

Mastery Approach to Coaching

An Educational Program for Youth Sport Coaches

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How Can Coaches Increase Their Effectiveness?

In answering this question, over 25 years of research has been conducted on coaching behaviors and their effects on young athletes. A sport psychology training program for coaches was developed and tested in this research. The program, which is known as the **Mastery Approach to Coaching**, is the *only scientifically validated* coaching-education workshop that has been shown to have the following outcomes:

- Fosters positive coach-athlete relations and greater mutual respect
- Increases the amount of fun that athletes experience
- Creates greater team cohesion and a more supportive athletic setting
- Promotes higher mastery-oriented achievement goals in sports and in school
- Increases athletes' self-esteem
- Reduces performance-destroying anxiety and fear of failure
- Decreases athlete dropout rates from approximately 30 percent to 5 percent
- Produces equally positive effects on boys and girls teams

In acknowledging its scientific merit, the research was honored as one of the top 100 science-technology contributions in the history of the University of Washington in a volume entitled *Pathbreakers: A Century of Excellence in Science & Technology at the University of Washington*.

What Does the Mastery Approach to Coaching Include?

During a workshop, coaching guidelines are presented verbally with the aid of animated PowerPoint slides. The principles are included in a printed workshop manual. They stress a "positive approach" to influencing athletes, which emphasizes the provision of reinforcement for effort as well as performance, the giving of encouragement after mistakes, and the desirability of giving technical instruction in an encouraging and supportive fashion. Coaches are urged to decrease punitive behaviors, which produce stress and decrease enjoyment of the sport experience. Instruction is given in how to (a) correct athlete mistakes, (b) increase communication skills, (c) develop a team-oriented approach to maintaining order and discipline,

and (d) deal with violations of team rules. Behavioral feedback and self-monitoring techniques are taught as ways for improving coaches' self-awareness and compliance with the guidelines. In addition, group-learning exercises are used to cover other topics, such as keeping winning in a healthy perspective, combating fear of failure, and working cooperatively with parents.

A **Mastery Approach to Coaching** workshop lasts 75-minutes when offered on weeknights, and a 2-hour version is available for weekends. Although optimal attendance is 50-150 coaches, workshops have been conducted with as few as 20 and as many as 1,200 coaches.

Mastery Approach to Coaching Context Outline

- Introduction
- Objectives of Youth Sports
- Orientation to the Psychology of Coaching
- Achievement in Sports and in Life
- Mastery Climate Research Results
- A Healthy Philosophy of Winning
- Behavioral Guidelines for Youth Sport Coaches
 - The “Reinforcement Power” of Coaches
 - Reacting to Mistakes
 - Maintaining Order and Discipline
 - Dealing With Violations of Team Rules
 - Getting Positive Things to Happen
 - Creating a Good Learning Atmosphere
- Self-Awareness
- Relations With Parents
- Coaching Your Child
- Concluding Message

Where Have Mastery Approach to Coaching Workshops Been Presented?

More than 25,000 youth sport coaches have participated in some 500 workshops in the United States and Canada. Workshops have been presented to volunteer coaches in a variety of sport-specific organizations (e.g., Little League Baseball, US Soccer Federation, Minnesota Hockey) and multi-sport organizations (e.g., Catholic Youth Organization, YMCA, community recreation departments). The program has also been offered as in-service training for PE teachers and coaches in public school districts.

How Does the Mastery Approach to Coaching Compare With Other Coaching-Education Programs?

In an article comparing the **Mastery Approach to Coaching** with other coach-training programs, the authors (Drs. Brown and Butterfield) concluded that "the **Mastery Approach to Coaching** is the most convincingly documented program in theory and research-proven effectiveness. It guarantees quality instruction because the developers conduct each training session themselves" (*American Journal of Diseases in Childhood*, 1992, p. 216).

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