's going on?" or "Your journal indicates a real drop in effort over the last three weeks. Do we need to talk? When is a good time for you?"

Priority: low medium high

Shed the shoulds

I avoid constantly using the "should" word, e.g. "You should work harder," or "You should get here earlier," or "You should lighten up."

Constant moral statements about what a person "ought to" do become a one-way negative commentary that has a preachy tone.

Athletes are more likely to change behaviors they name and recognize themselves as being detrimental to their success. Coaches will get better results by confronting athletes directly, e.g. "Are you feeling OK these days? You don't seem as enthusiastic," or "Are you having problems with transportation? This is the third practice you've been late for this week," or "You seem down lately—what's happening?"

Priority: low medium high

Calculate air time

I am sensitive to how much time I spend talking in meetings with athletes, compared with how much time is available for them to speak. I make sure that I don't use up more than 20 per cent of the total time available.

At major competitions our swimming coach always lectures us for 20 minutes using the same old ideas he always throws at us. He's a nice guy so we don't say anything, but it's a real downer.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

There is a direct positive relationship between the amount of time people have to talk about issues in a group they belong to and how much ownership they feel for that issue and group. Structure team meetings so that athletes have time to ask questions, raise issues, discuss concerns, and act as chairpersons.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Let athletes choose the time and place

When I want to discuss sensitive issues with athletes, I give them an opportunity to pick a time and place that is comfortable for them rather than what is convenient for me, e.g. “I want to spend some time this week talking about the effects of cliques on how we function during competitions. Think about where and when you want to do this. Give yourselves at least a day or so before we meet to think about what you want to say so that you’re prepared for the meeting. You can talk about this amongst yourselves and let me know tomorrow what you decide.”

By giving athletes the power to select the time and place, you are telling them you want to make sure they feel comfortable during the discussions. You are also encouraging them to take responsibility for the outcome.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Refuse possession

I avoid references to possession when discussing team members, e.g. “My girls are in better shape than yours,” or “My boys are faster than yours,” or “I developed that athlete.”

Athletes don’t belong to coaches. Most athletes learn best in relationships where power is shared. This sharing encourages them to be responsible, mature, and interdependent with coaches.

Because language reflects how we see the world, it is important to use words appropriately, e.g. “Our team is in great physical condition,” or “We’ve been working hard on sprinting.” Words that indicate possession do not encourage interdependence.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Bye the why

I avoid asking why questions when feelings are running high, athletes have made mistakes, or athletes have had a poor performance, e.g. “Why did you do that?” or “Why did that happen?”

When feelings are running high, it is difficult for an athlete to give a reason or justify why he did something. He may be able to explain how something happened or what he did, but if he is backed into a corner because a reason is demanded, he may feel powerless and just make something up. If you ask a child who is upset *why* she spilled her milk, she will probably say she doesn’t know or lie about it. If you ask her *how* it happened, she is more likely to explain that the milk was near the edge of the table and her elbow knocked it over.

Coaches who ask, “How did that happen?” or “What did you think about that?” are more likely to get accurate and truthful responses in difficult situations than those who ask *why*. Asking *how* avoids intimidating athletes and enables them to provide thoughtful answers.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Avoid justification through position

I avoid answering questions or justifying my actions based solely on my position as a coach, e.g. “I’m the coach and you’ll do what I say because I’m telling you to do it.”

If you are at a point where you are constantly using positional power to get athletes to cooperate, there can’t be much personal discipline or responsibility among team members. Coaches will get better long-term results and build maturity in athletes if they consider the athletes’ situation and focus on positive power through shared goals and an emphasis on talent and skill, e.g. “This is our strategy for achieving our goals; we need to build tactical skills if we want to take this divisional championship; here’s where we need your input.”

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Ban the blame

I avoid using my power to fix blame when things go wrong, e.g. “There were two people out of sync today who lost the game for us: Peter and Phil. Do that again and you’re benched.”

Instead of blaming, the coach and players can empower themselves by asking, “What’s one thing we did well today and one thing to need to improve?” or “That didn’t go well—what can we work on next week?” By getting athletes to discuss and address what went wrong, the coach is also enabling them to build ownership for what they do well, where they need to improve, and how they can change what went wrong.

Priority: low medium high

Take it step by step

I validate athletes’ efforts to change by looking for incremental improvements and commenting on them, e.g. “That’s a solid step forward for your goal shooting,” or “You’re moving in the right direction—the rest will come. Keep at it.”

By looking for small improvements and commenting on them, coaches confirm athletes’ abilities to improve skills, thus building their sense of personal power. Positive feedback must be based on legitimate improvements that the athlete also recognizes as significant.

Priority: low medium high

When defensive, ask a question

When I feel defensive, I don’t make a statement; I ask a question to get more information; e.g. when an athlete attacks a practice setup I don’t tell her to do it just because I set it up. Instead, I ask, “So you don’t think this setup will work for you?” or “Hey—what’s all this about?” or “What would you like to change?”

When you feel defensive and make a strong statement—“I’m the coach and that’s why you’re going to do it”—you are closing off discussion and burying the real issue. Is the athlete feeling insecure, or does she want to challenge your competence? Maybe she doesn’t feel the practice is appropriate for her goals. You are using your positional power as a coach to bury dissent.

By asking a question or simply listening, you can identify the real issue and address it before it escalates and involves the whole team. When you take this approach, you are treating the athlete as a partner in a team effort—someone who shares responsibility with you in making the team successful.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Listen to differences

When an athlete with an alternative view is being put down or his ideas are being dismissed, I ensure that this point of view is heard and considered, e.g. “Peter just said something that we didn’t pick up; let’s go back and listen again,” or “I want to hear some other ideas about this—Sandra, what were you just saying?” or “Before we go on, let’s go back and think about what Julie said.”

When athletes see that the coach listens to and respects alternative points of view, they become aware that when they have less accepted views they will be listened to as well. They discover that the coach will not listen only to the majority but will entertain other views as well.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Celebrate gifts

I encourage athletes to recognize and appreciate the different gifts that each of them brings to our team, e.g. talent, power, interpersonal skills.

By naming and recognizing the contributions each team member makes, coaches build mutual respect and confidence and an understanding of synergy—how the whole is greater than the sum of the individuals involved.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Be sensitive to interruptions

I avoid interrupting others and I teach athletes about the meaning of interruptions, e.g. “Sorry, I interrupted you—what were you saying?” or “Josée, you interrupted Karen, and I want to hear what she thinks.”

Interrupting others can be aggressive behavior and usually involves the misuse of power; e.g. people with more authority and power usually interrupt those with less; men interrupt more than women.²² By encouraging assertive communication practices, coaches can encourage people involved with the team to focus on active listening, thus reducing the number of interruptions.

Priority: low medium high

Information is power—spread it around

I provide athletes and others around me with the information they need to do a good job; I do not withhold or use information as a way to control or increase my own power.

People who work together are sensitive to how leaders use information. They know when information is used to control or manipulate others and they resent it. Coaches who share information freely develop more respect and personal power over the long term than those who hoard it or use it for their own gain.

Priority: low medium high

Listen for exchange times

I notice the different exchange times among athletes on our team and ensure that those with longer exchange times have opportunities to talk during group discussions, e.g. “Sarah, I think you were going to say something there but you didn’t quite make it in time. What were you thinking about?”

Exchange time is the length of the silence between one person speaking and another replying. People with very short exchange times often dominate conversations; when someone has just finished a sentence, they then jump in immediately with their ideas. People with longer exchange times are often left out of conversations and are thought to be passive or uninterested. Coaches who notice exchange times can ensure a more equal distribution of air time among all athletes on a team. Team members will also benefit from learning how jumping in quickly in conversations can be an aggressive use of personal power.

