COACHING GIRLS GUIDE

HOW TO GET (AND KEEP) GIRLS PLAYING

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING & RETAINING GIRLS IN SPORT

Made to Play

WE COACH

CONTENTS

1. ABOUT THE GUIDE

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. WHAT COACHES SHOULD DO

4. TOOLS FOR COACHES & PROGRAM LEADERS

5. GIRL-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS CHECKLIST

6. KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

7. COACHING MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

8. PRACTICE PLANS

9. HOW TO TRAIN COACHES

10. BEHAVIOR BANK

11. CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORT

AUGUST 2020

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO SERVE PROGRAM LEADERS AND COACHES WORKING TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN GIRLS IN SPORT. THIS BUILDS FROM THE WOMEN'S SPORTS FOUNDATION'S APRIL 2019 REPORT *COACHING THROUGH A GENDER LENS* [1] AND THE WORK OF OTHER RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD.

THE GUIDE TAKES LEARNINGS AND RESEARCH, AND TRANSLATES THEM INTO ACTIONABLE TOOLS. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE COME TOGETHER BASED ON A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH ON GIRLS IN SPORT, A CONVENING OF EXPERTS[2] AND LEADERS, AND A TEST WITH COACHES WORKING IN THE FIELD.

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 crisis will have lasting impacts on the way we coach, gather and play. As communities begin youth sports and activities, it is important to consider how best to protect players, coaches, families and communities.

Coaches and program leaders should consult local health officials to determine if and when it is safe to resume play and sport activities, as well as how to implement policies and procedures to slow the spread of COVID-19. Every community and sport is different, and coaches should consider local guidance to meet each community and activity's unique needs.

[1] The Women's Sports Foundation has led the way in understanding and translating important data about the role of women and girls in sport through their report : https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/coaching-through-a-gender-lens-report-web.pdf
[2] Expert Advisors: https://howtocoachkids.org/detail/172

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE RESEARCH SHOWS GIRLS LOVE TO PLAY AND PLAY HARD. EVEN SO, THEY START SPORTS LATER AND LEAVE EARLIER THAN BOYS DO – OFTEN BECAUSE OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OR BECAUSE OF NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES. THAT'S A BIG PROBLEM BECAUSE GIRLS NEED THE BENEFITS THAT SPORTS OFFER. THE GOOD NEWS IS THE RIGHT COACH CAN MAKE ALL OF THE DIFFERENCE.

Girls participate in sport at lower rates than boys at all ages. Girls tend to start involvement in sport later than boys do and they drop out sooner. These disparities are especially acute in urban communities and among girls of color.[3]

Recent research from The Women's Sports Foundation reveals that the reason girls participate less is not because they don't enjoy the key components of sport: being competitive, feeling athletic, reaching goals and building a team. They do want these things, and they report enjoying sport at high rates. The reality is that girls have extra challenges to overcome when it comes to getting and staying involved. For example, girls receive conflicting cultural messages about what it means to be a girl and what it means to be an athlete. They often feel that they must cross gender boundaries in order to play a sport seen as masculine, they get teased by boys while in traditionally male-centered sport spaces, and they do not have enough female coaches to look up to and relate to.[4]

It matters that girls aren't accessing the benefits of sport as much as they could be. Girls need the physical, mental, academic and social benefits that sport participation has been shown to give. In recent years, rates of depression and anxiety in the U.S. have increased and this trend is particularly true for girls.[5]

Many of these girls are not receiving formal mental health treatment,[6] so access to programs that provide benefits in non-traditional ways is vital. Young girls in urban communities, who have the least access to sport, are particularly vulnerable to experiencing certain types of trauma [7] and have inadequate access to high-quality mental health services.[8]

Sport has huge potential to benefit girls, but it has to be done well. While many factors contribute to whether or not a girl keeps playing, it is clear that girls need great coaches. The Women's Sports Foundation found that how a girl feels about her coach is one of the most important factors related to if she keeps playing the sport.[9]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While we know that coaches have the best intentions when it comes to helping their athletes succeed, we also know that people come to coaching, and any interaction, with implicit and explicit biases. For example, in a physical sport like rugby, a coach's perceptions of female "toughness" may cause them to focus on different activities or skills when coaching girls as opposed to boys. A coach's bias or expectations about femininity may influence whether they encourage their players to weight train or participate in other strength-based exercises. A coach who believes girls participate in sport primarily to "be with their friends" may not focus on girls' skill development as much as they would if coaching boys.

