



HANDBOOK

for coaches, teachers and others working with
socially sensitive youth in the field of sports

SPORT FOR INCLUSION AND INCLUSION FOR SPORT

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It is very important to create and maintain the inclusive way of thinking and acting. It is relevant for all areas of our life: culture, sport, education. We all are responsible for this. For the Consortium of the Project INsport, this means creating an environment and attitude where everyone could feel recognized, valued and honoured for their distinct talents and perspectives.



MAKING INCLUSION HAPPEN



Everyone should have the opportunity to be actively involved in whatever sport they choose; in whatever capacity they choose. The Consortium of the Project INsport is committed to being inclusive and open to all, regardless of age, gender, disability, cultural or religious background or sexual orientation, or other attributes that may lead to any person feeling excluded or isolated.

However, the Consortium acknowledges the still existing reality and understands, that despite many attempts, sport associations and clubs are missing out on entire groups of potential members, players, administrators and volunteers. And the reason for this is obvious: people who want to play sports, volunteer in sport events or be part of the sport administration feel, for a variety of reasons and barriers, excluded and don't become involved. Lots of young sport talents are missed and unnoticed due to the lack of inclusive thinking and acting.



WHAT DOES BEING INCLUSIVE MEAN?

Welcoming everyone in your club, regardless of factors like ability, gender, sex, background or age. Everyone has the right to be involved, and it's beneficial to all when club membership represents and reflects our local and global community.

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO?

Challenge assumptions to start breaking down barriers in sport by asking “Am I always treating others in the way I would like to be treated?”, “Are there any stereotypes, prejudices in my sport”, “How would I feel if I was a part of disadvantaged group”, “What can I do to change the situation?”, How can I help others to understand the inclusive sport concept?”



THIS HANDBOOK AIMS TO:

1. Promote the inclusive and accessible environments in sport;
2. Encourage you to act proactively to encourage participation of everyone in our community.

While it includes information about various individual aspects of a person's identity or circumstances, such as disability, gender, sexuality, it is important to remember that we each have multiple identities at the one time.

WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

The Handbook is for anyone involved in sport, whether that is as a club leader, participant, spectator, coach or competitive athlete. Creating inclusive spaces and events affirms that all individuals have a right to participate in sport.

This Handbook includes topics such as inclusive language, improving the awareness and engagement, signalling welcome and inclusion, inviting people to participate.

Short description of the Erasmus + Sport small collaborative partnership project „Sport for inclusion and inclusion for sport“/ INsport

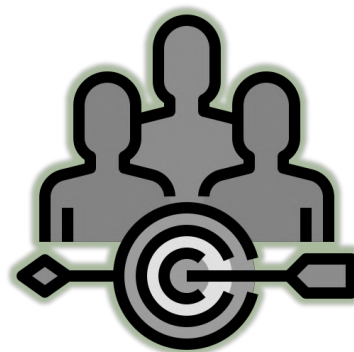
The Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA), as delegated by the European Commission, with Grant Decision № 622057-EPP-1-2020-1-LT-SPO-SSCP in 2020 has been approved for funding the project titled "**Sport for inclusion and inclusion for sport**", the acronym "**INsport**", submitted by Birzu lengvosios atletikos sporto klubas.





TARGET GROUPS

- Coaches, trainers, teachers, lectors, instructors, students of universities and other staff of organizations active in the fields of sport, youth work and social care.
- Young people (age 12-22), who will participate in various sport and physical activities planned during the project.



INDIRECT TARGET GROUPS

Local population and other organizations that could use the results of the project, those who will participate in dissemination events.

GOALS

 To develop an international network of organizations active in the field of sport, resulting from the direct exchange of experience and good practise in the project and resulting in the new approaches toward the role of sport in the process of social inclusion and real positive changes in the level of social inclusion through sport.

 To elaborate Handbook to help coaches, trainers and other staff of organizations active in the fields of sport, youth work and social care to use sport as a fun tool for social inclusion and at the same time provide them a description of the key elements to recognize those who can seek for higher or highest sport results. Handbook will be freely available and adoptable by other sport organizations.

 To improve skills of coaches, trainers and other staff of organizations active in the fields of sport, youth work and social care through the joint work on development of an innovative approach in order to use sport as a tool for social inclusion and raise awareness that it is possible to benefit from social inclusion through sport by discovering new possible talents among the young people at risk.

 To raise the level of social inclusion through sport. Active involvement of young people at risk in sport activities would prevent social exclusion; raise self-esteem, motivation for personal development and help to identify those, who can seek for higher or the highest sport results.

 To promote and reinforce the vision of sport as a method of integration, social inclusion and raise awareness of its potential.



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CONSORTIUM OF THE PROJECT INSPO



PARTNERS:

Applicant – Birzai Track and Field Athletics Sport Club (LT)

P2 – Athletic Federation of Lithuania (LT)

P3 – Inonu University (TR)

P4 – Bulgarian Sports Development Association (BG)

P5 – L'Orma (IT)



Birzu lengvosios atletikos sporto klubas (BLASK)
Birzai Track and Field Athletics Sport Club, Lithuania

BLASK unites young sportsmen of age 10-22. The club participates in competitions in Lithuania and abroad, so the themes of mutual respect, tolerance, fair play, physical activity, healthy life style and cooperation are actual and interesting for the club members. Birzai town is not big, but youth is active and willing to learn and discover new things. Coaches of the club are experienced and highly qualified. They are former sportsmen and are able to teach kids not only on scientific level, but also on their own experience and knowledge.

The club uses sport as a tool to form the pyramid of values, where tolerance, honesty, patriotism, altruism and healthy concurrence plays a significant role. Every sportsman must respect concurrent and be able not only to win, but also lose properly. Other aspects of human character and attitudes toward life, people and the world around are developed. The club promotes active life style and presumes that sport is one of the key elements in personality development.

Birzai town is situated in the remoted area, where many families face social exclusion and suffer from various addictions. Some of the club members are from poor families or families at social risk and live in rural territories. They are free of charge and the club supports their travels and participation in competitions. As one of the goals of the club is the promotion of tolerance, social integration and encouragement of personal development, above mentioned support and efforts to reduce social exclusion by club members are considered positive. This positive attitude guided club with the idea



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to use sport as a tool for development of the system of social inclusion among different institutions active in sport and/or working with young people at social risk.



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Athletic Federation of Lithuania

Athletic Federation of Lithuania was founded in 1921 in Kaunas, when the first Lithuanian Athletic Championship was organized. Since then, championships were organized every year until 1941. Next year Federation would like to dedicate this project to the 100 anniversary.

After Lithuania regained independence in 1990, Federation renewed its work. In 1991 Federation became part of the IAAF, now World Athletics WA. It is also the member of European Athletics.

Federation has more than 70 members (clubs and associations): <http://lengvoji.lt/federacija/>

Lithuanian Athletics Federation (LAF) organizes and conducts (or contributes to the execution) about 45 competitions per year. The number of the athletes, participating in the competitions, is about 7000. There are 259 athletes in the national Lithuanian team of the different age groups (senior, U23, youth, junior). 150 coaches are working with these athletes. The athletes of the national Lithuanian team take part in approximately 30 major competitions per year.