Priority: low medium high

Read body language

I notice and comment on athletes' body language as a regular part of communicating with team members, e.g. "You're looking bright-eyed this morning," or "What's that slouch about?" or "Are you tired? Your shoulders are drooping," or "I notice you turned away when André was making his point—do you disagree with what he was saying?"

Body language speaks as loud as or louder than words and is often used by athletes when they can't find the words or energy to communicate what they want to say. By picking up on body language on a regular basis, coaches can recognize issues when they are just starting or enable an athlete to begin to talk about something that is difficult to describe.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Legitimize different perceptions and experiences

I recognize that athletes attending the same event or competition will have widely different perceptions and experiences of that event. I validate those differences when talking to them, e.g. "What's one thing you liked about the event and one thing you didn't like?" or "We've heard one point of view, now let's hear from someone who had a different experience," or "I'm collecting some feedback on the billeting—how did you find it?"

Perception is reality for most of us. Coaches who check into and validate their athletes' perceptions of events are sharing the power of who defines experiences. By respecting athletes' points of view about a situation, coaches are encouraging them to reflect on their experiences and make judgments about them, thus building a partnership rather than a dependency.²³

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Plant positive metaphors

I know the value of positive images in motivating athletes to be the best they can be and I use them thoughtfully throughout the season, e.g. "This is the year of the big climb and we're three-quarters of the way there," or "Practise your individual positive images today and before your events tomorrow."

Positive metaphors plant positive images and thoughts, which build positive reactions, which enable positive self-esteem and result in positive actions.

Priority: *low* *medium* *high*

Power and Ethics in Coaching

Planning for change

Review your responses to the list of 20 communication strategies and record below with a check (✓) how you rated them. Make a copy of this page and post it where you will see it often.

Communication Strategy	Priority		
1. Praise cleanly	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Critique cleanly	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Avoid blackmail and threats	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Shed the shoulds	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Calculate air time	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Let athletes choose the time and place	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Refuse possession	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Bye the why	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
9. Avoid justification through position	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Ban the blame	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Take it step by step	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
12. When defensive, ask a question	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
13. Listen to differences	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
14. Celebrate gifts	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
15. Be sensitive to interruptions	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
16. Information is power—spread it around	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
17. Listen for exchange times	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
18. Read body language	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
19. Legitimize different perceptions and experiences	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>
20. Plant positive metaphors	low <input type="checkbox"/>	medium <input type="checkbox"/>	high <input type="checkbox"/>

Unit III: Using Power Positively

- Note what you want to *stop* doing.

- Note what you want to *continue* doing.

- Note what you want to *start* doing.

- List the steps you will take to make a change in your behavior.

.. Through Asking Questions

Raising and addressing important questions helps build a positive and interdependent relationship among coaches, athletes, and others in sport as they learn and grow together through their experiences. Effective questioning eventually leads to effective critical thinking—a way of thinking that examines how and why things are done the way they are.

Critical thinking is

- a productive and positive activity
- a process and not an outcome
- triggered by positive as well as negative events
- emotive as well as rational.

Learning occurs in two forms; single-loop and double-loop. Single-loop learning asks a one-dimensional question to elicit a one-dimensional answer. My favorite example is a thermostat, which measures ambient temperature against a standard setting and turns the heat source on or off accordingly.

Double-loop learning takes an additional step or, more often than not, several additional steps. It turns the question back on the questioner. It asks what the media call follow-ups. In the case of the thermostat, double-loop learning would wonder whether the current setting was actually the most effective temperature at which to keep the room and, if so, whether the present heat source was the most effective means of achieving it. A double-loop process might also ask why the current setting was chosen in the first place. In other words, double-loop learning asks questions not only about objective facts but also about the reasons and motives behind those facts.²⁴

Through critical thinking, coaches stimulate themselves and their athletes to learn together. They encourage athletes to explore their experiences, ideas, assumptions, and beliefs about sport as a way to discover their own “truth.”

Commitment to the truth does not mean seeking the “Truth,” the absolute final word or ultimate cause. Rather, it means a relentless willingness to root out the ways we limit or deceive ourselves from seeing what is, and to continually challenge our theories of why things are the way they are. It means continually broadening our awareness, just as the great athlete with extraordinary peripheral vision keeps trying to “see more of the playing field.”²⁵

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Coaching happens in a number of ways and in a variety of situations. There is potential for raising questions when talking in a dressing room or corridor, through sharing articles and newsletters, by using bulletin boards, and in many other formal and informal settings.

*Come on now, we're going to go build a mirror factory first and put out nothing but mirrors for the next year and take a long look in them.*²⁶

Coaches can encourage athletes to think about their involvement in sport

- by suggesting that athletes keep a journal about their experiences and providing time at the end of practice for them to complete journal entries, e.g. describing situations and reactions; recording questions, decisions and feelings; describing important incidents and tracing effects on themselves and others; creating plans for dealing with difficult situations; and clarifying personal challenges
- by holding team meetings at important points in the season, such as beginnings and endings of seasons and competitions, or to address emerging issues, conflicts, and ethical questions, e.g. to explore how subgroups on the team support or detract from team spirit
- by canvassing athletes about their expectations for being involved with the team, e.g. through a questionnaire filled out at the beginning of the season and then re-examined later in the season to see whether expectations are being met
- by creating learning opportunities where athletes can explore and share ideas and judgments with members of other teams or participants in other sports, e.g. downhill skiers could practise with stock car racers to get a sense of managing speed and turns
- by exploring personal judgments in the light of others' experiences and opinions, e.g. a series of "what would you do if ..." questions that are answered by athletes and coaches and then discussed.

The skill of asking questions

Asking questions is a skill acquired over time and with experience. The following tips are simple reminders for coaches and athletes when asking and answering questions.²⁷ They are designed to reduce the inhibiting aspects of the power imbalance in coach-athlete discussions and thus focus on power-to.

- Ask open-ended questions, i.e. questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no.
- Be clear about whether the activity or discussion is confidential and who will be informed about what was said or decided.
- Begin with questions that people are likely to be able to answer, e.g. opinions or ideas, so that you can build on their success before moving on to more difficult questions.
- Begin with low-risk questions that are less confrontational and require less self-disclosure before moving toward higher-risk questions.

- When facilitating discussions, encourage others to present a different point of view, e.g. “Let’s hear another perspective so that we don’t get caught up in just one view,” or “What are some other options here?”
- Probe for answers when you don’t understand a question, e.g. “I’m not sure I understand completely, can you think of an example?” or “Keep going on this; I need to hear more to understand what you’re saying.”
- Build a bridge or use a linking sentence when introducing sensitive questions, e.g. “One of the first characteristics mentioned in descriptions of healthy and well-functioning teams is that there is conflict among team members. Today I want to discuss the ways we are successful in dealing with conflict and where our challenges are. So let’s begin: What are the first words that come to mind to describe how we deal with conflict as a team?”
- Use language that your athletes will find comfortable.
- Be aware of an athlete’s stage of development when asking questions. How mature is the athlete? What are the athlete’s goals?
- Support others around you who ask reflective questions, e.g. “Nice question” or “These are important questions—they may make us feel uncomfortable but that’s probably a sign that we should be thinking about this.”
- Ask questions that test where athletes stand on topics, e.g. “What does that sound like to you?” or “Does this seem like a sensible approach?” or “How important is this issue to you?”

Questions for the beginning of a season

Coaches have an important opportunity at the start of a season to set norms for how they will interact with athletes. Asking questions and listening well is a good beginning. Questions may be asked in small group discussions, interviews, team meetings, informal chats, or surveys—whatever works best in your situation.

Questions for athletes

- What is one skill you do well in this sport?
- What is one skill you would like to improve in this sport?
- What do you like most about practising?
- What do you like least about practising?
- What do you like most about competition?

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- What do you like least about competition?
- What is your top athletic goal for your participation in this sport?
- How would you describe the support of your family for your participation in this sport?
- What is one thing that other members of this team probably don't know about you (that you would be comfortable about them knowing)?
- Who are your role models in sport? Why are these individuals role models for you?
- What do you do in your leisure time?

