



Chalk Talk Overview:

Building Individual Character and Team Chemistry

Coaches, generally speaking, are people of high character and integrity. They have deeply rooted beliefs that sports have helped them to develop as a successful adult; they have learned many lessons from mentors and athletic experiences. However, all too often, they are caught in the frenzied panic of tryouts, cuts, teaching skills, building team concepts to intentionally focus on passing along their character lessons in a way that creates thoughtful personal growth for their players.

We intend to offer a simple set of activities/conversations that can be used to help players get the most from their coaches. If done systematically, young athletes can articulate their character, their belief system, and develop team unity. These lessons are designed to be 20 or 30-minute conversations with simple actions that athletes perform as they become thoughtful in their character development. We know coaches have a lot to cover but feel that an intentional, focused conversation can succeed once a week. Minimal supplies are required for some activities, but they are worth doing. Visual displays of character are potent reminders as well as points of pride as we develop student character. The lessons will encourage students and coaches to post visual representations on the MSID app, so parents and the entire community can follow the team's character development.

Character can be a difficult topic to talk about. Often, we feel like we are crossing into parental responsibilities or many adults are uncomfortable talking about it because they have not given it enough thought personally. The reality is that too many young people do not have conversations about character and are left to develop it on their own without guidance or the support of a caring mentor. Coaches represent the perfect mentor to develop character, especially when done thoughtfully and intentionally. Developing a character-rich vocabulary will help student-athletes to begin to see connections throughout their life and also aid in their character development.

At the start of season parent meeting, let parents know the team will be working hard toward developing character throughout the season. You may be surprised by the reaction of parents when talking concretely about character development and may even have some who want to help out. Writing is a powerful learning mechanism and memory tool. Thus we suggest giving players journals and having them filled out weekly with student thoughts.

Remember, the greatest coaches are not judged by how many wins they attain, but by how many winners they create!

Lesson 1: Core Values – What do we stand for as a team? (20-30 minutes)

Learning goal: To develop a common set of core values to guide our team.

Most coaches tell players what to believe, rather than building the team around core values. Phrases like, “That’s not how we do things around here!” are reprimands rather than culture building when a coach sets all the core values. If you ask the questions, the athletes will have the same answers. When they are allowed to build the culture, they will share the responsibility for policing each other’s behavior and character development.

Group Conversation: (this may be structured as the whole team or broken into smaller groups and then brought together as a team, depending on the size of the group and number of adult facilitators. Smaller groups (10-15) can be more effective.)

Chalk Tip: Ask for clarification from players who suggest a value to help all members understand the value. We will go deeper into some of these later in the season. As a coach summarize and emphasize the importance of committing to these values as a team

1. When we put on our jersey, who do we represent?

Chalk Tip: team, coaches, school, student body, community, family, alumni, etc

2. How do we want these groups to view us?
3. How do we want to treat each other?
4. What are the core values that we need to exhibit?

Chalk Tip: Respect, loyalty, cooperation/teamwork, competitive, enthusiasm, confidence, support, self-control/sportsmanship, etc.)

Tasks:

1. Create the list of core values that represent the team.
2. Captains/leaders (or whatever group selected) create a poster to hang in the locker room with all the core values. Each member of the team signs the poster to represent their commitment to the team and upholding the values. Alternatively, the coach (or captains) can have a poster ready, and players can write their own core value they suggested on the poster)
3. Hang the poster in a prominent place in the locker room.
4. Take a picture of the poster and post it on the MSID app.
5. Have players list the team core values in their Compass journal, placing a star by those they see as the most important.
6. Have players interviewed to post on the MSID app.

Lesson 2: Focus on what you can control, not the other stuff

Lesson Goal: To empower players to recognize what they control and focus on that.

Focus is an important factor in sports and too often, athletes focus on the wrong things. This lesson intends to have players realize the span of their control and encourage them to focus solely on things they can impact.

Partner Talk: With a partner next to you, brainstorm what you can control in practice and what you cannot control. Spend 3-4 minutes filling out a simple chart like the one below. Then, think for 3-4 minutes specifically about game situations and their span of control.

| THINGS I CAN CONTROL | THINGS OUT OF MY CONTROL |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
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Chalk Tip: What we control generally fits into one of these three categories - attitude, effort and team dynamics

Task 1: Read the following article excerpt in any manner convenient (Individually, or aloud as a team).

Focus on What You Can Control - By Jim Taylor, PhD

A major focusing problem I see with many athletes is that they focus on things over which they have no control. Athletes worry about their opponent, the weather, or the conditions, to name a few things outside of their control. This focus has no value because they cannot do anything about those things. This kind of focus hurts performance because it lowers confidence and causes doubt and anxiety. It also distracts you from what you need to focus on. The fact is, there is only one thing that you can control, and that is yourself, for example, your motivation, confidence, emotions, intensity, and behavior. If you focus on those things, you will be more confident and relaxed, and you will be better able to focus on what you need to do to perform your best.

Outcome vs. Process Focus

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to prime focus is having an outcome focus during a competition. Outcome focus involves focusing on the possible results of a competition: winning, losing, rankings, or who you might defeat or lose to. An outcome focus is the kiss of death in sports.

Here's why.

Many people believe that focusing on the outcome will increase the chances of that outcome occurring, but the opposite is true. Here's why. When does the outcome of a competitive performance occur? At the end, of course. Moreover, if you are focusing on the end of the performance, what are they not focusing on? Well, the process, obviously.