Inonu University, Turkey

Inonu University was established in 1975 after it was accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the Republic Senate with the 'Inonu University Law' by law no 1872 and was published in the official gazette. It has provided educational services for the 1976-1977 academic years.

Inonu University which is one of the most respectable and well-established universities of the country has 13 Faculties (It will be 16 once the separation of the Science and Literature faculties are done), 3 Colleges including the State Conservatory, 12 Vocational Schools, 5 Institutions, 1 Techno city, 19 Research and Practice centres including Turgut Ozal Medical Center and has about 30.000 students.

Inonu University missions are:

1. Rearing individuals who internalize their own values and who welcome universal values.
2. Delivering education on higher education level.
3. Carrying out scientific researches.
4. Contributing to its country and the world in almost every field, but specifically in health.



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Bulgarian Sports Development Association (BSDA), Bulgaria

Association was founded in 2010 and is a non-profit public benefit organization devoted to the development of Bulgarian sport and improving sporting culture in Bulgaria!

BSDA main goals are:

1. Sustainable development of physical education and sport in Bulgaria.
2. Develop different strategies and programs for sport tourism.
3. Development, application, implementation and coordination of national, municipal, government, European, international and other projects and programs for development of sport, sports facilities and physical education.
4. Improving the health, physical condition and sports culture of the nation, concerning youth problems as a priority.
5. Optimization and mobilizing human and material potential in sport and personal development.
6. Creating an enabling environment for sustainable and efficient management and entrepreneurship in sport and tourism.
7. Development of education in physical culture and sport and through sport, and informal continuing education in the field of sport, professional development, business and entrepreneurship.
8. Protection of children, youth, professional athletes, coaches, sports figures and sports organizations.
9. Develop, Stimulate entrepreneurship and personal development of the youngsters.
10. Development of prevention through sport.



Sport and Social Promotion Association (L'Orma), Italy

L'Orma is a non-profit educational agency that since 2000 develops and delivers the best possible formative sportive / expressive experiences based on non-formal education and aimed at personal and professional growth of children, parents and teachers.



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The permanent staff is composed of 10 persons that coordinates every year, more than 100 educators, developing different initiatives declined in sport, physical and artistic expression (theatre and musical performance arrangements) and playful-recreational education activities.

The organization implements its activities through education and motion laboratories in schools (addressed differently, both to teachers and students), through conciliation initiatives for families in public spaces, parks and sport events, and through free-time events such as summer and holiday camps.

L'Orma is accredited as an educational institution for training school teachers, by the Ministry of Education in Italy.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

to encourage social inclusion and equal opportunities in sport through improvement of skills of coaches, trainers and other staff of organizations active in the fields of sport, youth work and social care and activities related to the social inclusion through sports.





HOW TO START?



Whatever you do – **get organized!** Being organized means your event will run smoothly for everybody involved.

- Consider an action plan for key tasks in the lead up to the game/event/meeting.
- Develop a running sheet with clear times, designated roles and any impacts on participants (e.g. game times, warm-up periods, attendance at ceremonies, breaks, refreshment, etc.).
- Circulate to Clubs, schools, classes, Association, Coaches, Teachers, team/organization officials with plenty of notice.



Carefully decide on the type of the event – in this process the following questions need to be considered:

- ✓ What is the exact goal of the event? It can be a professional, an economic, educational or other goal, including the establishment of professional relationships, returning a former invitation, etc.
- ✓ What kind of event is to be organized? Is it a competition, a match, a conference, a demonstration, parents meeting or a training camp?
- ✓ What is the size of the event? How many active participants are there? How many supporters are expected? How long will it last?
- ✓ The timing of the event is important, too. What other events are there at the same time, which might have an effect on the success of our sports event? It is also important to note that seasonality might also play a role; For example, do we need a cloakroom?
- ✓ The venue of the event: how many venues are there? Is it our own facility, or do we have to rent it? Is it an outdoor or an indoor space?

TO REACH COMPLEX RESULT – START SIMPLE!

Events don't need to be huge and in fact a simple ceremony that connects people together may be all that is needed and provides a starting place for future events. It doesn't need to be over complicated or cost a lot for your club/organization.



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1ST TIP! – Consider Flag raising ceremony at the beginning of the day.

A Welcome to Country/club or an Acknowledgement of Country/club/organization by a hosting official / community member. It can be a short speech about what the day means to the club/organization and recognise any current or past players, committee, officials or members, relevant to the target groups participating in the event.

TO BE NOTICED – PROMOTE YOUR DAY!

PLAN AHEAD:

- o Create an Event on a social network (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.)
- o Use your web page
- o Use the webpages of your partners
- o Take plenty of photos videos
- o Invite local mass media

DATA PROTECTION – IT IS NOT SO COMPLICATED!

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – is a crucially important document describing how personal data of the participants and employees should be maintained and stored. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the toughest privacy and security law in the world. Though it was drafted and passed by the European Union (EU), it imposes obligations onto organizations anywhere, so long as they target or collect data related to people in the EU. The regulation was put into effect on May 25, 2018. The GDPR will levy harsh fines against those who violate its privacy and security standards, with penalties reaching into the tens of millions of euros.





THE MINIMUM INFORMATION THE ORGANIZER OF THE EVENT HAS TO PROVIDE AND DECLARE:

Controller	Legal Basis	Personal data recipients
Name of the organizer of the event	GDPR Article 6, 1. e) processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller	Personal data can be given to the xxxxxxxx organization(s)
Contact information	The purposes of processing Personal Data	Data protection specialist contact information
Telephone: xxxxxxxx E-mail: xxx@xxx Of the Controller	e.g. to ensure eligible expenditure supporting documents and possibility of verify the veracity of given information	E-mail: auris.paulins@zpr.gov.lv xxxxxxx (as the contacts of the data protection specialist may vary from the contacts of the organizer)

DATA TRANSFERING TO “THIRD COUNTRIES”: e.g. The organizing organization (Name of the organization must be mentioned) is not transferring personal data to countries, which are outside Europe Union and Europe Economic zone.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PERSONAL DATA PROCESSING: link to the website with more information on the requirement for the protection of the personal data.

MAKING PHOTOS DURING THE EVENT – FUN BUT RESPONSIBLE AFFAIR!

Sports organisations and clubs benefit from using images of young participants to promote and celebrate activities, events and competitions. Some coaches also find it helpful to use photographs or videos as a tool to support a young athlete's skills development.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS

Including the child's personal information (full name, address) alongside their image can make them identifiable and therefore vulnerable to individuals looking to locate, contact or 'groom' children for abuse.

Even if personal details are kept confidential, other details identifying the sports organisation, school or club, or their favourite sportsperson or team, can also be used to groom the child.