Questions for teams

- What can you contribute to this team?
- What would you like to get from this team?
- If you were the coach of this team, what is one rule you would make sure everyone followed?
- What activities other than this sport do you participate in during an average week? What is your time and energy commitment to this club? Do you have the time to give the club the commitment required to do your best? Do your other activities support the kind of training and competition that this sport requires?
- People often talk about the rights and responsibilities of athletes and coaches. What rights do you think athletes have as members of a team? What rights do you think coaches have as team leaders? What responsibilities do you think athletes have as members of a team? What responsibilities do you think coaches have as team leaders?
- Boundaries are limits that enable safe and healthy relationships and may be physical, psychological, social, or sexual. These limits define what coaches can and can't do in their relationships with athletes. What boundaries do you want for coach–athlete relationships on this team?

Questions about coaching

- What are the top three skills that you want in your coach?
- What are the top three characteristics you want in your coach?
- If you were coaching this team, how would you make sure that everyone was treated fairly?

- If you were going to write a code of ethics for coaches, what would be your top three priorities to include in the code?
- If you were the coach, what three rules would you insist be obeyed by everyone on the team?
- Name a leader whom you admire. What outstanding characteristics does this leader have?

General questions

- Look ahead to the end of this season. What would make this a successful season for you?
- What is the best thing that could happen for you this year as a member of this team?
- What is the worst thing that could happen for you this year as a member of this team?
- What does the expression *fair play* mean to you?
- What are your physical strengths with respect to this sport?
- What are your psychological strengths with respect to this sport?
- What are your physical weaknesses with respect to this sport?
- What are your psychological weaknesses with respect to this sport?
- How would you describe your diet?
- Are you happy with your current fitness level?
- How long have you been playing this sport?
- How long do you intend to play this sport?
- Do you have an interest in coaching this sport eventually? Why or why not?

Questions for a personal journal

Keeping a personal journal during the season can encourage reflection and thoughtfulness. In addition to their daily logs, athletes will benefit from considering some of the following questions:

- What's one good thing that happened today?
- What's one not-so-good thing that happened today?
- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor, 5 = excellent) how would you describe today? What made you pick that number? Is this the number you usually pick to describe your days or do the numbers vary? Do you want to change this number for tomorrow? What could you do to change this number for tomorrow?

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- What are the first words that come to mind to describe how you felt physically today?
- What are the first words that come to mind to describe how you felt emotionally today?
- What is one thing that stood out for you during practice today?
- What is one thing you would change about today's workout, if you could?
- What are you going to focus on during your next three practices?
- What did you think about during today's practice? Did your thoughts help or hinder your participation and focus?
- What is one thing you can learn from another athlete on this team? How will you learn this?
- What happens during training that is fun for you?
- How can you help make training enjoyable? For yourself? For the whole team?
- How are we doing as a team in maintaining healthy boundaries?
- Do you see any ethical issues emerging?

Questions for the end of a season

Hindsight takes reflection to become 20/20. The following questions encourage 20/20 hindsight:

Questions for athletes

- What did you like most about being on this team?
- What did you like least about being on this team?
- What benefits did you experience as a result of being on this team?
- What did you contribute to this team?
- What were your goals at the beginning of the season?
- How successful were you in achieving these goals?
- Do you feel any different about yourself as an athlete after participating with us this season?

Questions for a team

- What do you think this team was best at?
- What do you think this team was worst at?
- How did your teammates contribute to your experiences this season? What did they contribute that both helped you and hindered you in having a successful and enjoyable season?

Questions about coaching

- If you were coaching this team next year, what would you change?
- If you were coaching this team next year, what would you keep the same?
- If you were the coach looking back on the season, what is one thing you would do differently that would make a big difference to the team?
- After participating on this team for an entire season, what do you think are the coach's key values or deeply held beliefs?

General questions

- What outside influences had a negative effect on your experience this season?
- What outside influences had a positive effect on your experience this season?
- What stands out most in your mind about this season?
- If a couple of your best friends were going to come into this club next year, what advice would you give them about how to have a successful and enjoyable season?
- What parts of your involvement with the club did you find the most fun? What happened that made them fun? How can you ensure that you have fun in all of your future sporting activities?
- Given your experiences this season, rate the importance of the following characteristics in ensuring that athletes have a successful season in this sport. Add your own characteristics in the space provided. Put a number next to each item to indicate how you rank its importance.
 - physical conditioning
 - personal motivation
 - physical sport skills

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- mental strategy skills
- ability to collaborate with other team members
- _____
- _____
- _____

Questions for the end of an athlete's career

Athletes and coaches learn a lot through their participation in sport. Both you and they can benefit from sharing this knowledge and passing it on to future participants.

In some organizations, discussions that include questions like the following are often called exit interviews and are valued sources of information and inspiration for those staying on.

- What were you looking for when you first got involved in this sport? Have you found what you were looking for? Has what you were looking for changed while you were involved in this sport?
- What are the positive things that have happened to you as a result of your participation in this sport?
- What are the negative things that have happened to you as a result of your participation in this sport?
- If you could change one thing you did while participating in this sport, what would it be?
- Is there one thing that you experienced while you were participating in this sport that you would want to relive?
- Do you have any regrets about your participation in this sport? What things did you do that you might have done differently? Do you have any bad feelings about others on the team? Do you need to have any closing discussions with people on the team about things that happened?
- What were some highlights for you as an athlete in this sport?
- What did you learn about yourself as a result of your participation in this sport?
- What did you learn about coaching as a result of your participation in this sport?
- Overall, on a scale of 1 to 6 (1 = negative, 6 = very positive) how would you describe your experience as an athlete in this sport? Please explain your choice.

Unit III: Using Power Positively

- Think of other coaches you have had. Pick one who was particularly effective. What was it about that coach that made her or him effective?
- Think of all the athletes you have known during your experiences in sport. Pick one that you especially admire. What is it about that athlete that makes her or him admirable?
- Was it your choice to get involved in this sport or was someone else a key motivator?
- What did you learn as a result of your experiences in this sport that you can apply in other situations?
- Sport creates many pressures for athletes. Describe one positive and one negative pressure that you experienced.
- If you had a child who wanted to get involved in this sport, what would you consider before signing him or her up?
- If you were developing a training program for coaches, what types of courses do you think would be most important?

The first step in moving toward critical thinking is asking more thoughtful questions ... an essential skill in using power positively. How could you use athletes' responses to enhance your coaching?

.. By Thinking and Acting Ethically

Making decisions where right and wrong are at stake has to do with values and ethics. We all have values and make judgments on the basis of them; the challenge for coaches is to strive for better values and high ethical standards.²⁸

Values	Ethical
A value is a deeply held idea of what is desirable, something worth having or believing. For example, winning is a value in competitive sport. It is something that coaches, athletes, and others believe is important; a gold medal is something worth having. Values are important; they motivate what we do.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Of or pertaining to morality or the science of ethics; pertaining to morals2. Dealing with the science of ethics or questions connected with it3. In accordance with the principles of ethics; morally correct, honourable; conforming to the ethics of a profession²⁹

Thinking and acting ethically is easy when you know what is right, when you understand what you want and why, when the situation is clear and when little is at stake. However, simple situations are not always the rule.

- What is right often involves difficult choices, e.g. selecting team members when the right choice is unclear, balancing athletes' interests with the demands of a competitive schedule.
- Situations can be complex and unclear, and your understanding of them may change as you see other points of view.
- The significant level of commitment and the potential rewards demanded by competitive sport raises the stakes for everyone involved.

Being able to think and act ethically is an important and complex leadership skill. When this skill is second nature, coaches use power positively in their relationships with athletes. There is congruence among what they think, say, and do.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

The following assumptions (in shaded boxes) are fundamental to thinking and acting in an ethical manner. The reflective questions offer a practical guide for such ethical behavior.

