
Teaching the Code for Living

Series C: Group Exercises

Lessons designed to illustrate *The Code for Living* through Team Exercises



***Winning More
Than The Game***

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE
CONTACT:

Tara Riley
Director of Education
Email: triley@abw.org
P.O. Box 99007
Seattle, WA 98139-0007

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Introduction

These sessions have been designed for use by coaches, parents and athletes for several purposes:

1. To teach the values that stand behind the Code for Living, thereby building the character of the athletes
2. To help team members get to know each other and thereby create stronger bonds to one another and greater commitment to the team
3. To provide coaches with tools for teaching the values the coach holds.

Many of the exercises involve "games" and other interpersonal activities which some of the players may not have done before. At first, this may make them feel silly, nervous, or uncomfortable. This is normal. When appropriate, it is important that the coach introduce each session by recognizing that while some, including the coach, may not feel comfortable at first, there is a real value to the session, and that they should enter into it with a positive attitude. At times, the coach can "go first" when sharing is called for. If the coach is willing to be open, honest, and vulnerable, it will encourage others. The coach should emphasize that the exercises have to do with character formation and team spirit, which are as important to each person and to the team as skill development.

To gauge whether your team likes an activity or whether the activity is fulfilling the desired objectives, you can carefully watch the players and ask some specific questions. Informal observations over an extended period of time provide some very valuable information. As a successful coach you should be asking yourself:

1. Do the players understand how the game is supposed to be played?
2. Is the challenge appropriate and is everyone involved?
3. Are the players cooperating, helping, and sharing? Are they having fun?
4. Most importantly: Do they get the point?

As the coach, remember that values make our life safe and workable. Understanding values will help students manage their time as well as provide direction in their life. Solid values are the basic stepping stones to happiness and success.

Finally, we believe it is important to provide opportunities for character development in addition to skill development and competition. By participating in games and exercises such as these, players learn about themselves and one another. This builds individual self-confidence and team unity.

***I will develop my skills to the best of my ability
and give my best effort in practice and competition.***

Lesson 1 Goal-Setting

Age level: all ages
Size of group: any size
Materials: paper and pencils

Learning Goal

To create measurable goals that each player will work toward throughout the season

Activity

Note: Due to time constraints, you may choose to do this activity all in one day, or spread out across three consecutive days.

Day 1

1) Share the following quote by Michael Jordan: “Part of this commitment is taking responsibility. That’s not to say there aren’t obstacles or distractions. If you’re trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I’ve had them; everybody has had them. But obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it or work around it.”

Optional: Discuss the quote in depth – what does it mean to take responsibility? What roadblocks might you encounter?

2) A goal is a specific, identified action or event you desire to attain or achieve. Discuss what goals are and how they help us get to where we want to be in all aspects of our life.

Day 2

3) *(Briefly review the discussion from yesterday)* Have each player write out three areas that they intend to improve through the season (including possibly their strength). They should also list the amount of time they plan to devote each day and what drills/activities they will use to reach their goals. Collect the papers for use the next day.

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Day 3

Hand back the goal sheets to each player and ask them the following questions:

- Is your goal reasonable and realistic? (The goals must have a chance of succeeding.)
- Are your goals stated in a positive way? (Set goals in a positive way by saying “I will,” not “I can’t.”)
- Are the goals long- or short-range? - You must first set short-range goals before you can establish long-term ones. Allow the team time to make changes if needed.
- Now review some of the rules of your sport.

Optional – allow time for the team to discuss their goals with a partner or in small groups.

4) Collect the sheets so that you may make a copy to keep yourself. Throughout the season, check-in with the players with their goal sheets, modifying them if needed, or creating new goals as previous ones are achieved.

Coaching Points

1) “A dream is something you think about. A goal is something you are willing to work toward achieving. A dream becomes a goal when you start to make it come true.” (Kramer, 1992)

2) "Goal-setting is a positive character trait. ...Of course, one must make a commitment to achieving goals. Ideally goals will be established either by the athlete herself or by the coach and the athlete together. ...Charting of goals that are measurable and clear is a critical part of providing athletes with a program of mastery experiences." (Thompson, 1995)

3) Stress responsibility as “ownership.” Players who have ownership in their team take responsibility for being ready to play.

4) Talk about setting realistic short-term goals as it is important that players not only learn how to set goals, but to learn the positive feeling they receive from meeting those goals.

5) Point out the need for not only performance-based goals, but lifestyle goals which lead you through life’s journey.

I will compete within the spirit and letter of the rules of my sport

Lesson 2 No Rules

Age level: all ages
Size of group: at least 10
Materials: open space and a soft rubber ball

Learning Goal

To develop an understanding of the importance of rules.

