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# *Teaching the Code for Living*

## Series G: More Group Exercises

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



***Winning More  
Than The Game***

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE  
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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    You Have the Potential**

Age level: all ages  
Size of group: at least 5  
Materials: paper and pencils

**Learning  
Goal**

To define potential and state what determines performance in an individual.

**Activity**

1) On a sheet of paper, have each player write one thing they do well, and one thing they would like to do better in this sport.

2) Share the following quote by Henry Ford: "Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you're right."

*Optional: take time to discuss the Henry Ford quote in depth.*

3) Let the team know that everyone in the room has potential – the ability is there. Everyone has what it takes to succeed. Potential is the capacity existing in all people based on inherited ability, training and inner motivation. Ask the team the following: Would you learn to play a concerto on the piano for \$10 million dollars? Would you get all "A's" this semester for \$30 million dollars? If the answer is yes, then it is not ability holding you back, it is your attitude, your motivation.

4) Look at the list of things you would like to do better – Why haven't you pursued these goals that you desire? What causes you to perform at a level "lower" than your recognized potential? (Possible answers include adults/parents, friends, negative attitudes, lack of motivation, higher priority needs, etc.)

*Optional: Discuss self-discipline – the disciplining or controlling of oneself, one's desires, actions, habits, etc. – and how it affects your team.*

5) Performance depends on what individuals do with their natural abilities, knowledge and inner desire and motivation. Discuss the statement "It's not what I have, it's what I do with what I have that determines my performance." If possible, share an example from your own experience that is pertinent and of interest to the team.

6) Return, once again, to the one thing each player wrote they would like to do better. Have each player come up with one way they can begin to work toward each goal.

**Coaching  
Points**

1) Vidal Sassoon said, "The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary."

2) Emphasize the need to focus and work hard during drills.

3) Stress the importance of mastering the fundamentals of your sport.

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

**Lesson 2 On the Line**

Age group: all ages  
Size of group: 10-20

**Learning Goal**

To practice taking a stand among peers while building an appreciation for different opinions.

**Activity**

1) Ask the team to stand up as you describe an imaginary line across the center of the room - a "continuum." Identify the two positions at either end of the line as 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree.' State that the middle position is for those who are 'moderates.'

2) Ask the team to stand on the line according to the following statements: "I would be willing to break a rule if no one knew and it didn't matter." Then, "...if it would help me look a little better and didn't hurt anything." "...if it would help the team win a game." "...team win a league championship." "...team win a state championship." "...team win a national championship." "...team win a world championship."

3) Stop at any time once everyone is on the line for a specific statement, and have the ones near each other discuss why they are at that spot. Then pick one representative from each area of the line to report to the rest of the team.

4) Gather the team together and discuss "why does ABW have as a part of its Code for Living, 'I will compete within the rules of my sport.'"

*Optional: Discuss any of the following: Why is making your opinion public sometimes important? Why is recognizing individual opinions important? Why is it important to consider other people's opinions? Why might you not want to "take a stand" on a topic? How did you feel about publicly taking a stand? Why might you have been tempted to change your position after you looked around you?*

**Coaching Points**

1) Harold Schoenberg said, "Anybody who gets away with something will come back to get away with a little bit more."

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 Circle Up**

Age level: any age

Size of group: at least 5

#### **Learning**

##### **Goal**

To practice respect by considering a multitude of opinions surrounding one topic.

##### **Activity**

1) Have the team sit on the floor in a circle. Using a ball, one specific to your sport if appropriate, lead a discussion on sport topics. The person with the ball gets to speak to the team, then the ball is tossed around to someone new. Introduce a theme on which all have to speak, related to respect in sports – i.e. Latrell Sprewell choking his coach, Roberto Alomar spitting on an umpire, Robert Horry throwing a towel at his coach during a game, etc. You may also ask about what the players think about a recent incident locally or nationally or something they saw in a game. Find out not only what they think, but also how they try to control themselves.

2) Discuss which professional athletes your team members respect (or not) and why.

*Optional: Discuss the concept of respect and how it relates to your team. Respect is defined as to feel or show honor or esteem for; to hold in high regard.*

#### **Coaching Points**

1) Play fairly regularly to emphasize team solidarity. Let important issues arise.

2) Discuss how respect for opposing players will better prepare you for a game.

3) 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?

4) This exercise may be used for hearing from each player quickly and will build team unity.

## ***I will place team goals ahead of personal goals.***

### **Lesson 4 Standing Together**

Age level: age 8 and up  
Size of group: at least 4

#### **Learning Goal**

To work together towards a common goal.

#### **Activity**

1) Break the team into smaller groups of four. Have each group of four sit in a circle, grasping the arms or hands of the people next to them. The group must then attempt to collectively stand up. Some groups may sit facing each other, others may choose to sit with their backs to each other. Let them experiment.

*Optional: Use a larger group of people, grabbing the hands of people not next to one another.*

2) Discuss how they felt trying to stand up.

3) Discuss the word faithful and how it relates to your team. The word faithful implies continued, steadfast adherence to a person or thing to which one is bound by an oath, duty, obligation, etc.

#### **Coaching Points**

1) Let the team experiment – go slowly – the more people the harder it is. Vary the number of people, the way they face one another, how they grasp hands, etc.

2) Discuss the saying “a chain is only as strong as it’s weakest link.”

3) It is possible to achieve personal goals while totally dedicating yourself to the team goals.

4) A real athlete never has a hidden agenda.

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

**Lesson 5 Positive Communication**

Age group: all ages

Size of group: at least four

**Learning**

**Goal**

To show how affirmation can make positive changes in people and make them more willing to resolve conflict.

