

Athletes interact with many people every day, like coaches, parents, other athletes, staff, teachers and friends. It's easy to get lost in the crowd and do what everyone else wants you to do. As an athlete, you need to learn to speak out for yourself.

What does it mean for an athlete to speak out?

Speaking out means...

- Asking for what you want.
- Being able to say no .
- Saying what you need.
- Expressing your feelings and opinions in effective constructive ways.

Why should athletes speak out?

- To clear up misunderstandings with other people.
- So people will know what you need. ("I'm tired, I'm injured, I need to rest.")
- So you can express your emotions in a way that makes you feel better and doesn't hurt anyone else.
- To have control over what happens to you.
- To feel good about yourself.
- To have healthy relationships.

Why are some athletes afraid to speak out?

- They are afraid they might make someone angry or hurt their feelings.
- They are afraid of what might happen. (get grounded, lose a friend, get cut from the team)
- They are worried about what other people might think of them.

What happens if athletes don't speak out?

If you don't speak out about something that makes you feel strongly:

- You may start to put those feeling on to yourself.
- You may feel like you have no control over what happens to you.
- You may start to blame other people.
- You may start to feel bad about yourself and want to hurt yourself or others.
- You may feel misunderstood and alone.
- You may not be able to solve problems with other people.

Communication tips for athletes

We all have to deal with conflict in our lives. It may be because of a difference of opinion, or a misunderstanding. Sometimes it is hard to think about other people's feelings when we have strong feelings ourselves. Here are a few tips for dealing with sticky situations.

Let the other person know you are not trying to criticize or blame her for anything. You just want to talk about something that you didn't like.

Say what the problem is. Be specific about one particular thing.

Describe what happened that you didn't like and how it made you feel.

Avoid saying things like 'you always...!' or 'you never...!'

Avoid name-calling, blaming, or putting the other person down.

Treat the other person with respect.

Let the person know what you want from them.

A simple way to remember these tips is

W-I-N.

WHEN YOU ____ . I FEEL ____ . I NEED ____

Example:

"When you tell me to try harder, I feel frustrated because I don't know what I'm doing wrong. I need you to show me how to do it again."

or

"When I'm late for practice, I feel embarrassed because everyone stares at me when I walk in. I need to be on time. Can we try to leave a little earlier?"

ASK BodySense...

For parents

How can I encourage my child to talk about what's going on with them?

- Ask your child open-ended questions and listen carefully to the answers without judging or interrupting. "How did you feel today?" "What went well for you?" "What do you think you can do to improve?"
- Invite your child to share what they want to with you. Respect the child's privacy if they don't feel like talking about something.
- Try not to react immediately to what the child says.
- Repeat back to the child what you think they meant and ask if you are correct.
- Support your child's feelings so that they will be comfortable and accepting of whatever it is they feel.
- Be expressive about your own feelings, model openness and resolution.

How can I approach the coach with a problem?

- Think about your own views. What do you really think? Work toward finding solutions with coaches (rather than fault). Work toward understanding the reason behind the decision a coach has made.
- Make sure you've thought about solutions, including changes that will be good for the coach as well. For example, "If you could let me know when Jane isn't following your instructions I can talk to her about it at home."
- Remind yourself to tell the coach that you want to hear what she or he has to say.
- Remind yourself to give the coach a chance to clear up any misunderstandings.
- Have discussions that are sensitive when you are calm and level-headed. Give yourself some time to think about the situation before heading into it.



Speaking Out

Look into it

Straight Talk About Children and Sport,

Coaching Association of Canada, 1997.

Games Girls Play, Caroline Silby,

St. Martin's Griffin, 2000.

Girls Speak Out, Andrea Johnston,

Scholastic Books.

www.girlpower.com

Information adapted from the following publications appears in this newsletter:

Sandra Friedman, Nurturing Girlpower,

Salal Books, 2000; Caroline Silby, Games Girls Play, St.

Martin's Griffin, 2000; Janet LeBlanc and Louise Dickson,

Straight Talk About Children and Sport, Coaching

Association of Canada, Mosaic Press, 1997.

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The information in this newsletter is educational and should not replace the advice of a health professional.

Created by BodySense.

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