Activity

Note: Due to time constraints, you may choose to do this activity all in one day, or spread out across two consecutive days.

Day 1

- 1) Gather the team together and set the equipment needed for your sport down in the middle of the space. Explain that they have a few minutes to scrimmage, but they must play without following any of the rules - i.e. you can use your hands in soccer or you don't have to dribble in basketball. Then let them loose to play. Be sure to allow enough time for the players to actually get frustrated, even quit playing.
- 2) After a few minutes of play, stop and evaluate how the game was played and the need for rules.
- 3) Now review the rules for your specific sport.

Day 2

- 4) Bring the team back together and discuss the need for rules. Discuss how the team felt playing with rules or without and what rules are difficult to keep (For example – fouling in basketball, foot faults in tennis, not using your hands in soccer.)

Optional – Discuss recent rule changes in your sport or controversial rules that exist in your sport and the temptation to break a rule in order to get back at someone when you're mad, i.e. illegal hits, etc.

- 5) Ask the team how they would change the rules or what rules they would like changed.

Lesson 2 No Rules continued

Coaching Points

1) “Even if children play the same game by the same rules again and again, it will be different each time they play it, thanks to the ongoing individuality of the players, the time-and-space situation of the moment, and blind fate.” (Maguire, 1990)

2) Use rules specific to your sport when bringing up examples to discuss. For example: In football when catching a pass near a sideline, both of your feet must come down inbounds for it to become a legal catch. If you perfect your pass catching technique you will be able to execute at a higher level.

In basketball when dribbling the ball, you may not “carry the ball” as you dribble. You must have the proper technique, again learned through practicing, that will enable you to become a better basketball player.

3) Try to teach your players that the rules of their sport may actually assist them in becoming better athletes.

4) Point out specific rules that relate to sportsmanship.

5) Discuss the need for rules to avoid chaos.

I will respect the dignity of every human being, and will not be abusive or dehumanizing of another either as an athlete or as a fan.

Lesson 3 A Funeral for Put-Downs

Age level: all ages
Size of group: at least 10
Materials: paper and pencils

Learning Goal

To create a positive community climate by promoting awareness and sensitizing the team to the hurt of put-downs.

Activity

- 1) Give each player a slip of paper and a pencil on which to write a hurtful put-down remark or behavior they never want to see or hear again.
- 2) Have each player put their slips into a community box and ask 2-3 members to take turns reading the slips to the rest of the team.
- 3) Take the team outside to either burn the slips in a metal wastebasket, bury them, or throw them into a dumpster. Invite statements of “good-bye to the put-downs.” Encourage use of words that are friendly, supportive, helpful, favorable, etc.
- 4) Discuss the following: Why is it important to “burn, bury or trash” the put-downs? What can you do to keep those put-downs buried? How did it feel to burn or bury the put-downs? What can the team do to help each other keep the painful statements dead?

Optional – Discuss differences in opinions, i.e. what may be considered a put-down by one person, may not by another. Discuss the issue of Native Americans mascots used by sports teams. Examples are: “Braves”, “Redskins”, and “Chiefs”.

Coaching Points

- 1) Put-down remarks are a basic form of communication among children and adults themselves; at times they are even used in families to convey affection: you goof-off, you jerk, you crazy kid. Though off-hand and flippant, they not only damage self-esteem but also undermine the level of trust within a team. A positive climate cannot develop unless you, the facilitator, challenge your team to prohibit put-down remarks and encourage them to exchange statements of appreciation.
- 2) Eleanor Roosevelt said, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”
- 3) Discuss how respect for opposing players will better prepare you for a game.
- 4) Detail the importance of good sportsmanship and how that relates to a player’s development as an athlete. For example, two players of equal ability are vying for a college scholarship – what could make a coach choose one player over the other?
- 5) Remember the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

I will place team goals ahead of personal goals.

Lesson 4 Take the whole bag?

Age level: middle school and up

Size of group: at least 8

Materials: paper slips and pencils, enough bags of M&M's for each team member

Learning

Goal

The players will determine their own and others' attitudes about the value of cooperation in promoting improved social decision-making.

Activity

1) Share the following quote by Magic Johnson: "Ask not what your teammates can do for you. Ask what you can do for your teammates."

Optional: Take some time to discuss the quote in depth.