Living the rule

Thinking and acting in an ethical manner is grounded in a variation or extension of the golden rule.

If we're ethical, we treat others with respect; to do so, we must treat them as persons. Persons must be conceived as like ourselves. Thus to treat others as persons we must treat them as we would want or expect to be treated in like circumstances.³⁰

- Think of yourself as an athlete. What are your top three priorities for how you would like to be treated by a coach?

- As a coach, are these priorities in line with your understanding of how coaches generally relate to athletes?

- As a coach, is this how you treat athletes? Explain.

It is the first step that breaks the rule. This is the big one—after that first time it gets easier and easier and ethics mean less and less.³¹

Providing leadership

Ethical matters require leadership. There is a tendency today to have people discover their own values in the name of personal freedom. Currently, our major institutions are being discredited and the experience and wisdom of our elders downplayed—we often act without reference to how other, more experienced coaches would act.

The fight against evil is the free and lonely decision of individual human beings to commit their lives to an ethical purpose, to being ethical individuals, to choose ethically. That lifestyle is chosen because it is right, not because it leads to rewards or because it avoids punishments. The most noble ethical posture belongs to that person who, risking total isolation, creates an ethical and civilized atmosphere by choosing to be just, fair, moral, and decent.³²

- Think of an experienced coach you consider a leader in sport. What is his or her position on a major issue in sport?

- What is your position on that same issue?

- What opportunities do you have to speak out on issues in sport?

Power and Ethics in Coaching

- How do you take advantage of these opportunities to provide thoughtful ethical leadership?

Leadership is more than an individual phenomenon; it's a cultural thing, embedded in peoples' lives and their cultures. ... If you would be a leader, first lead yourself.³³

- Each of us has a responsibility for leadership; sound ethical practices begin with our own actions as coaches. Give two specific examples of how you provide ethical leadership with athletes.

- In what specific situations have you felt ethically right about what you have done?

- In what specific situations have you felt uncomfortable and wanted to act on better values?

Levels of values

Values are held at different levels. From highest to lowest these are principle, consequence, consensus, and preference.³⁶

Level

1	<p>Principle values are based on what is ethical—something is right because it is proper, moral, duty bound, or simply what ought to be. Values held at this level are often codified into statements of belief, or codes of ethics, or religious systems. Values held at the level of principle involve a strong belief in what is right. Holding to principles can also involve refusing to go along with the will of the majority or doing what is considered rational. For example, most coaches value athlete safety at the level of principle.</p>	Willing
2a	<p>Consequence values are based on a rational analysis of outcomes or consequences. Something is right if, upon reasonable analysis, the results are desirable. For example, many practices in sport are justified on the basis that they produce winners, e.g. “That coach must be doing something right—look at the medal winners she has produced.”</p>	Thinking
2b	<p>Consensus values are based on the opinions or actions of a majority. Something is desirable because it is accepted or desired by more individuals. For example, the language and practices of a number of coaches are shifting to reflect a growing social consensus for gender equity.</p>	
3	<p>Preference values are based on what is enjoyable, likable, or pleasurable—something is good simply because you like it or prefer it over something else. Preference values are very personal and are justified on the basis of feelings. The things people desire at this level are mainly related to indulging themselves, e.g. “She prefers soccer over dance,” or “He prefers to practise before school rather than after school.”</p>	Feeling

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A value may be held at any level, and it is not always an easy task to determine at which level you hold a particular value. For example, respect for individuals can be based

- on principle, or the golden rule
- on reasoning or group norms (consequence or consensus)
- on a preference for respect over disrespect.

Determining levels at which values are held is a personal and subjective activity that involves honest, critical reflection.

Review the three most important coaching values you listed on page 72. At what level do you hold each of these values?

Value

Name the level

Think about other important things that govern your day-to-day activities as a coach, e.g. rules for tournaments, a rationale for determining practice schedules and training routines, gender equity policies, and team strategies. On what level of value are these based?

Governing practice

Level

- Are any of these practices based more on your own personal preferences than on other higher levels? If so, which ones?

Raising or avoiding ethical issues

Not all issues need to be raised to a level of principle, i.e. the level of principles and ethical standards described in the CPCA *Coaching Code of Ethics*. On the other hand, there is a natural tendency to avoid ethical issues. This applies to coaches as well as others in sport.

Coaches and others in sport need to know when to raise ethical issues and when to diffuse or set them aside—knowing this is the art of ethical leadership. Conflicts between values held at the level of principle are difficult, if not impossible, to resolve; this type of value conflict is the defining feature of an ethical dilemma.

The toughest ethical issues have no right or wrong, no black or white, but shades of grey. Every choice has costs. This is the definition of an ethical dilemma. Not only is there no right or wrong, but coaches in good conscience differ about which is the lesser evil.³⁷

Think about the ethical issues you face in day-to-day coaching; e.g. you suspect strongly that your star player is using steroids, but you have only one game left in a winning season and it's a graduating year for the athlete—you are torn between confronting him or letting the whole thing go.

Describe one of these issues.

Power and Ethics in Coaching

- What values do you hold at the level of principle that can guide you in addressing this ethical issue?

- What other ethical issues are you willing to raise? When?

- What ethical issues do you try to diffuse, i.e. deal with at a lower level? When?

- What ethical issues do you choose to set aside? When?

Building community

There is a need to bring people into an ethical community. Thinking about values and acting ethically involves coaches in building their own community in sport with others with whom they can reach agreement about standards of rightness.

Acting ethically is part of being a good community member; it also involves taking action to build a community of coaches. This is particularly important in coaching because of the competitive nature of sport and its inherent tendency to see others as opponents. The coach who goes it alone, against all opposition, is seen by some as a hero, by others as a villain.

- Do you see yourself as part of a community of coaches?

Yes No Explain.

- What do you or could you do to build an ethical community in sport?

Being ethically responsible involves being able to respond to and accommodate others' ideas and concerns and then to act on behalf of the agreements you can reach with them.

Coaches must reason together to reach agreement; this requires a deep awareness of others' situations, concern for all involved, and the ability to accommodate different views.

In a practical way, applying a code of ethics involves a willingness and ability to become involved in the lives of others in sport. Thinking about ethics is something you do in relationship with others; you need to talk with others, hear their views, and consider their interests in the overall context of the situation.

- Do you share your concerns about ethics with others in your sport?

- How often do you listen and act on others' concerns about ethics in sport?

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Learning what is acceptable

A precondition for making ethical choices and taking responsible action in sport is that coaches must have access to information and discussions about the situations where they are to act.

Coaches must be aware of and understand the cultural norms of their sport and how these evolve. For example, there are accepted ways to organize and run practices and competitions. Learning and living with what is acceptable is an ongoing process.

Right action is something people learn by reflecting on these norms and their experiences with others in the context of better values. Coaches need to practise using a code of ethics just as they need to practise their coaching skills.

- How well do you understand cultural norms in your sport? Do you always agree with these norms? Explain.

- How often do you consciously think through what you are doing from an ethical perspective?

- Are there ways you can help others to grow ethically by initiating opportunities for discussing ethical concerns?

Feeling in control

To change the way you do things, you must see yourself as having some control over what you do.

You are more likely to act ethically if you see yourself as having some control or responsibility in situations involving questionable activities. For example, coaches who feel that they are drawn into questionable activities, such as encouraging fighting in hockey or instructing their players to deliberately hurt an opponent in rugby “because this is how the game is played,” are less likely to change than coaches who do not feel compelled to do what others do.

- What are some accepted activities in your sport that may be questionable?

- In what situations involving questionable activities have you felt in control (responsible) or not in control (not responsible) as a coach?

- Did your feeling of being in control (responsible) or not being in control (not responsible) affect what you did in these situations?