**Activity**

1) Begin by asking the players if they know what affirmations are and give an example. Demonstrate one yourself to the team. Explain that we are doing this exercise because: it reminds us that we are all of value; it helps us meet the put-downs we receive; it builds our self-esteem and helps us get know another person better; and it shows us how feeling good about ourselves and each other helps us resolve conflicts.

2) Divide the team into pairs. Each player will talk for two minutes on "What I like about myself." The only rule is that you may not say anything negative or bad about yourself, or put any limitations on the good things about yourself. For example, you cannot say you were a good friend except when you forgot to wish them a Happy Birthday. Have each partner choose either letter A or B. "A" will be the first listener, "B" the first speaker. Inform the pairs that they will have to introduce their partner to whole team after each has finished talking. Also explain that the listener's role is to: listen intently without talking during the two minutes - if their partner runs out of ideas, remain interested but silent; and remind your partner if and when they say something negative about themselves.

3) Have the pairs take their turns talking, then return to the whole team. After each partner has been introduced, discuss the fact when we feel good about ourselves we have good relationships with others. However, when we do not feel good about ourselves, tension and adversity lead to conflict.

*Optional: Discuss how it went – how did it feel to be the speaker? The listener? Why is attentive listening so important in this activity?*

**Coaching  
Points**

1) You may want to also discuss the concept of humility – the state or quality of being humble – and how it relates to this activity.

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

3) Affirmations are really "mental reps" for the athlete.

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

5) Positive attitude is an affirmation.

***I will follow the team rules established by the coach.***

**Lesson 6    Blindfolded Picture**

Age level: any age

Size of group: at least 5

Materials: paper and pencils, blindfolds

**Learning  
Goal**

To appreciate how rules can help us

**Activity**

1) Give everyone an index card and a pencil, and have everyone on the team put on a blindfold or close your eyes.

2) You then describe, slowly and in detail, the scene you want people to draw. It should be very specific, very basic. For example, you could say, "First I want you all to draw a house. The house should be in the middle of the card, and should have a simple triangular roof. Next, I want you to put a sidewalk in front of the house. There should be a car on the road in front of the sidewalk..." Keep the picture simple so that when you ask everyone to remove their blindfolds, they will be surprised at how awkward their drawing looks. Something they could have done excellently was made extremely difficult by the addition of a mere blindfold.

3) Discuss how they felt drawing the picture with the blindfold on – what was frustrating? Then acknowledge that fact that some view rules as a hindrance to accomplishing a goal much like the blindfold. Using rules specific to your team, discuss how they are in place to help the team; not hinder their progress.

**Coaching  
Points**

1) Be honest and fair with the rules you place on your team and make sure you are consistent in applying consequences for breaking a rule.

2) Explain why you have rules as their coach.

3) Discuss the rules you have for the team.

4) Remember that rules apply equally to each player. Make that statement very clear.

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

## **Lesson 7 Trustworthiness: a part of being a role model**

Age level: all ages

Size of group: at least four

Materials: chart paper and a marker

### **Learning**

#### **Goal**

To reinforce the concept of trust and the part it plays in everyday life.

#### **Activity**

1) Share the following quote by George MacDonald: "To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved."

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

2) Ask the team to name people (such as family members, friends, and community members) whom they trust and rely upon.

3) Ask the team to explain why they feel they can count on these people. On the chart paper, note key words and phrases from the explanations that describe trustworthy traits such as dependable, reliable, honest, caring.

4) Lead the team to understand that the trustworthy traits that they admire in others are the same traits that will enable others to put their trust in them.

### **Coaching Points**

1) A community is created when every member of the team knows each other; cares, respects and affirms each other; and feels membership in and responsibility to the team.

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

3) Explain mentoring and how being a mentor can help any player become a positive influence.

4) Have you ever wondered what other people think when your name is spoken? Do they have good thoughts or bad thoughts? What does your name mean? I want to invite you to reflect on your name.

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

## **Lesson 8 Teamwork in the Community**

Age level: all ages  
Size of group: at least 8  
Materials: a large dry-erase or chalkboard.

### **Learning**

#### **Goal**

To give participants the opportunity to consider what is involved in cooperative efforts and why real teamwork can be very effective.

#### **Activity**

1) Gather the team, and together, develop a definition for the term “teamwork.” The definition should include the kinds of behavior and attitudes that go into effective teamwork. Write the definition at the top of the board.

2) Break down into smaller groups and have each group come up with a list of community activities that would involve teamwork. If they need help, suggest that they think of different places they have been in the last week where they may have observed teamwork in action (school, home, etc.) Ask what activities in all these places suggested that good teamwork was or wasn’t happening.

3) Bring all of the groups back together and share the examples and descriptions of the teamwork they observed. Examples might include concepts of cooperation, planning, listening, etc. Enter these observations under the definition. Circle keywords and phrases that appear frequently. Amend their definition of teamwork if needed.

4) Share the following Swedish Proverb: “The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your own arm.” Ask the team for suggestions about jobs that they might get involved in around the school or in the community. Is there something that needs to be done such as collecting recyclables and planting flowers? Guide their enthusiasm by helping them form teams and apply their “teamwork” principles to getting the job done.

*Optional: Invite a speaker from your community to practice to talk about UNICEF, Big Brothers, Meals on Wheels or other helping services. Coordinate a project that the team can participate in to go along with this speaker, like a food drive or toy collection.*

### **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) Compassion is sorrow for the sufferings or trouble of another or others, accompanied by an urge to help.

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

## Sample Teaching Planner for Series G

Week #	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	10-minutes You Have the Potential	10-minutes On the Line	10-minutes Circle Up	10-minutes Standing Together	10-minutes Positive Comm.
2	10-minutes Blindfolded Picture	10-minutes Trustworth- iness	10-minutes Teamwork in the Comm.		

## 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.