2) Present the following situation to the team: "If I give you a choice between one, single M&M and one bag of M&M's, asking nothing in return, you will take the whole bag gladly. What if I throw in the following catch? I will make this offer to everyone in the room. If more than 20% of those in the room choose the whole bag, nobody gets anything. If 80% or more chose the one single M&M, then each person gets exactly what he asked for. Now, if you think that almost everyone will choose the sure-bet single M&M, then taking the whole bag is still the way to go. After all, your decision by itself won't really change the outcome. If it's going to be less than 20% anyway, then you can get a whole bag of M&M's without affecting anyone else's chances. I'm sure in the new spirit of cooperation you all will now pick the single M&M. I certainly would. Of course, if everyone else is going for the single M&M, maybe I'll...."

3) Each player is given a slip of paper to write his anonymous request for his share of the M&M's. The papers are collected and tallied according to the responses.

4) Share the responses and discuss the outcome. Pass out M&M's at the end of practice.

Optional – Discuss the following quote: "Whenever a new group assembles, there is a sorting out process that it must go through before it can become a team that works together toward a common goal. There are four general requirements that must be satisfied in the minds of your players before they can begin to work together as a team to accomplish the group goals of playing as well as they can and winning. They are acceptance by the group, feeling that one has adequate influence within the group, having an identity in the group, and believing that the individual will win if the group wins." (Thompson, 1995)

Coaching

Points

1) "Team sports, such as soccer, help to teach a child and young person how to work with others and sacrifice self-promotion for the sake of the team's needs." (Barnes, 1997)

2) "Teams break when they don't have a goal or the goals aren't clearly defined by the leaders. Goals have to be firmly entrenched, otherwise people begin to operate as individual entrepreneurs in a system that really needs cooperative work." (Dr. Lew Richfield)

I will be a positive influence on the relationships on the team.

Lesson 5 Appreciation Circle

Age group: all ages
Size of group: any size

Learning Goal

To share positive impressions and perceptions with one another, thus building self-esteem and increasing awareness of the importance of stating appreciation.

Activity

1) Have the team sit in a circle and share the quote “All for one, and one for all.” Ask if any one knows where the quote originated. (It comes from *The Three Musketeers*.)

2) Ask for a volunteer to sit in the middle of the circle. One at a time, the players compliment the volunteer by commenting on something that they like, admire or appreciate about the person. The volunteer is not to respond. After all of the players have given compliments, the volunteer returns to the circle and a new volunteer comes forward. This process is repeated until all of the team members have had an opportunity to be in the middle of the circle. Encourage the use of words like generous, kind, pleasant, etc.

IMPORTANT: Some individuals may find this difficult; some may laugh or act inappropriately. It may work better for everyone to think of “a positive word or phrase” for the person in the middle before you begin. Then, instruct the team that you will go around the circle and everyone will ONLY say their word or phrase, with no talk between, so that the circle may be completed quickly. Then the leader may summarize what the qualities were.

3) Discuss the following: Why is it important to be able to make positive statements about others? How can making positive statements to each other help us work together better? How did you feel when others complimented you? Do you ever compliment yourself?

4) Help the team make a plan to compliment themselves at least once every day.

Optional – Create your own team slogan, like the Musketeers.

Coaching Points

1) George Bernard Shaw said, “What really flatters a [person] is that you think [them] worth flattering.”

2) A player who is a positive influence on his/her teammates earns respect.

3) When discussing this lesson, think of and give details of teams who went from a losing season to a winning season next time.

4) You may do this exercise with an individual player each day or do the team as a group.

I will follow the team rules established by the coach.

Lesson 6 Setting Rules

Age group: all ages
Size of group: at least 8

**Learning
Goal**

To build team cohesiveness by establishing team rules together

Activity

Note: Due to time constraints, you may choose to do this activity all in one day, or spread out across three consecutive days

Day 1

1) One of the most effective ways to have a team follow the rules is to allow them the opportunity to help create the rules and consequences. Break the players into smaller groups of four and distribute 5 x 7-inch cards to each person. Discuss the importance of teams having a way to make decisions together - a way that gives every member a way to contribute his or her ideas.

2) Ask each player to write down five rules that they think would be beneficial to the team. Then have two group members get together, compare lists and agree on four ideas eliminating all others. Have two pairs get together, compare lists, agree on 5 of their combined ideas and eliminate the others.

Day 2

3) Bring all of the groups back together. Keep a list of all ideas. Have the team discuss all of the ideas and eliminate those that seem unworkable or less possible. Create a final list that everyone agrees on.

Optional: Discuss the following: Why might making decisions this way be easier or more difficult sometimes? How did your team come to a consensus? How did you feel when your team made their final choices? How did you influence your team's decision?