Yes No Explain.

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Making changes

It is very difficult to make substantial and permanent changes in a person’s basic characteristics or fundamental style. ... Managers can help employees identify their “default modes” or deeply ingrained personal traits including those that have been working against them. Managers can then help the employee recruit and use at least one “anchor”—someone who will help him or her stay on track.³⁸

Having a coaching mentor or anchor is one way to support yourself in changing behavior. The first step is to identify what you want to change; the second step is to find a coaching colleague who can be your anchor and keep you focused on those changes. The third step is to approach your anchor and involve that person in enabling you to change.³⁹

- Step one: Review your responses to the questions in this section. What are your top two priorities for change?

- Step two: Which of your coaching colleagues do you trust as having your best interests in mind (someone who knows you well and will understand what you want to do to become more effective)?

- Step three: When will you approach your anchor to discuss working with him or her in making change? How will you work with that person as your anchor throughout this change process? Be specific about how your anchor can support you.

.. Through Applying a Code of Ethics

The Canadian Professional Coaches Association (CPCA) *Coaching Code of Ethics*⁴⁰ is a guide to thinking and acting ethically. This section provides a context and a four-step process for applying this code to situations in sport. It is a guide to better coaching values—values that support the positive use of power in sport.

Ethical decision-making may be straightforward and simple; more often it is complex and difficult. The following four basic steps offer a guide to both types of situations:

1. Understand the situation.
2. Select principles and key words.
3. Apply the code.
4. Address dilemmas.

For the simple situations, use the steps to review and confirm your original judgment. For more difficult ones, where ethical principles conflict, use the steps to guide your thinking.

1. Understanding the situation

Go to where the action is—the realities of individual lives. Use the chart on the next page to answer the following questions.

What happened? Describe in point form *your* understanding of the situation, e.g. setting, specific incidents, who was involved, what actions occurred, etc. Describe *another person's* understanding—someone who needs to be considered in arriving at a decision in this case. Accurately describing others' views involves asking questions, listening carefully, and talking about the situation as clearly as you can—otherwise you may make assumptions that will escalate the conflict. Cross-check your information to ensure its accuracy whenever possible. Although the form on the next page has room for only two understandings, it is important to gather as many views of the situation as are necessary.

Other relevant information? What other information is relevant to understanding what happened, e.g. previous related incidents, backgrounds of those involved, policy guidelines, sport rules, accepted practices in the sport.

Feelings involved? How did the people involved feel about what happened? How do they feel now? Do they feel satisfied, justified, angry, used, hurt, or betrayed?

Goals? What do the people involved hope to gain from their actions?

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	Person 1	Person 2
What happened?		
Other relevant information?		
Feelings involved?		
Goals?		

2. Selecting principles and key words

Ethical behavior is based on principles and ethical standards as well as what people do in specific situations.

Relevant ethical standards. Review your understanding of the situation and read through the chart of key words below. This chart is a one-page summary of the CPCA *Coaching Code of Ethics*. Circle the ethical standards that are relevant to the situation. At this stage in your analysis it is important to highlight all the standards that apply. Use the code for further explanation of each item.

I. Respect for participants	II. Responsible coaching	III. Integrity in relationships	IV. Honoring sport
Respect (1.1–1.5)	Professional training (2.1–2.2)	Honesty (3.1–3.4)	Spirit of sport (4.1–4.2)
Rights (1.6–1.7)	Self knowledge (2.3–2.4)	Sincerity (3.5–3.6)	Respect for the rules (4.3–4.4)
Equity (1.8–1.11)	Beneficence (2.5)	Honor (3.7–3.8)	Respect for officials and other coaches (4.5–4.6)
Empowerment (1.12–1.14)	Coaching limits (2.6–2.8)	Conflict of interest (3.9–3.11)	Drug-free sport (4.7–4.9)
Informed participation (1.15–1.17)	Athlete’s interest (2.9–2.14)	Self-awareness (3.12–3.13)	Positive role model (4.10–4.11)
Confidentiality (1.18–1.22)	Safety (2.15–2.16)		Responsibility to coaching (4.12–4.16)
Mutual support (1.23)	Sexual relationships (2.17–2.18)		
	Colleagues (2.19–2.22)		

Power and Ethics in Coaching

3. Applying the code

Key words or ethical standards. For each item circled on the previous page, jot down the key words and main points in each ethical standard in the code.

Implications for those involved. Jot down the implications of each standard for each person involved in the situation. Jot down any implications that may not be covered by the ethical standards in the code.

Key words or ethical standards

Implications for those involved

4. Addressing dilemmas

What to choose. An ethical dilemma ultimately demands a choice between two conflicting alternatives. Use a process of elimination to reduce your list of implications to one or more pairs of conflicting actions for each participant in the situation.

“For this participant there is a choice between ... ”

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<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Choices do not need to be made so that one person wins and the other loses. Most situations can involve win-win solutions. Examine each situation for actions that benefit everyone involved. If this is not possible, choose the alternative with the least harm.

Taking action. Suggest an appropriate action for each participant.

“Given this situation, my options and the code, I ought to ... ”

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In Conclusion

The CPCA *Coaching Code of Ethics* is an important guide to right action in sport through its description of key coaching values. It is up to individual coaches to clarify and act on these values in their day-to-day work with athletes and others in sport.

Acting ethically can involve many conflicts. Being an ethical coach means acting within the coaching community and finding agreement with others in similar situations. At the same time, acting ethically may mean taking a leadership role in disagreeing with what other members of your community think and want.

Discussions of ethics can often sound like one person preaching to another. As a result, raising ethics can be risky. People who try may be ignored or dismissed. As one writer put it, ethics is often seen as a stern old woman, sitting on her front porch, her lips pursed. Coaches don't invite her to the games.

At the same time, however, there is a need for coaches to invite ethics to the games by seeing the code as a working, living guide to action. Coaches need to acknowledge and celebrate the powerful ethical underpinnings of coaching and through their integrity, honor, and tact strive to create a sports community based on better values—values that support the positive use of power in sport.

Appendix



Canadian
Professional
Coaches
Association

Association
canadienne des
entraîneurs
professionnels

CPCA

Coaching Code of Ethics

Principles and Ethical Standards



Coaching
Association
of Canada

CPCA is the professional arm of the
Coaching Association of Canada

Acknowledgments

The *Coaching Code of Ethics* is the result of the work of many people and organizations. The CPCA would like to thank

- Paul Tomlinson and Dorothy Strachan of Strachan•Tomlinson for their research, writing, and their facilitation of the Ethics Workshop.
- The Coaching Ethics Advisory Committee:

Marty Hall
Andy Higgins
Tom Kinsman
Pierre Lamarche
Guy Lavoie
Marion Lay
Paul Melia
Al Morrow
Ann Peel
Mary Ann Reeves
Ken Shields
Dana Sinclair
Trevor Tiffany

- The many, many associations, both within and outside of sport, that sent us their Codes of Ethics for use in our research.
- The many people involved in formulating the original Coaching Code of Ethics.
- Heather Ebbs for an excellent copy edit.

Introduction

This section of the code of ethics is organized around four ethical principles identified during a workshop for Coaching Ethics Advisory Committee members.

I.	Respect for Participants	93
II.	Responsible Coaching	97
III.	Integrity in Relationships	101
IV.	Honoring Sport	103

Each principle is followed by a brief description and a list of ethical standards illustrating how that principle applies to the activities of coaches. These standards are grouped by key words that are an important part of the overall principle.¹

1. The approach, structure, and contents of this code were inspired by the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, 1991*. For a detailed guide to this code and how it was developed, see Carole Sinclair and Jean Pettifor, editors, *Companion Manual to the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, 1991* (Chelsea, Que: Canadian Psychological Association, 1992). Many of the ideas for ethical standards were drawn from numerous other codes. The most significant of these were developed by the Association québécois des entraîneurs professionnels en sport, The British Institute of Sport Coaches, and Promotion Plus, Women In Coaching Committee, British Columbia.