THERE'S AN INCREASED RISK OF IDENTIFICATION OF, AND CONTACT WITH, A CHILD:

- By someone in circumstances where there are legal restrictions – such as if the child is in local-authority care or placed with an adoptive family
- Where it's potentially dangerous to reveal the child's whereabouts to an estranged parent due to previous concerns about domestic violence

Organisations wishing to use or permit the use of images of children involved in their activities must therefore have a policy in place to safeguard them. You'll also need to consider whether parental permission for photography should be sought, and take storage and privacy considerations and additional concerns about talented young athletes into account.

MINIMISING THE RISKS

- Think carefully before using any images showing children and young people on your website, social media or other publications
- Choose images that present the activity in a positive light, and promote the best aspects of the sport and organisation
- Don't supply full names of children along with the images, unless:
 - It's considered necessary – such as for elite young athletes
 - It's in the child's best interests
 - The child and parent have consented
- Only use images of children in suitable dress or kit, including recommended safety wear such as shin pads or gum shields
- Activities such as swimming, gymnastics and athletics, present a higher risk for potential misuse than others, so images of these activities should:
 - Focus on the activity rather than a particular child
 - Avoid showing the full face and body of a child – instead show children in the water, or from the waist or shoulders up
 - Avoid images and camera angles that may be more prone to misinterpretation or misuse than others
- Consider using models or illustrations if you are promoting an activity, rather than the children who are actually involved in it

Provide coaches who use images of athletes as part of their training with clear guidelines by which they are required to comply, including: use of the images, consents, and retention, safe storage and confidentiality.



SOCIAL INCLUSION IS A MULTIFACETED THING

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING

The path of sport, education and other activities often takes twists and turns. Some stressors are unexpected and easily managed, while others are huge and especially challenging. It is not a secret, that even young people and children are dealing with a mental health issue each year, most commonly anxiety, depression, loneliness, distraction and various addictions (alcohol, technologies, etc.) issues. Sports and clubs play an important role as spaces for connection, meaning, contribution, play and physical movement. As protective factors for our mental wellbeing, sports clubs can make a big difference for people experiencing a mental health condition.

TO BE PROACTIVE IN MAKING SURE YOUR CLUB IS INCLUSIVE FOR PEOPLE WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING PSYCHOLOGICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY, CHECK WHETHER:

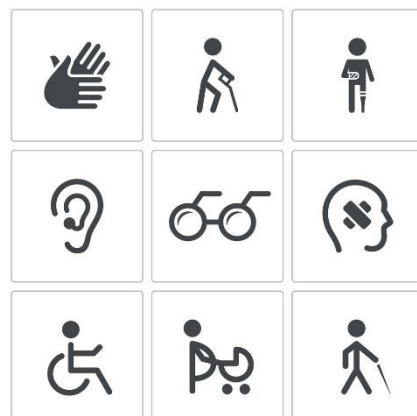
- Club/organization leaders and members have a good understanding about mental health issues, stigma and supports. That it's okay not to be okay.
- Club/organization leaders understand the boundaries of their role. That they are visible, encourage support seeking and open about supports available.



2ND TIP! – Remember, psychological or emotional stress and distress is not always visible. Take a moment to consider how you can signal a welcoming environment for someone who may be struggling, and opportunities to share information on supports and mental wellbeing.

DISABILITY

Sport clubs/organizations are expected to make their club as accessible as possible, and to take action to include people with disabilities in both playing and non-playing roles. To make someone with disability feel welcome, it is important to remember that everyone is different and will have individual preferences. It is not necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of all the different types of disability, it is more beneficial to focus on the individual's needs- they are the expert and will be able to let you know what will support their participation. For e.g., will they need ramp access, instructions in simple / direct language, visual rather than verbal cues, options to take out or a rest break.





COMMUNICATION ABOUT COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH A DISABILITY

The best practice use of language when referring to people with disability is person-first and impairment second.

USING PERSON-CENTERED LANGUAGE

A person is not defined by their ability or one single attribute of their identity. This means paying attention to the words we use to describe others and using language that does not frame disability as a limitation or as an inspiration simply for living with a disability. Always speak to the person directly and not to anyone else that might be assisting or accompanying them. When meeting with or speaking to somebody who uses a wheelchair, you may wish to choose a location where you can sit down too, so that you can put yourself at the same level as the person.



3RD TIP! – Take a moment to consider what barriers currently exist in your sport that may stop someone with disabilities from participating. Rather than waiting for someone with disability to make a request, take proactive actions to remove these barriers.

GENDER EQUALITY

Women are still very under-represented in organised sport as participants, coaches, officials, administrators, and board members. We encourage to have in mind:

- Cultural barriers (such as gender roles/expectations, competitive male orientated sport)
- Sense of belonging, lack of female representation in committees / leadership roles
- Family / caring responsibilities
- Access barriers (time, facilities, transport, cost) Lack of entry level and pathway opportunities



4TH TIP! – When thinking about supporting women in sport, consider an intersectional approach to ensure all women, including non-binary and trans women are invited along. If you are hosting an event for women, you may want to include text such as this to ensure this message is clear: *“Our definition of women is inclusive of all women including transgender, non-binary and gender queer women.”*

IMPORTANT

- Due to femme invisibility in the media and a lack of female role models in sports, girls and women struggle to see themselves a part of the sporting community, even before they have had a chance to decide for themselves. To tackle this it's important to elevate femme and



female voices and identities in ambassador, role model and leadership roles. This means giving them opportunities to tell their story, share their profiles and celebrate their achievements and spotlighting campaigns that uplift women in sport.

- Women who are primary carers for children or other family members may face additional challenges when it comes to finding time to participate in sports including a lack of childcare and time. This can be combated by providing programs where childcare or a crèche is available. Running a 'Mums and Bubs' session is also helpful to support women who may share responsibilities whilst participating.
- Some sports are a lot more expensive and inaccessible than others, especially if sporting equipment and facilities are involved. Consider what the club can do to support participation by removing some of these barriers. This could include purchasing club equipment that can be hired out for free, using facilities that are free or low cost to use, finding venues near public transport and offering tickets to events on a sliding scale.

DIVERSE GENDERS, SEXES, SEXUALITIES (DGSS)



DGSS INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

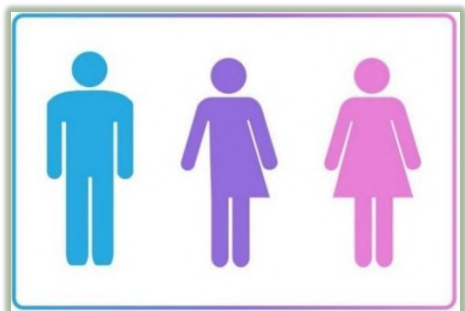
Language shapes our understanding of topics and how we interact with others. Using inclusive language ensures we do not leave anyone out of our events and programs and individuals are seen, heard, and invited along.

USING GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Communication plays a key role in this. Telling a teammate to 'man up' or that they 'run like a girl' both use outdated gender stereotypes and are likely to cause offence. This sort of language can also shape an understanding of what individuals believe they can achieve based on gender stereotypes. When

addressing a group of people, terms such as 'hey guys' can easily be replaced with gender neutral options such as team, folks, friends, mates and many more.