Day 3

4) The team should also be involved in formulating appropriate consequences for breaking a rule. Once your rules have been established, go through each one and ask "What do you think is a fair consequence for breaking this rule?" The advantage of this process is that rule enforcement then has the collective consent of the team behind it - if they have consented in advance to the consequences, it's easier to get them to look at what they did and take responsibility for their behavior.

Optional: Discuss the word "honor" as it applies to sports and your team. Honor is defined as a keen sense of right and wrong; adherence to action or principles considered right.

Lesson 6 Setting Rules continued

Coaching Points

- 1) It is important to always help your players understand the rules in order for them to be motivated to follow them out of a sense of responsibility to self and others.
- 2) There may be additional rules that you wish to institute that the team does not create. Be sure to share those with the team before establishing the consequences so that they may feel some ownership of the rule.
- 3) It is important for the players to have ownership in team rules. However, each coach will have to, at times, make rules independent of the wishes of the players. Discuss.

***I will display caring and honorable behavior off the field
and be a positive influence in my community and world.***

Lesson 7 Stranded

Age group: all ages
Size of group: at least 8
Materials: pencil and paper

Learning Goal

To establish what the valued qualities/characteristics found in others are.

Activity

Note: Due to time constraints, you may choose to do this activity all in one day, or spread out across two consecutive days

Day 1

1) Share the following quote by Jackie Robinson: "A life is not important except in the impact it has on others."

Optional – Discuss the concept of "idealism" – a behavior or thought based on a conception of things as they should be or as one would wish them to be.

2) Give each player a piece of paper and pencil and ask them to imagine that they are stranded on a desert island. Keeping in mind that there is much to be done to create a hospitable environment on the island, each player must then write the names of five people, famous or not, with whom he or she would like to be stranded. If he or she wishes, historical or fictional figures may be brought to life by writing their names on the list. Collect the sheets for use the next day.

Day 2

3) Return the lists to their respective owners and ask that next to each of the five names, the player note the characteristics or qualities the individual possesses that make him or her a dependable companion on the desert island.

4) After a few minutes, the coach solicits volunteers to share with the entire team the specific characteristics their individuals possess and why they chose them. Discuss the similarities and differences between the various lists, as well as whether or not those people most closely involved in their real lives possess those qualities or characteristics that they have identified.

Optional – Discuss the following: Who has made a difference in your life?

Coaching Points

1) "Children who are loved and disciplined consistently, who feel free to express themselves and to try out new things, and children who see models of compassion around them are more likely to become independent, to make friends easily, to express compassion and empathy for strangers, and to feel comfortable in the world outside their families." (Bullard, 1996)

2) No matter what level of sport you coach there are always younger players looking up to older players.

***I will give of my time, skills, and money as I am able
for the betterment of my community and world.***

Lesson 8 The Cup

Age group: all ages

Size of group: at least 5

Materials: paper cups (5 or more per group of 5), rubber bands, string

Learning Goal

To learn how a team can work together to accomplish things they could not accomplish on our their own, as an individual.

Activity

1) Break the team into smaller groups of 5-7 people. Give each player one 8-10" piece of string. Hand out one rubber band to each small group. Each player in that group then ties one end of their string to the rubber band.

2) Place the cups rim down and separated in each group's space. Challenge the group to stack the cups or to build a pyramid. No one may touch the rubber band, anyone else or the cups. Each person can only hold their end of the string. With each person pulling and relaxing their strings, the group can expand the rubber band enough to pick up the cups and move them.

Optional: Challenge the group to complete the task without talking.

3) Discuss how the activity went – what was difficult? What was easy? Discuss how it relates to their everyday life – does anyone volunteer? Many volunteer projects require lots of people coming together to accomplish their goal. We always hear the saying “one person can make a difference.” But when all those “ones” come together, the outcome can be astounding.

Coaching Points

1) To significantly increase the challenge and team building skills, blindfold everyone holding the strings and have non-blindfolded people standing behind them giving verbal directions.

2) You may want to establish an action plan of community involvement for the entire team or individuals.

Sample Teaching Planner for Series C

| Week # | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 10-minutes Goal Setting | 10-minutes Goal Setting | 10-minutes Goal Setting | 10-minutes No Rules | 10-minutes No Rules |
| | | | | | |
| 2 | 10-minutes Put Downs | 10-minutes Whole Bag? | 10-minutes Appreciation | 10-minutes Setting Rules | 10-minutes Setting Rules |
| | | | | | |
| 3 | 10-minutes Setting Rules | 10-minutes Stranded | 10-minutes Stranded | 10-minutes The Cup | |

Recognition of Participation

Athletes for a Better World has Certificates of Participation for your athletes available upon request. ABW recognizes the individual efforts athletes and coaches make to live by the Code for Living.