Here's the irony. By focusing on the process (e.g., technique, tactics, intensity) rather than the outcome, you will more likely perform better because you are paying attention to things that will help you perform better. And, if you perform better, you're more likely to achieve the outcome you wanted in the first place. Also, why do you get nervous before a competition? Because you're afraid of the outcome, more specifically, you're afraid of failure. So by focusing on the outcome, you're less likely to perform well and achieve the outcome you wanted for them. In contrast, if you focus on the process, you are more likely to perform your best, the result of which is the outcome you wanted in the first place.

Four Ps

I have a rule you can follow that will help you identify what kinds of things you should focus on in your sport. I call it the four Ps. The first P is positive. You should focus on positive things that will help your performance and avoid negative things that will hurt it.

The second P is process. As I explained above, you should focus on what you need to do to perform your best, such as technique or tactics, not on that which will distract you.

The third P is present. You should focus on what you need to do right now to perform well at this moment. You shouldn't focus on the past because you can't change it. You also shouldn't focus on the future because you can't change it directly. The only way to control the future is to control the present. The only way to control the present is to focus on it.

The last P is progress. There's a tendency for many athletes to compare themselves with other athletes, seeing others having better results and getting ahead of them in the rankings. How your opponents perform is outside of your control. What you should focus on is your improvement. Athletes develop at different rates. An athlete who is ahead of you now may not even be in sight behind you in a year. What's important is that you see yourself steadily progressing toward the goals you want to achieve.

Reinforce the 4 P's: positive, process, present, progress

Chalk Tip: Have the kids write them in their journal and write what they mean to them individually.

Task 2: Fill in the goal individually and write in your Compass journal

Goal: As a member of our team, I can control and will focus on the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Task 3: Have captains, summarize the answers and make a **Focus** poster for the locker room.

Task 4: Post a picture of the poster on the MSID app.

Lesson 3: Teamwork – How well do we work together?

Lesson goal: To think more deeply about what good teammates do and reflect on how to improve as a teammate.

Coaches are great team players, thus creating their desire to coach. However, most adolescents are followers, and if leaders are not good teammates, culture building is necessary to teach about good teamwork. The saying that “educators need to build culture every day, because if they aren’t someone else is,” demonstrates the need for the coach to place a focus on culture building, rather than let it evolve without their leadership.

Watch the first portion of the video (pause it after the bird scene):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUXdrl9ch_Q&list=PLmknBP2VYDxLNn7LPeAi3WYlgYjMudwYq

Partner talk: Make a list of examples of bad teamwork in the bird video.

Group share: Have each group give one observation, until all are out. Copy the list of bad teamwork in the journal.

Chalk Tip: Look for answers like excluding teammates, making fun of teammates, bullying, gossiping, etc.

Who allows these to occur? **Chalk Tip:** players, coaches, parents

Who is responsible for preventing them? **Chalk Tip:** Coaches, Admin, players, parents

Task (bad teamwork): Write in your Compass journal, how you will act to prevent examples of bad teamwork on this team.

Play the remainder of the video.

Group Brainstorm: Make a list of examples of good teamwork in the crab and bear videos, put the list in your journal.

(Chalk Tip: Look for answers like common goal, working together, helping each other out)

| EXAMPLES OF GOOD TEAMWORK |
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Task 1: Good teamwork: What actions will you take to help build quality teamwork within our team? Write them in your journal.

Listen to the comments by Geno Auriemma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FXW6Zp-Wuw>

(Chalk Tip: Have players summarize what they hear, have others add on, re-state, rephrase until it has led them to an understanding of his comments.)

Would you want to play for Coach Auriemma or not? Why?

Task 2: List the top 3 traits for how you want your teammates to view you. These are your personal character traits for focus and improvement this year. Commit them to memory (write them in your journal), so you consistently remember to display them.

I want my teammates to view me as:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Follow up with partner conversation, player A gives 3 traits and Player B responds as to their views of player A. Then reverse roles.

Task 3: Interview a player on how they want to be viewed by teammates and what they are doing to achieve that. Post the interview on the Compass MSID app.

Task 4: Have players find their own quote that relates to teamwork. Write in their journal, present to the team. Team posts best quotes to the app.

Lesson 4: Accountability – Take ownership of your actions, choices, life

Lesson goal: To empower student-athletes to take ownership of their team, actions, and life

We live in a world that increasingly places blame and looks for excuses. As coaches, we want our athletes to learn to own their performance and understand they contribute to the greater team. An individual can learn to own their performance and make contributions that far exceed their accomplishments. This lesson helps students to think about owning their life.

Group conversation:

What is accountability? **Chalk Tip: Have players build on each other's answers until we develop a good working concept.**

What is our team accountable for?

Who are we accountable to? **Chalk Tip: build until you are satisfied, making sure they are accountable to all the right people, including team, coaches and themselves.**

Why is it important? **Chalk Tip: Ensure they include it helps us to grow and become our best.**

Watch the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PYV9Cw4R6Q>

Chalk Tip: Have players answer the next questions in their journal

Individual:

What do I need to take ownership of in my life? How will I do that?

Partner talk:

What do we need to take ownership of on our team? How will we do that?

Team talk:

What do we need to do to be accountable for our team's performance and behaviors?

Tasks:

1. Have players write in their journal how they will be personally accountable for displaying the team's core values and improving the team's performance.
2. Agree on three actions that all members of the team will take for increased accountability and post them in the locker room.
3. Take a picture of the poster and post it to MSID.
4. Create and post a video on team's commitment to themselves and their program.