RESPECTING PROUNOUNS

A person who identifies as trans, non-binary or gender diverse may not use binary pronouns such as they/them/theirs. If you do not know what pronouns someone uses, then it is best to ask or use their name when referring to someone in third person. Remember, you cannot 'tell' if someone is trans, non-

binary or gender diverse by looking at them so avoiding assumptions is key. It is okay to ask someone what pronouns they use directly or ask for pronouns for a registration form. Next time you introduce yourself, try sharing your pronouns as well.

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS WHEN ASKING FOR TITLE, SEX, AND GENDER DATA:

Title – Ms, Mr and Mx

Sex – female, male, intersex, prefer not to disclose

Gender – man, woman, non-binary, transgender, gender queer, prefer not to disclose and a free text option

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes regardless of whether they are based on gender identity, sex or sexuality reduces a person to a single characteristic and should be avoided. As well as shaping our belief of people, stereotypes can drive social judgements. Although it is very natural to judge others, it is what we do with those thoughts that matter and not allowing them to lead to prejudice or influence how we treat members of our community. In sport this means not assuming women cannot be strong or that gay men do not enjoy sports and so on. The more conscious we are about our unconscious bias, the more we as a community can challenge these harmful stereotypes that hold us back from our full potential.





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SPORT FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society, improving their skills, ability, opportunity and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity. Sports break down barriers and build bridges where boundaries usually exist. Sport can be understood across ethnics, cultures, languages and religions. Sport can create a feeling of inclusion in society, no matter what race, age, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, whether you are able-bodied or disabled, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status you are or hold. Sport organisations and governments can increase their sport programmes that focus on sport as a facilitator for inclusion. Sport and physical activity, promote tolerance, solidarity, inclusiveness and many other sporting and European values. Sports can provide a huge opportunity to make friends and connections on a team, helping newcomers establish roots in their new home. Sport clubs, organizations, and agencies are often unaware of the benefits that sport and physical activity programming/partnerships can have in helping integrate people in risk, people with disabilities or migrants/refugees. Making this a policy will keep these people in structured programmes that provide spaces to express themselves in safe ways and learn important life skills. Policies like these will help social inclusion for those in underserved communities, helping marginalised groups in our cities and



towns. Marginalised and disadvantaged groups such as migrants, refugees, and people at risk of discrimination, for example, have the chance and opportunity to interact and integrate with other social groups through sport. Sport also provides people with a disability an opportunity to increase their participation in society, show their talents and

challenge stereotypes. Sport should be a place where everyone should feel free and safe athletes, coaches and volunteers need to be able to participate in sports without fear. This will provide a platform from where inclusion can start. Sport has the power to change the world as Nelson Mandela, declared: *“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can*

Project: [INSport – Sport for social inclusion and social inclusion for sport](#)

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Erasmus+ Sport – Small Collaborative Partnership



create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.”

It's difficult to argue that people with disabilities have less favourable experiences than most when it comes to sports. People with disabilities face a great deal of barriers that limit their participation in sport. Some of these barriers are physical, while others are created by a lack of awareness and opportunity. Many people without disabilities have a difficult time understanding the barriers that people with disabilities face, and therefore have a difficult time involving them within a team. Other common barriers faced by individuals with disabilities include a lack of opportunity in sport, a lack of accessible facilities to play sport, and limited information to resources about sports. “Inclusion in sport” is the idea of breaking down these barriers, so that all people have equal opportunity to play sports, regardless of disability, accepting all people as equals – regardless of ability, ethnicity, age, religion, or gender identity – and ensuring that they have access to the same services and opportunities as everyone else.

PROJECT PARTNERS PRESUME THAT SPORT COULD BE USED AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO COMBAT THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

It is proved, that sport has positive impact on psychological health and has positive impact on those who suffer from depression, anxiety, stress, unstable mood states, lacks self – esteem (Pollock, M. L., Gaesser, G. A., Butcher, J. D., Despres, J., Dishman, R. K., Franklin, B. A., & Garber, C. E. (1998).

The period of adolescence is very complicated, because physical development of young people outrun the mental development. In many cases, this leads to dissatisfaction and self-esteem suffers (Michailovič, 2001, p. 14). If youngsters do not find support and understanding in the prosocial environment, they can easily step on a way toward deviant behaviour, addictions and social exclusion as a result (Abromaitienė, 2012).





Sport and sport organizations together with young people active in sport can and should be good a alternative for youngsters at social risk or already facing social exclusion. Sport itself is a great way to get rid of negative thoughts, anxiety, aggression, release tension and accumulated stress, improve mood, experience various positive emotions, improve self-esteem, helps to be in harmony with others and to achieve the same objectives together, increase level of tolerance. Sport is a good way to spend free time and keep yourself busy instead of doing nothing or being in a group of socially irresponsible persons. At the same time sport educates the respect to rules, teammates, opponents, motivates to get involved, develops skills needed to make a team, act as a team, accept responsibility and make decisions.

PROJECT PARTNERS PRESUME, THAT THERE ARE 2 POSSIBLE WAYS TO USE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION:

1. Active involvement of young people at social risk in a specific sport (football, volleyball, track and field athletics, basketball, judo, chess, shooting, etc.), support their attempts and motivate to work purposely toward the good personal result or achievements in team sports.

On the other hand, it is obvious, that not everyone can be good at sport. For those, who cannot show results in sport or are not interested in specific sports, the second possibility is recognized.

2. Involvement of young people at risk in regular physical activities in order to form habits of healthy way of living, ensure social leisure, develop sense and understanding, that each society member is important, needed and equal.

Project partners have built the project on the presumption and belief that sport is a universal language, spoken and understood all over the world, attracting and having positive impacts on societies and people of all ages. Due to this unique feature, sport can be a tool used by sport organizations to provide activities and events attractive to everyone, and encourage contacts between people from different social groups and with different capabilities, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, and physical or mental health.





According to K. Watson (2016), latest researches had also found that sports are beneficial not only for physical health, but can also positively affect mental health: sports improve mood, concentration, reduces stress and depression, improves sleep habits, helps to maintain healthy weight, boosts self-



confidence, develops leadership traits. All this is very important for successful socialization process and proper integration. Both of these factors (physical and mental health) are very important for successful social inclusion and raise of self-esteem.

When we talk about sport for inclusion, we must mention the essential and extremely important role of the coach/PE teacher who conducts the training or training sessions. Every coach or PE teacher has an important responsibility to their players. Every word that participants in the sports session hear influences them, and they are looking to them as a role model. Bullying and harassment frequently occur outside the classroom or on sport halls/fields. Part of the responsibility as a coach/PE teacher is to erase an unacceptable dialogue that is disparaging and harmful to a person. The goal should always be to provide a safe, respectful, positive, and competitive environment for all participants. Although the process of social inclusion of a person with a disability or in risk of social exclusion may be out of the comfort zone, it is important to note that other persons and families will always take points from your leadership such as how you demonstrating qualities and components of inclusion - this is more likely to foster understanding and advocacy to the rest of your team and their families. Coaches/PE teacher should not get caught up on the fact that these persons may be a hindrance to the team, instead, they should view this as an opportunity to embrace differences, and spend more energy on finding positive ways for that person to succeed.