I. Respect for Participants

The principle of *respect² for participants³* challenges coaches to act in a manner respectful of the dignity⁴ of all participants in sport. Fundamental to this principle is the basic assumption that each person has value and is worthy of respect.

Acting with *respect for participants* means that coaches

- i. do not make some participants more or less worthy⁵ as persons than others on the basis of gender, race, place of origin, athletic potential, color, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, marital status, age, or any other conditions⁶
- ii. have a responsibility to respect and promote the rights of all participants. This is accomplished by establishing and following procedures for confidentiality (right to privacy); informed participation and shared decision-making (right to self-determination—athletes’ rights); and fair and reasonable treatment (right to procedural fairness). Coaches have a special responsibility to respect and promote the rights of participants who are in vulnerable or dependent positions and less able to protect their own rights
- iii. interact with others in a manner that enables all participants in sport to maintain their dignity
- iv. build mutual support among fellow coaches, officials, and athletes and their family members.

In being faithful to the principle of *respect for participants*, coaches would adhere to the following ethical standards:

Key Words

Respect

Ethical Standards

- 1.1 Treat all participants in sport with respect at all times.
- 1.2 Provide feedback to athletes and other participants in a caring manner that is sensitive to their needs, e.g. focus criticism on the performance rather than on the athlete.

2. Respect: consideration of the dignity of others; courteous regard.
3. Participants: those taking part in sport, e.g. athletes and their family members, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators.
4. Dignity: self-respect; self-worth.
5. Worthy: having worth, value, or merit; deserving praise; valuable; noble; estimable; virtuous; legitimate.
6. Condition: a provision or stipulation called for as a requirement for participation or competition; a prerequisite; anything that modifies or restricts the nature of participation.

Key Words

Ethical Standards

- 1.3 Respect the areas of expertise, experience, and insights of others in sport by considering carefully their opinions.
- 1.4 Do not engage publicly (e.g. statements, conversations, jokes, presentations, media reports) in demeaning descriptions of others in sport.
- 1.5 Be discreet⁷ in non-public conversations about athletes, coaches, or other participants in sport.
- Rights*
- 1.6 Recognize athletes' right to consult with other coaches and advisers.
- 1.7 Respect athletes as autonomous individuals and refrain from intervening inappropriately in personal affairs that are outside the generally accepted jurisdiction of a coach.
- Equity*
- 1.8 Treat all participants equitably within the context of their sporting activities, regardless of gender, race, place of origin, athletic potential, color, sexual orientation, religion, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, and any other condition.
- 1.9 Use language that conveys respect for the dignity of others (e.g. gender-neutral terms) in written and verbal communications.
- 1.10 Do not practise, condone, ignore, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of unjust discrimination in sport.
- 1.11 Act to prevent or correct practices that are unjustly discriminatory.
- Empowerment*⁸
- 1.12 Encourage and facilitate participants' abilities to be responsible for their own behavior, performance, and decisions.
- 1.13 Respect as much as possible the opinions and wishes of participants when making decisions that affect them.

7. Discreet: prudent; cautious; wary; careful about what one says or does.

8. Empowerment: the act of enabling or state of being enabled.

Key Words

Ethical Standards

	1.14	Give athletes the opportunity to discuss, contribute to, and agree with proposals for training and for performance standards.
<i>Informed participation</i>	1.15	Provide athletes with the information necessary for them to be meaningfully involved in the decisions that affect them.
	1.16	Communicate and cooperate with family ⁹ members, involving them in appropriate decisions pertaining to an athlete's development.
	1.17	Clarify the nature of coaching services to participants, i.e. athletes, parents, family members, or significant others.
<i>Confidentiality</i>	1.18	Determine, in consultation with athletes and others, what information is confidential.
	1.19	Keep confidential any information about athletes or others gained through coaching activities and believed to be considered confidential by those persons.
	1.20	Share confidential information only with the consent of those requesting confidentiality or in a way that the individual(s) involved cannot be identified.
	1.21	Exercise discretion in recording and communicating information to prevent this information from being interpreted or used to the detriment of others.
	1.22	Clarify and implement measures to protect confidential information, e.g. restricting access to confidential records.
<i>Mutual support</i>	1.23	Encourage a climate of mutual support among all participants in sport.
<i>Extended responsibility</i>	1.24	Encourage participants to respect one another and to expect respect for their worth as individuals.
	1.25	Keep informed on current issues related to respect for participants, e.g. gender equity.

9. Family: those persons who are identified by an athlete as providing familial support, whether or not they are biologically related.

II. Responsible Coaching

The principle of *responsible coaching* carries the basic ethical expectation that the activities of coaches will benefit society in general and participants in particular and will do no harm. Fundamental to the implementation of this principle is the notion of competence—responsible coaching (maximizing benefits and minimizing risks to participants) is performed by coaches who are “well prepared and current”¹⁰ in their discipline.

In addition, *responsible coaching* means that coaches

- i. act in the best interest of the athlete’s development as a whole person
- ii. recognize the power inherent in the position of coach
- iii. are aware of their personal values and how these affect their practice as coaches
- iv. acknowledge the limitations of their discipline
- v. accept the responsibility to work with other coaches and professionals in sport.

In being faithful to the principle of *responsible coaching*, coaches would adhere to the following ethical standards:

Key Words

Ethical Standards

Professional

2.1 Be responsible for achieving a high level of professional training competence through appropriate training.

2.2 Keep current with relevant information (knowledge), coaching and teaching skills and research through personal learning projects, discussions with colleagues, workshops, courses, conferences, etc. to ensure that coaching services benefit and do not harm others.

Self knowledge

2.3 Evaluate how personal experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, individual differences, and stresses influence actions as coaches and integrate this awareness into all efforts to benefit and not harm others.

10. *Integrity Makes True Champions: The Coaching Code of Ethics* (Gloucester, Ont.: Coaching Association of Canada, Canadian Association of National Coaches, 1993).

Key Words

Ethical Standards

	2.4	Engage in self-care activities that help to avoid conditions (e.g. burnout, addictions) that could result in impaired judgment and interfere with the ability to benefit and not harm others.
<i>Beneficence</i> ¹¹	2.5	Coach in a way that benefits athletes, removes harm, and acts consistently for the good of the athlete, keeping in mind that the same training, skills, and powers that coaches use to produce benefits for athletes are also capable of producing harm.
<i>Coaching limits</i>	2.6	Take the limits of knowledge and capacity into account in coaching practice; in particular, do not assume responsibilities if insufficiently prepared for them.
	2.7	Recognize and accept when it is appropriate to refer athletes to other coaches or sport specialists.
	2.8	Refrain from working in unsafe or inappropriate situations that significantly compromise the quality of coaching services and the health and safety of athletes.
<i>Athlete's interest</i>	2.9	Ensure that activities are suitable for the age, experience, ability, and physical and psychological conditions of athletes.
	2.10	Prepare athletes systematically and progressively, using appropriate time frames and monitoring physical and psychological adjustments.
	2.11	Refrain from using training methods or techniques that may harm athletes; monitor innovative approaches with care.
	2.12	Be aware of significant pressures in athletes' lives, e.g. school, family, and financial pressures, and coach in a manner that fosters positive life experiences.

11. Beneficence: an ideal or principle of conduct that requires us to act in a way that benefits others. Such benefit might take the form of preventing or removing harm, or acting directly to produce a good. The same training, skills, and powers coaches use to produce benefits are also capable of producing harm.

