

COMMUNICATION

Your ability to send and receive messages with others based on mutual respect.

WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

LOW

Athletes at low levels will:

- Need a lot of work to be a better communicator.
- Often get off track when talking and confuse people.
- Not listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Hang their heads and clench their fists when frustrated.
- Need a lot of practice controlling their body language.

HIGH

Athletes at high levels will:

- Be a great communicator.
- Stay focused and make sure people know what they mean.
- Be a great listener.
- Remain positive when losing and motivate others.
- Have some good experience controlling their body language, but still realize they are a work in progress.

HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

Coaching Tips

- **Deliver Direct and Specific Messages:**
 - ✓ Try team building activities focused on being clear and concise. Athletes must learn the importance of not making people guess what they're trying to say, especially in the middle of a game.
 - ✓ When athletes are not being direct and specific, pause to give feedback as a coachable moment, then get back into practice. This will reinforce the importance of clear communication for everyone.
- **Responsibility for Failure to Communicate:**
 - ✓ Set the expectations that each athlete is 100% responsible for delivering a clear message, so if they think others aren't getting what they're saying, they need to say it again or in a different way.
 - ✓ Create ground rules for "how" you will communicate as a team during time-outs and huddles.
 - ✓ Practice a "zero-surprises" policy, by having all team members share important information in a timely way.
 - ✓ Draw out the quiet or less experienced athletes to share. Let them know not talking is a failure to communicate.
- **Listening is the Hardest Part of Communicating:**
 - ✓ Encourage your athletes to ask questions and share their opinions. Then carefully listen to each other.
 - ✓ Teach your athletes to listen with their eyes as well as their ears. They should pay attention to nonverbal cues. Be respectful. Look the other person in the eye and listen quietly and carefully.
- **Body Language Matters:**
 - ✓ Set the expectation that you are evaluating body language and attitude just as much as physical skills.
 - ✓ Lead by example in your own body language. Be composed and upbeat.

Talking Points

- Discuss how to communicate more clearly with direct and specific messages.
- Watch the Geno Auriemma YouTube video on body language and discuss it for your team.
- Discuss the major breakdowns in communication on your team and how to make improvements.
- Talk about the point that "how" you say something is often more important than "what" you say.

Tools

- APP Lessons: Communicate Clearly, Body Language
- CORE Elements: Composure, Coachable
- PRESSURE Elements: Attention Seeker, Short Fuse, Stubborn

"What are you selling today? Are you selling positive, or are you selling negative? Are you affecting everybody else in a positive way or a negative way?" – Nick Saban, Alabama Football Head Coach and National Champion –