There a lot of benefits of inclusive sports which are overlooked. It helps keep our bodies fit but also helps to increase our motor skills development, for socialisation, to increase our confidence and independence. There is also a lot of benefits for the community as a whole by implementing inclusive sports too. These benefits could be:

- Increase in the appreciation of and acceptance of those with disabilities;
- A better understanding of diversity;
- Greater respect for all;
- Development of meaningful relationships;
- A significant increase in the access of and inclusion within other aspects of life.



Sport is a global social factor which carries and produces values. It is important to understand that sport and physical activity are social factors and potential social inclusive tools. The implementation of the inclusive function of sport means to pursue in priority a social integration goal. To use sport for social inclusion, it is essential to make good use of the non-sport



components (education, mentorship, skills, intervention, training, reflection, etc.). This should be done in a structured, reflective and well-planned way. There are different methodologies and good practices on how and in what way sport can be used as a tool for socialization, social inclusion and social adaptation, but they are all based on a few basic principles:

- **Access** – in the physical and non-physical environment;
- **Attitude** – be a positive and have a willingness to take real action;
- **Choice** – what options people want and how they want to get involved in sport;
- **Communication** – the way we let people know about the options to get involved and about the culture;
- **Opportunity** – what options are available for people is risk of social exclusion;
- **Policy** – how a sport club, sports association or an organisation commits to and takes responsibility for inclusion through sport;
- **Partnerships** – how individual and organizational relationships are formed and how effective they are;
- **Sport as a tool of inclusion** – we should use the unique power of sport to achieve learning and social change in the community related to social inclusion.





EXAMPLES



Sitting volleyball

Sitting volleyball is a form of volleyball for disabled athletes. As opposed to standing volleyball, sitting volleyball players must have at least one buttock in contact with the floor during the game.



Adapted basketball

This sport is a great source of exercise and an excellent group activity. With adaptations can be made to allow all participants to be involved - families and friends can come together.



Golf

Adaptive golf can be played standing or sitting. Adaptive golf carts can help stabilize the body while swinging the club. Adaptive golf can teach you how to play golf if you have limb loss, paralysis, problems seeing or hearing, and emotional or cognitive problems.



Paddling

A canoe or kayak, modified for special positioning and grip, can make it possible to join outings. Canoes, tandem kayaks, and rafts allow people of all abilities to take part in paddling sports together.



Tennis

Tennis uses adaptive equipment for mobility, such as a wheelchair. Rules get modified based on the type of disability. This allows a stand-up player to compete against or on the same team as a player in a wheelchair.



BASKIN: A SPORT FOR EVERYONE

What is Baskin?

Baskin, which means *Inclusive Basketball* is a new sport invented in Cremona in 2003. This is a sport with great attention to the human diversity in terms of physical and mental abilities. The main objective is to create an activity where everyone – girls, boys, people with and without physical or mental disabilities – can participate in and enjoy to the fullest extent of their abilities. Baskin makes sure that everyone gets a chance to play a decisive role in the game, each of them making their own contribution and giving their all. In this sense it is not a mere game, but an authentic sport with which everyone can use their abilities to the maximum in order to win. It currently represents one of the most innovative sports offer as far as global accessibility and inclusion of all types of people are concerned.

Baskin is played on the same ground as a regular basket-ball. The aim is the same as Basket: the confrontation of 2 teams whose goal is to score as many baskets/points as possible in a set time. A great deal of the basic rules of basket-ball is used for Baskin: precise ball throwing, static and dynamic dribbling, passing the ball to a team player.

However, Baskin remains quite different from basket-ball in the way that it offers the possibility to make people whose mental and/or physical capacities can be radically different. In this regard, some adaptations had to be invented.

STORY

The men who came up with Baskin are Antonio Bodini, an engineer and father of a disabled daughter and Fausto Capellini, a P.E. teacher in an high school in Cremona. The idea is simple yet ingenious: a sport inspired by basketball but with modified rules that allow anyone to take part in the game in a meaningful way.

The Cremona Town Council gave the group access to its sports facilities, local sporting organizations in the area started to form their own Baskin teams for young people from outside the junior high school system. Baskin has grown and continues to grow because people like it, because everyone has fun playing it and because no-one is ever excluded.





The Baskin association was founded in 2006 with a mission is to promote this sport across the country. Baskin is currently being played at provincial and inter-regional levels in most of Italy.

THE GAME

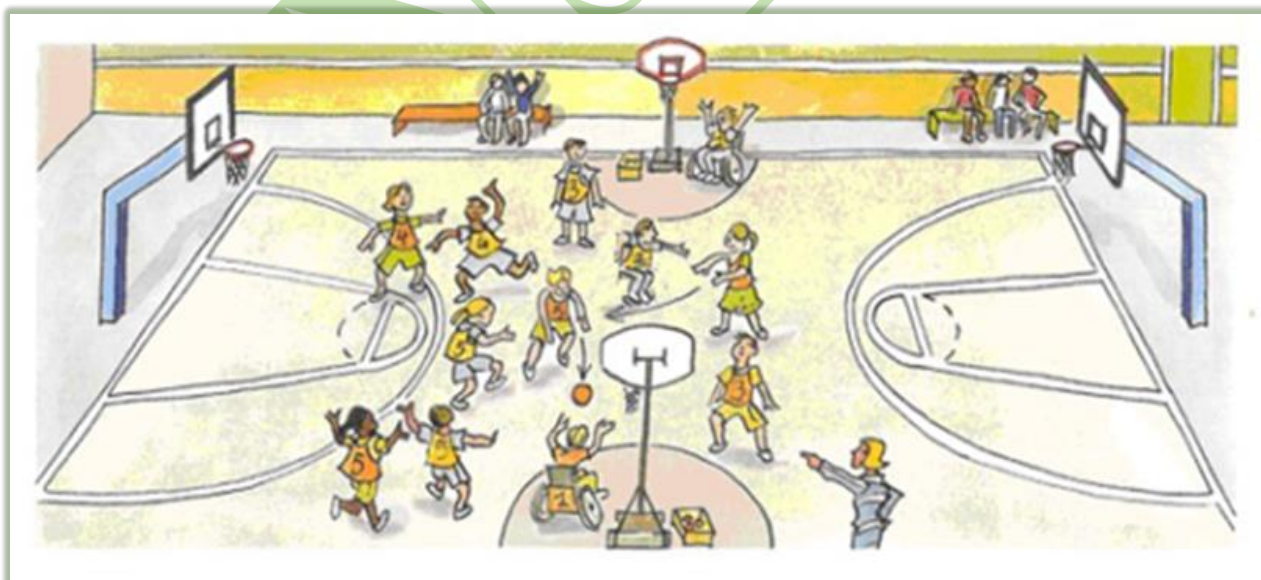
Baskin successfully meets the challenge of extending participation to almost everybody, since the only motor skill required for the game is shooting a ball in a basket. Indeed, the triple merit of Baskin is to allow a single team to include:

1. Boys AND girls (this is not always obvious in sport)
2. People with AND without big sport experience and good sport skills
3. Persons with AND without disability (this is still much less frequent)
4. People with physical AND with mental disabilities (this is quite extraordinary).