Key Words

Ethical Standards

- 2.13 Consider athletes' future health and well-being as foremost when making decisions about an injured athlete's ability to continue participating.
- 2.14 Strive to be fully present, physically and mentally, in the performance of coaching duties.
- Safety*
- 2.15 Ensure that athletes train and perform in suitable and safe settings.
- 2.16 Make athletes aware of their responsibilities for participating safely in sport.
- Sexual relationships*
- 2.17 Be acutely aware of power in coaching relationships and, therefore, avoid sexual intimacy with athletes, both during coaching and during that period following coaching during when imbalance in power could jeopardize effective decision-making.
- 2.18 Abstain from and refuse to tolerate in others all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes either or both of the following:
- i. the use of power or authority in an attempt to coerce another person to engage in or tolerate sexual activity. Such uses include explicit or implicit threats of reprisals for noncompliance or promises of reward for compliance.
 - ii. engaging in deliberate or repeated sexually oriented comments, anecdotes, gestures, or touching, if such behaviors
 - a. are offensive and unwelcome
 - b. create an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working environment
 - c. can be expected to be harmful to the recipient.

Key Words*Colleagues***Ethical Standards**

- 2.19 Act toward other coaches in a manner characterized by courtesy, good faith, and respect.
- 2.20 Collaborate¹² with other coaches and colleagues from related disciplines.
- 2.21 Communicate and cooperate with health practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of athletes' health-related needs.
- 2.22 Use discretion for resolving disputes with colleagues, e.g. deal with differences of opinion constructively on a personal basis and refer more serious disputes to appropriate bodies.

*Extended
responsibility*

- 2.23 Encourage others, when appropriate, to coach responsibly.
- 2.24 Recognize and address harmful personal practices of others in sport, e.g. drug and alcohol addiction, physical and mental abuse, misuse of power.
- 2.25 Assume responsibility for the actions of athletes and other supervised individuals with regard to the principle of *responsible coaching*.

12. Collaboration: a process through which parties such as members of an interdisciplinary team (e.g. trainer, psychologist, masseuse, team captain) work together on problems and issues to develop solutions that go beyond their limited visions of what is possible. Collaboration is based on the simple adage that two heads are better than one and that one by itself is not good enough. See Barbara Gray, *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (London, England: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), 5.

III. Integrity in Relationships

Integrity means that coaches are expected to be honest, sincere, and honorable in their relationships with others. Acting on these values is most possible when coaches possess a high degree of self-awareness and the ability to reflect critically¹³ on how their perspectives influence their interactions with others.

In being faithful to the principle of *integrity in relationships*, coaches would adhere to the following ethical standards:

Key Words

Ethical Standards

Honesty

- 3.1 Explore mutual expectations with athletes in an honest and open manner, giving due consideration to the age and experience of individuals.
- 3.2 Accurately represent personal coaching qualifications, experience, competence, and affiliations in spoken and written communications, being careful not to use descriptions or information that could be misinterpreted.
- 3.3 Make athletes and others clearly aware of coaching qualifications and experience.
- 3.4 Notify other coaches when working with those coaches' athletes.

Sincerity

- 3.5 Honor all promises and commitments, both verbal and written.
- 3.6 Act with an enthusiastic and genuine appreciation for sport.

13. In coaching, critical reflection questions existing assumptions about the values and practices that govern coaches' actions. The essential component of critical reflection is an attitude based on (i) open-mindedness, i.e. an active predisposition to hear more than one side of an issue; (ii) active inquiry, i.e. asking why things are done the way they are; and (iii) sincerity, i.e. coaches being genuine in their coaching relationships. *HIV/AIDS Education for Nurses: Practice Issues and Curriculum Guidelines* (Ottawa: Canadian Nurses Association, 1992).

Key Words**Ethical Standards***Honor*

- 3.7 Know the support and abide by sport's rules, regulations, and standards.
- 3.8 Take credit only for the work and ideas actually done or generated and give credit for work done or ideas contributed by others.

Conflict of interest

- 3.9 Do not exploit any relationship established as a coach to further personal, political, or business interests at the expense of the best interests of athletes or other participants involved.
- 3.10 Be clear about and avoid abusing relationships (e.g. with athletes, assistants, officials, administrators, board members) and avoid other situations that might present a conflict of interest or reduce the ability to be objective and unbiased in the determination of what might be in the best interests of athletes.
- 3.11 Declare conflicts of interest when they arise and seek to manage them in a manner that respects the best interests of all those involved.

Self-awareness

- 3.12 Evaluate how personal experiences, attitudes, values, social context, individual differences, and stresses influence coaching activities and thinking, integrating this awareness into all attempts to be neutral and unbiased in coaching.
- 3.13 Recognize and reveal whether personal views are based on facts, opinions, conjecture, theory, beliefs, etc.

Extended responsibility

- 3.14 Encourage athletes and other participants to develop and maintain integrity in their relationships with others.

IV. Honoring Sport

The principle of *honoring sport* challenges coaches to recognize, act on, and promote the value of sport for individuals and teams and for society in general.

Honoring sport means that coaches

- i. act on and promote clearly articulated values related to coaching and sport
- ii. encourage and model honorable intentions and actions in their coaching practice
- iii. show high regard for and promote the value of sport in Canadian society and around the world.

In being faithful to the principle of *honoring sport*, coaches would adhere to the following ethical standards:

Key Words

Ethical Standards

Spirit of sport

- 4.1 Advocate and model the fundamentally positive aspects of sport, e.g. sporting and human excellence, fair play, honest competition and effort, self-discipline, integrity, personal growth and development, respect for the body, challenge and achievement, the joy of movement, and other positive aspects identified by participants.
- 4.2 Actively seek ways to reduce potentially negative aspects of sport, e.g. winning at all costs, playing to the letter of the rules at the expense of the spirit of the rules, exploiting unfairly competitors' weaknesses, focusing on sport to the harmful exclusion of other aspects of athletes' lives, initiating and supporting potentially harmful training regimes, and other negative aspects identified by participants.

Respect for the rules

- 4.3 Accept both the letter and the spirit of the rules that define and govern sport.
- 4.4 Actively encourage athletes and other participants to uphold the rules of the sport and the spirit of such rules.

Key Words**Ethical Standards**

<i>Respect for officials and other coaches</i>	4.5	Accept the role of officials in ensuring that competitions are conducted fairly and according to established rules.
	4.6	Refrain from abusive personal attacks on officials and other coaches, especially when talking with the media.
<i>Drug-free sport</i>	4.7	Support initiatives that encourage the spirit of sport ¹⁴ (see also 4.1, 4.2).
	4.8	Actively discourage the use of performance-enhancing drugs; support athletes' efforts to be drug-free.
	4.9	Refrain from encouraging the use of alcohol and tobacco in conjunction with athletic events or victory celebrations at playing sites.
<i>Positive role model</i>	4.10	Maintain the highest standards of personal conduct and project a favorable image of the sport and of coaching to athletes, other coaches, officials, spectators, families, the media, and the general public.
	4.11	Project an image of health, cleanliness, and functional efficiency in personal habits and appearance, e.g. refrain from smoking while coaching, refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages when working with athletes.
<i>Responsibility to coaching</i>	4.12	Promote and maintain the highest standards of the coaching discipline.
	4.13	Encourage measures to improve the quality and availability of coaches' professional services.

14. The Canadian Centre for Drug-free Sport has designed a major campaign under the theme of the spirit of sport. At the heart of their message is the premise that inherent in sport are all the strengths, values, and qualities necessary to overcome the incursion of performance-enhancing drugs. Sport is strong and it gives (or can give) strength to those who participate. This theme embraces the fundamental positive aspects of sport, is non-blaming and non-moralistic, and emphasizes the positive attributes of sport. Manifest Communications Inc., *Draft Strategy for A National Educational Campaign to Promote Drug-free Sport in Canada*. (Document prepared for Canadian Centre for Drug-free Sport, Ottawa, 19 April 1993).