The players of a Baskin team have different “roles” and thanks to this differentiation of roles Baskin makes this inclusiveness possible, by enabling anyone to bring a decisive contribution to the game. Thus, the success of the team really depends on everybody!

GAME FIELD

Adapted Basketball court (standard dimensions) with two regular baskets plus two mobile baskets placed transversely on the court (on the perimeter in the middle of the court) with high min 1.80 m and max. 2.00 m. Around these two baskets there are two semicircular areas (with a radius of 3 m). It is possible to draw the two semicircular areas using scotch tape.



RULES

A game is played in 4 times of 6 minutes, each without interruption. Time is only stopped during changes. The mini-basketball is used and there is only one referee.



A team consists of 14 players, 6 of whom take the field. Each player has a well-defined role that depends on their physical capacities, their understanding and their playing skills.

The team is composed of 3 normally able-bodied and 3 differently able-bodied. Each player is given a number from 1 to 5 according to their characteristics. All players must enter the field.

There must be at least 1 girl playing role 4 or 5. There must be at least 2 RULE 5 players on the pitch.

PLAYERS 1 & 2: people with disability with full or partial use of the hands for shooting at the lateral basket, the walk enables him/her to move. They cannot be marked. They are positioned in the restricted area related to the lateral backstops where they remain for all the duration of the game. They can only throw the ball in the baskets of the lateral backstops.

PLAYER 3: person with disability who possesses full or partial use of the hands, walking, running even with dribbling not continued or interrupted dribbling. Does not possess smooth running. They play on the court and traveling and double dribbling are accepted. They can only defend over adverse players 3 and vice-versa, they can only be blocked by adverse players 3. They can shoot both into the lateral baskets (scoring 2 points) or into the regular baskets (scoring 3 points) wherever they shoot from on the playing ground.

PLAYER 4: person with disability, who possesses the major praxes (the use of the hands, therefore shooting, walking, smooth running with dribbling regular dribbling). They play on the court but are not submitted to performing the layup. They can only be blocked by adverse players 3 and/or 4. They are not allowed to score into lateral baskets. They can shoot 3-point field goals and/or 2-point goals.

PLAYER 5: able-bodied person (tutor role) They play on the court and they are submitted to the same rules as regular basket-ball. They have the traditional role of monitoring the play of their team. They can be blocked by all the players moving on the game court. They are not allowed to score into lateral baskets. They can shoot 3-pointers and/or 2-point goals. They are only allowed 3 shoots per quarter.





EXAMPLE OF A PRACTICAL ACTIVITY USING SPORT AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION



TITLE	Step into the shoes of the other	
DURATION	30 minutes (can be divided into 3-6 sessions)	
SPACE	Sport hall or Open area	
TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS (necessary materials)	Depending on the availability. It can be basketball / football / volleyball / handball , etc area. Pen, paper, box, scarfs.	
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	10 - 16	
METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	Warm-up activity, practice activity, debriefing	
AIM OF THE ACTIVITIES, GAMES (expected learning outcomes)	Usually and almost unconsciously children and youngsters exclude from the sport and physical activities/games those, whom they consider as “not useful” in the field (higher weight, too small or too tall, not able to run fast , has some disability, exclusion can be based on gender or culture, etc.). It is obvious, that in team sport every player wants to score and be the “number one”. Those with fewer abilities and opportunities are pushed away and are just staying in the field, even if invited to be the part of the team. As a result, those “weaker” children and young people lose the least interest in sport and physical activity, choose digital tools and condemn themselves to technological isolation and excessive food consumption. The aim of the activity is to set different rules to the players and let participants to “step into others’ shoes”. This way few goals can be achieved: 1. Social exclusion in sport and physical activity will be prevented. 2. Active participation in sport and physical activities/games will be promoted. 3. The attractiveness of the sport and physical activity will be rediscovered / increased. 4. An element of the fun will be included.	
	DURATION	DESCRIPTION
THE SESSION STEP BY STEP	Each activity can take aprox. 5 mins	Activity 1: Warm up. Depending on the type of the sport chosen as the basis of the activity (basketball/ football/ volleyball, handball). This example will be provided on the basketball basis.



		Activity 2: participants are divided in 2 teams. According to the number of players in each team, coach writes on the piece of paper the role each player will have to perform: e.g. „can't score“, „plays with left hand“, always passes ball to others“, „always stops when gets the ball“, „closes eyes while scoring“, „moves 3 steps after getting ball and passes“, etc. Pieces of paper with roles go to the box and each player randomly picks paper with his own role and do not show his role to other participants. Each player performs its own role. Activity 3: Roles can be switched and game session repeated. Activity 4: Participants are divided into pair. One player puts scarf on his eyes and becomes „blind“. The other players help him to get ball and provides commands where to move to get closer to the basket: „right, left, forward, etc.“. When the „blind“ player reaches the appropriate place for scoring, the assistant commands „score“ and the „blind“ player tries to score. Modification: Players can be divided in pairs and in teams (e.g. 3 pairs in each team). The assistants take the hand of the „blind“ player and lead him across the playing field. The assistant can catch the ball, move with him, but he can't score. Only „blind“ participants can score. Roles in pairs can be changed and the game repeated. Modification: weights can be put on the hands, legs and waist of the participants. This would be simulation of the “obesity”. Other rules can remain the same. Activity 5: debriefing. How have you felt performing the given role? Did you like the feeling experienced during the game while performing the certain role? Why have you felt the way you did? How have you felt being “blind”/“obese”? etc.
RESULTS, GOALS ACHIEVED	1. Social exclusion in sport and physical activity will be prevented. 2. Active participation in sport and physical activities/games will be promoted. 3. The attractiveness of the sport and physical activity will be rediscovered / increased. 4. Element of the fun will be included.	



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	The players will understand that the active participation in sport and physical activity is important to everyone regardless the physical condition. The awareness about the importance of sport and physical activity as an overweight and obesity prevention tool will be raised. Sport and physical activity as an alternative to the games in digital devices will be promoted.
SOURCE OF INFORMATION	Eramus+ Sport small collaborative partnership projects: EU be Active/EUBA START



Project: INSport – Sport for social inclusion and social inclusion for sport
Project Number: 622057-EPP-1-2020-1-LT-SPO-SSCP
Erasmus+ Sport – Small Collaborative Partnership



SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR SPORT



In the previous chapter we have talked about the way the sport can foster and promote the social inclusion. In this Part we will talk about how social inclusion can serve for the needs of the sport. Sounds strange? Not at all – the relation between sport and social inclusion is simple and mutually beneficial!