Key Words**Ethical Standards**

- 4.14 Encourage measures that promote education, knowledge development, and research in the field of coaching.
- 4.15 Develop the coaching profession by exchanging knowledge and experiences with colleagues, athletes, and students and by being participants, course facilitators, or master course conductors in courses and internships.
- 4.16 Uphold the responsibility to coaching by bringing incompetent or unethical behavior to the attention of appropriate regulatory committees in a manner consistent with the ethical principles of this code, if informal resolution or correction of the situation is not appropriate or possible.
- 4.17 Encourage athletes and other participants to honor sport on a lifelong basis.

*Extended
responsibility*

Notes

Unit I: Power and Leadership in Coaching

1. Chris Argyris, “Good Communication That Blocks Learning,” *Harvard Business Review* (July–August 1994), 77–85, adapted.
2. *The New Shorter Oxford* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1993), adapted.
3. The term *better values* recognizes that using power responsibly is an ongoing process of action–reflection–action.
4. Thelma Jean Goodrich, ed., *Women and Power: Perspectives for Family Therapy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 8.
5. *Ibid.*, 38–39, 44, adapted.
6. Heather Clarke, Dan Smith, and Guy Thibault, “Athlete-Centred Sport” (discussion paper, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Sport Policy Steering Committee, November 1994).
7. Charlene Eldridge Wheeler and Peggy L. Chinn, *Peace & Power: A Handbook of Feminist Process*, 3rd ed. (New York: National League for Nursing Press, Publication No. 15–2404, 1991), 101–2. This handbook contains models of patriarchal power and feminist power.
8. Former Canadian national team athlete.
9. Eric Røste (Norwegian cross-country ski coach; national team director), “The Achievement of Excellence: Collected Thoughts with Possible Implications” (speaking notes at a coaching conference, 1994).

Unit II: About Power

1. Two resources used in the development of this section were Pamela Cuming, *The Power Handbook: A Strategic Guide to Organizational and Personal Effectiveness* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1981) and Mary Harper Kitzmiller, “Bases of Power: Developing the Group’s Potential,” in *The 1991 Annual: Developing Human Resources* (San Diego: Pfeiffer and Co., 1991). See also J. French and B. Raven, “The Bases of Social Power,” *Studies in Social Power*, ed. D. Cartwright (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 118–149.
2. Thomas Greenfield and Peter Ribbins, ed., *Greenfield on Educational Administration: Towards A Humane Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 223, 247.

Unit III: Using Power Positively

1. A number of terms are used in this chapter to refer to periods when a person is under the influence of strong emotions, e.g. *off-centred*, *staying cool*, *highly emotional*. These terms are not intended to be technically correct but rather to point toward emotional states that individuals must define for themselves.
2. R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1994), 242, adapted.
3. Two references used in the development of this section were Carol Travis, *Anger, The Misunderstood Emotion* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1989) and Hendrie Weisinger, *Dr. Weisinger’s Anger Work-Out Book* (New York: Quill, 1985).

4. Jenny Steinmetz, Jon Blankenship, Linda Brown, Deborah Hall, and Grace Miller, *Managing Stress Before It Manages You* (Palo Alto, California: Bull Publishing Company, 1980), 82, adapted.
5. Ann Peel (president, Canadian Athletes Association; former national athlete), comment made in reviewing this handbook, 1995.
6. Ken Sinclair (publisher of *On-Court Magazine*; chairman of the Canadian Open; former vice president of Tennis Canada), interview by Pierre Lamarche, 1993.
7. For information on harassment, read Rachel Corbett, *Harassment in Sport: A Guide to Policies, Procedures and Resources* (Ottawa: Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, September 1994).
8. Although in some sports, “working the officials” is a practice widely accepted by coaches, the *Coaching Code of Ethics*, paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6, clearly decries this.
9. Marilyn R. Peterson, *At Personal Risk: Boundary Violations in Professional–Client Relationships* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 73–74.
10. There are many aspects of boundary violations that are not addressed in this short space, including legislation related to sexual harassment, societal conditions such as paternalism that support boundary violations and violations among athletes, e.g. when a powerful senior athlete seduces a new and more vulnerable athlete on a team.
11. Corbett, *Harassment in Sport*.
12. In July 1995, a survey by Sport Canada, which governs amateur sports, revealed that 20 per cent of the athletes who responded from various national teams said they had been sexually involved with coaches. Nearly 10 per cent said they had experienced forced sexual intercourse, and some of the respondents were younger than 16 when the acts occurred. Rick Westhead, “RCMP widens investigation into James sex assaults,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 9, 1997, D1.
13. Excerpt from *The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports*, copyright © 1994 by Mariah Burton Nelson, reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company.
14. Sheldon Kennedy, quoted in David Shoalts, “Kennedy scores back on Bruins ice,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 10, 1997, A12.
15. Peter Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1989), 28. Although this quotation refers to man–woman relationships, the same principles apply to same-sex relationships.
16. For further information on and discussion about this ruling, see Sheila Robertson, “Coaching, Trust, and Sex,” *Coaches Report* 3, 3 (Winter 1997), 5.
17. Ibid.
18. Peterson, *At Personal Risk*, 74–94, adapted.
19. Canadian Professional Coaches Association, *Coaching Code of Ethics* (Gloucester, Ont.: CPCA, 1993). Also refer to your own organization’s code of ethics.
20. Beneficence is an ideal or principle of conduct that requires us to act in way that benefits others. Such benefit might take the form of preventing or removing some harm, or acting directly to produce a good. The same training, skills, and powers coaches use to produce benefits are also capable of producing harm.
21. Rutter, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*.

22. Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand, Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).
23. For additional information and practical communication strategies on building self-esteem in athletes, see Peggy Edwards, *Self-Esteem, Sport and Physical Activity* (Ottawa: Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, and the Canadian Teachers' Federation, March 1993).
24. Argyris, "Good Communication," 78–79.
25. Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990), 159.
26. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451 ... The Temperature at Which Books Burn* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1950), 164.
27. Phillip Hunsaker and Anthony Alessandra, *The Art of Managing People* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 95–101, adapted.
28. R. Scott Kretchmar, *Practical Philosophy of Sport*, 237, adapted.
29. *The New Shorter Oxford*.
30. Robert V. Hannaford, *Moral Anatomy and Moral Reasoning* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 179. Different versions of the rule are held as a key standard by major world religions. Many of the assumptions outlined here are adapted from Professor Hannaford's work.
31. Marion Lay (feminist advocate in sport and former Olympic athlete), in conversation with the authors, 1995.
32. Peter Koestenbaum, *The Heart of Business: Ethics, Power and Philosophy* (San Francisco: Saybrook Publishing Company, 1987), 110.
33. Greenfield and Ribbins, *Greenfield on Educational Administration*, 255, adapted.
34. For other values clarification activities, see Coaching Association of Canada, "The Role of the Coach," in *National Coaching Certification Program, Coaching Theory, Levels 1, 2, and 3* (Gloucester, Ont.: CAC, 1990).
35. Don Lyon (former head coach of Canada's women's downhill and super giant slalom team), quoted in Martin Cleary, "Women's Ski Coach and Stunning 24 Year Career: Don Lyon wants to be around to help raise his two sons," *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 18, 1995.
36. Christopher Hodgkinson, *Educational Leadership: The Moral Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 96–104.
37. Patricia Clark, "Business Ethics: A Balancing Act," *The United Church Observer* 57, 7 (January 1994), 18–23.
38. Lucy McCauley, "Briefings from the Editors: Employee Performance: On Default Modes and Anchors," *Harvard Business Review* (March–April 1994), 14–15, adapted.
39. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), through its emphasis on practical application of coaching theory, provides coaches with an opportunity to receive feedback on their ability to apply coaching knowledge through self, peer, or examiner evaluation, thus supporting coaches in finding and working with an anchor to assist in making change.
40. Many national and provincial (or state) sport-specific associations and other organizations also have codes of ethics you may wish to use in this unit.

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