To ensure the successful process of social inclusion through sport, experienced teachers, coaches, trainers and other staff working with young people are needed. Specific skills to work with “difficult” and at the same time sensitive young people at social risk need to be formed. At the same time, it is crucial to envisage gifted young people, who can seek for higher or highest sport results, identify them, engage, motivate and guide them to the sport discipline which needs the abilities one has. To reach this aim, specific trainings for coaches, trainers and other staff working with young people need to be organized in order to improve their knowledge and provide recommendations/ methodology/ guidelines/ description of the key elements to recognize those who can do sports not only for fun, but also for the result.



HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP EDUCATORS, TRAINERS AND TEACHERS TO ENVISAGE TO GIFTED YOUNG PEOPLE – POSSIBLY SUCCESSFUL SPORTSMEN.

THE FEATURES SUCCESSFUL ATHLETES USUALLY EXHIBIT (THE PERSON CAN HAVE ONLY ONE COMBINATION OF THESE):

1. **Self-confidence:** such sportsmen are innately self-confident, and they truly believe that they will win. They also have the confidence to deal with any unexpected situations that may arise and to speak up for themselves or their teammates when appropriate.
2. **Motivation:** Athletes are motivated by the desire to be better than their opponent and even better than their personal best.
3. **Self-discipline:** They know that success doesn't happen overnight. They have enough of the self-discipline to follow the training sessions regularly.



4. **Optimism:** An athlete who lacks an optimistic attitude isn't likely to fully excel because they don't expect to win. A successful athlete must believe that they will win and remain positive even when facing adversity.
5. **Acceptance of Criticism:** The one is able to understand that it's important to remain coachable while accepting and learning from their mistakes. They will also be open to advice or tips from teammates and accepting of calls made by officials.
6. **Poise under Stress:** it is natural to be stressed and feel pressure during the game/competitions. The successful athlete will find its own way to deal with this situation and perform as successful as he can.
7. **Focus:** The one should be able to focus on the moment while competing and tune out anything that is happening in the stands with spectators or that might be occurring in their personal lives outside of their sport.
8. **Resiliency:** Losses are just a reality of being an athlete. Setbacks will occur, and an athlete can't be successful if they aren't resilient. Even after a loss, successful athletes stay positive and use the experience as an opportunity to learn and move forward.
9. **Competitive Spirit:** Sportsmen need to enjoy winning, and it is likely that they will be competitive even in areas outside of their sport.
10. **Natural Leadership:** Even athletes who don't take on roles as captains or co-captains will usually have some leadership traits. Quick decisions often need to be made in the heat of competition, and an athlete with leadership skills will be better prepared to take the initiative to make them.
11. **Humility:** It is important to be more able to acknowledge and accept the mistakes rather than trying to make excuses. Alternately, when a humble athlete's team is successful, they do not take all of the credit. Real athletes credit their teammates and coaching staff when they are successful.
12. **Passion:** An athlete who is passionate about their sport is more likely to be successful.

MOST ATHLETES – PROFESSIONAL AND RECREANATIONAL – HAVE ALWAYS HAD AN INSTINCT TO MOVE, SAY J. TIMOTHY LIGHTFOOT, CHAIR OF THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND KINESIOLOGY.

HERE ARE FEW OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ONE'S INCLINATION TO EXERCISE/SPORT:

1. THE ACTIVE PARENTS



Research suggests pre-schoolers whose parents are highly supportive of exercise are more than six times more likely to be highly active than inactive. Early on, the family ends up being a really important factor in kids' activity levels.

2. A GREAT COACH

While mom and dad play a big role in your physical activity as a tot, people such as coaches, peers and other role models can make a big difference in how much one exercises. For girls in particular, coaches, gym teachers and other exercise leaders are critical motivators, according to a report from the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. But the opposite is true too: some studies show that middle-aged non-exercisers cited “negative school experiences” as reasons for recent sedentary life style.

3. THE ONE IS BUILT LIKE AN ATHLETE

About 52 percent of a person's daily physical activity is genetic, although estimates range from 24 percent to 92 percent. Genetics, anthropology and anthropometry have the greatest impact on one's ability to become an athlete.

4. THE ONE GREW UP IN A SPORTY COMMUNITY

When the one is surrounded by physically active people, being active becomes a routine and habit. It is much easier to start doing sports regularly when you are used to be active.

The individual work and parenting of a young man –future sportsmen – have a crucial importance on the long-term result. When it comes to parenting a young athlete, it's easy to focus on results: a pizza party when a team wins in the playoffs, a special treat when he or she scores the game-winning goal or achieves personal best result. But for determined athletes, a focus on recognizing effort rather than results can yield more long-term benefits.

Praising results can have negative consequences: Studies have shown that kids who are praised for being ‘smart’ versus working hard, for example, are more likely to cheat on tests, and praising children for positive qualities versus praising their efforts can lead to lower self-esteem.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO USE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY TO APPRECIATE CHILDREN'S EFFORTS VERSUS THEIR VICTORIES, AND HERE ARE A FEW TIPS FOR HOW TO REFRAME THE PRAISE TO CREATE AND PROMOTE HEALTHIER, HAPPIER ATHLETES:

1. EMPHASIZE EFFORT

Children are looking for what the right things are to do, and trainers need to help them in creation of this internal compass. That means making an athlete feel fulfilled knowing that he or she worked hard, versus them winning the game. The trophy shouldn't be the end goal for the athlete or for you



as a coach. Instead of focusing on the result – like scoring the winning goal – appreciation means focusing on the extra skills practice that an athlete did to perfect her shooting technique.

... BUT DON'T IGNORE THE RESULTS

Naturally, there's an outcome: everyone wants to win, score goals, get points, strike someone out.... The trainers/coaches/teachers shouldn't avoid talking about it, because whether such conversation is taken out loud or not, a young athlete will have feelings on his win or loss. It is also important to be honest about how the game/competitions went.

It is obvious that winning is different than losing, but what we should know from positive psychology when people feel valued and appreciated as human beings, when kids on the team know that the coach cares about them and wants them to do well, that creates psychological safety.

2. BE AUTHENTIC

Studies have shown that 'warmth' versus overly inflated praise is more beneficial for a child's self-esteem, so don't lie to your young athlete about how he or she played. Instead, focus on making the athlete feel cared about, versus sugar-coating the truth.

When it comes to communication, don't ignore the digital space. If you're coaching teenagers, assume that they're seeing everything that you're posting on social media – be careful with posts, always ask yourself: 'Would I say this out loud to a group of people?' If not, don't share it.

3. CARE FIRST, CRITICIZE LATER

If you focus on the effort and the human being, when it's time to give some critical feedback, the athlete will be much more open to feedback because you've put enough into their emotional bank account. It is necessary to let an athlete know that trainers/coaches/teachers value and care about them and have their backs. It is important to earn that respect by showing that you're in it for the athlete – not just the win.

4. TAKEAWAY

Sometimes it is really difficult to find the words after the game/competition. It is always possible to start with: 'I loved watching you play'. Usually, it is a true statement even when the outcome isn't what trainer and kid were hoping for. Remember – you can't control the outcome, but you can control your attitude and your effort.

The sport life consists not only from trainers/coaches and sportsmen. The people on the side line of every sport event matter as well and it is not easy to be a simple observer – sometimes stress and emotions are skyrocketing. And the role of the spectators is usually mistaken – the reaction of the audience can inspire the sportsmen or, in opposite, let them down. So, the right behaviour of the



indirect participants of the sport event is very important talking about the games/competitions where young athletes are competing.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS HOW TO BE SUPPORTIVE AND INSPIRING SPECTATOR:

1. CHEER ON EFFORT, NOT JUST ACHIEVEMENT

Rather than focusing on cheering hard when an athlete scores a goal in a game, try to cheer on moments of great effort. That could be when a child tries a new move—even if it doesn't work out—or passes the ball to a teammate instead of trying to score a shot solo.

2. FOCUS ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DYNAMIC

If we focus on encouraging teamwork and community rather than on competition and winning, more young athletes will stay in sport. Focusing on a joyful and hardworking environment will undoubtedly lead to more development and wins.

3. ENCOURAGE CHEERING FOR EVERYONE

It is important to remember to cheer for everyone, not just the star players or your favourite or most dominant personalities on a team. The golden rule is to give positive feedback to each individual player on your team.

4. BE AWARE OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

Giving each player specific positive feedback is of great importance. However, a rule to not criticize any child during the game, ever, should be set up too. Every kid knows when they make a mistake once they begin playing at more competitive levels, so whether you're a coach or a spectator, during a game is not the time to bring it up.

5. CHEER FOR THE OTHER TEAM

Coaches (and spectators) can influence how the team sees and treats players on opposing teams by cheering for those kids as well. And cheering for great plays from the other team as a coach can also cue your own athletes into great tips and tactics that they may not have noticed before. Showing appreciation for the game and all the joy it can bring is something that ought to be celebrated.

6. COACHES SHOULD SET THE TONE WITH PARENTS

It can be helpful to have a meeting with parents at the beginning of the school year/start of the training session. Let them know that the only thing you want to hear from them during a game is positive encouragement - no coaching the coaches, no coaching the athletes.

7. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY LANGUAGE



You may not realize that your body language unconsciously is sending negative messages, but if you're constantly shaking your head, covering your eyes, looking down, gesturing wildly, or just showing closed off body language, you may be sending unintentional nonverbal cues to the athletes. If you aren't sure how you're appearing at games, consider asking someone to video you for a few minutes, then play the footage back to see how you handle different moments. Focus on positive body language like cheering, smiling, making eye contact, and generally keeping your body relaxed and open.

8. REMEMBER THAT KIDS ABSORB EVERYTHING

The areas that control logic and rational thought are some of the last to receive a circuit update in an adolescent's brain. That means it may be harder for them to control their emotions, and if they see you engaging in unsportsmanlike behaviour, from cursing under your breath at the umpire to shouting at a parent on the opposing team, they begin to emulate that reaction.

TAKEAWAY: When athletes look at their coach during a game, they should see positivity and encouragement, not frustration or anger. Athletes also shouldn't see you arguing with referees or exhibiting negative body language. Remember, how you act determines how your athletes act.

A team's success is largely measured by its season record; however, successful coaches understand that forming strong coach-athlete relationships is just as important as achieving wins. Establishing relationships with athletes helps a coach understand what motivates or drives each individual. It also highlights a personal, caring approach on the part of the coach—demonstrating that the coach sees the player as more than just a ticket to victory. Creating a relationship with each athlete helps improve overall team morale in addition to helping ensure the team will accomplish its goals.

THERE ARE SEVERAL SKILLS COACHES CAN DEVELOP THAT CAN HELP THEM FORM STRONG TIES WITH THEIR ATHLETES:

1. COMMUNICATION

One of the most important aspects of the relationship between coach and athlete is communication. With clear communication, coaches can lead, direct, and manage their teams more effectively. In return, the team and individual athletes can both freely express ideas and concerns to the benefit of everyone.

Coaches must consider every situation and every athlete individually to decide the best form of communication. Although a democratic style of coaching is usually the best strategy, an autocratic



style can also have its advantages. Autocratic coaching is known for telling instead of listening and can be advantageous when concrete trust is present. Democratic coaching, on the other hand, is a style where the coach and individual athletes communicate openly and have collaborative discussions.

2. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Building an athlete up through positive support and encouragement can help them accomplish their personal goals and support the team constructively. Coaches who help their teams visualize a positive outcome can increase the team's chances of achieving success. Coaches don't need to be positive about every aspect to accomplish their goals. They can acknowledge where their athletes are doing well, along with showing them where they need improvement. It's important to note that positive reinforcement hinges on effective communication. One of the coach's responsibilities is to help their players grow as athletes, as well as help them gain confidence in their skills both on and off the field.

3. GENUINE INTEREST

For a coach to gain the respect of their athletes, they must give respect in return. To create a strong relationship, coaches must show an interest that goes beyond immediate team-related issues. The difference between demonstrating interest and genuine interest is sincerity. A coach with genuine interest will gather information about players that may help with game strategy, practice, and general team bonding.

4. AVAILABILITY

The relationship between coach and athlete depends on how to open the coach is to establishing interpersonal relationships. As a mentor and advisor, the coach needs to make clear to the entire team that he or she is available to talk whenever needed. Younger student-athletes often need advice and at times, maybe seeking someone to follow. By being available and engaged, coaches have an opportunity to positively influence their athletes. Coaches who make themselves available to their athletes are paving the way toward establishing and nurturing strong relationships.

5. TRUST

Trust is the cornerstone of a strong bond, and it is formed when a coach provides clear instructions, delivers positive reinforcement, and shows genuine interest. Once trust is established, athletes usually listen more closely, follow instructions more readily, and generally enjoy the entire team experience more intently. Mutual trust is beneficial to the team, to how athletes play their sports, and it often leads to positive results.



BE AWARE OF NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

The coach-athlete relationship is considered particularly crucial because of its effect on the athlete. Young athletes are susceptible to their surrounding environment and to the ideas of others, making the coach-athlete relationship critical to the development of athletes as individuals as well as sports participants. If a coach is exclusively focused on victory and their sole goal is winning, they may be able to reach that goal. However, it comes with the strong possibility of introducing ethical and professional dilemmas.

Success without effective relationships produces athletes with the ability, but with no personal growth. Coaches must understand their job isn't just about physical progress, it's about equipping their young athletes for success in life. A lack of interest, remoteness, deceit, and pessimism are key characteristics to avoid as a coach. Apathy and irritability set a poor example and lead to ineffective relationships.

These characteristics do not provide a healthy foundation for positive relationships, furthermore, they exploit the impressionable minds of athletes who are focused on pursuing victories on the field. The real victories are found in teamwork and personal connections.



HANDBOOK BY INSport

RECOMMENDED READING

- o [Ohio University Blog, “Encouraging Multisport Athletes”](#)
- o [Ohio University Blog, “Identifying Mental Health Concerns in High School Athletes”](#)

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