Any of these behaviors, while not necessarily intentional, could influence how fulfilled and challenged a girl feels from their sport experience. Becoming more aware of biases about the role of women and girls in sport and using strategies to overcome them is fundamental to changing the way girls are treated in sport. Coaches also might simply be unaware of ways that girls are feeling unwelcome in the sport context or are facing barriers that they need extra support to overcome. Since coaches are at the core of how girls experience sport, we want to give coaches tangible tools they can use to create more girl-friendly sport and play environments.

[3] http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/go_out_and_play_exec.pdf

[4] Coaching Through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls Play & Potential, https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/coaching-gender-lens-maximizing-girls-play-potential/

[5] https://adaa.org/find-help-for/women/mental-health-in-young-girls-and-teens

[6] https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/11/health/children-teens-mental-health-untreated-study/index.html

[7] https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/BRIEFING_PAPER_GOC_AND_TRAUMA_FINAL.pdf

[8] Hodgkinson, S., Godoy, L., Beers, L. S., & Lewin, A. (2016). Improving Mental Health Access for Low-Income Children and Families in the Primary Care Setting. Pediatrics, 139(1). doi:10.1542/peds.2015-1175

[9] Coaching Through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls Play & Potential, https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/articles_and_report/coaching-gender-lens-maximizing-girls-play-potential/

WHAT COACHES SHOULD DO

1. MAKE SURE THE PLAYING SPACE & TEAM CULTURE WORK FOR GIRLS

There are some basic things that coaches can do ahead of time to make sure that they are creating girl-centered environments. Some of these things have to do with the physical space, the language we use, the examples we elevate and the way we model behaviors. In some cases, like with facilities, coaches may not have direct control over these things. Regardless, it's important for them to understand and advocate to program administrators for the needs of the girls on their teams.

CREATE A SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE AND PROVIDE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

Coaches should make spaces as safe and welcoming as possible to all girls. This means coaches should prioritize girls-only spaces that are supervised, hazard-free, well-lit and have accessible restrooms. Coaches should strive to create an environment that celebrates differences and is free of discrimination and judgment, so girls aren't simply included but welcomed into their sports experience. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, and coaches should always prioritize the safety, security and well-being of young athletes.

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Without meaning to, we are all responsible for perpetuating a culture of masculinity in sport through language. One of the most common ways we do this is by referring to all young people as "guys." Girls are not "guys." In fact, in one study of classrooms where teachers called all the students "guys," researchers found that girls were significantly less likely to raise their hands because they thought the teacher wasn't talking to them. We also tend to provide sport examples that feature men. When making team names, don't just rely on the Red Sox, Raptors and Red Wings. Be sure to also include the Storm, Spirit, Sky Blue FC and other women's teams.

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU INCLUDE GIRLS

Make time to reflect on how you include girls a part of your everyday approach. Talk to other coaches, program administrators and the girls on the team about successes and challenges. Think about what kind of biases you might have when it comes to girls' participation in sports and find ways to include players and parents in conversations about perceptions and misperceptions of female athletes. Check out the Conversation Starters on page 34.

COACH'S CORNER

LET GIRLS MAKE THE SPACE THEIR OWN

Coach Sally from PeacePlayers in Brooklyn has all of her girls write their name and draw a picture of themselves on a piece of paper. Then they write things on the paper that they like about themselves. They pass it around and their teammates also write something nice about them (not about their physical appearance) on the paper. She says "we hang these up in the gym and the girls really like seeing them everyday."

NEUTRAL AND OBJECTIVE LANGUAGE MATTERS

Coaches and kids from KIDSPORTS in Eugene, OR recognize the importance of inclusive language and are witnessing what they call the "Sabrina effect". Basketball player Sabrina Ionescu is helping to transform basketball language to be more gender neutral. Instead of talking about Sabrina as a woman shooting the ball "like a guy," they refer to Sabrina shooting the ball as a "basketball player." This vernacular shift is a powerful reminder of why language matters, for all kids.

2. CREATE CONNECTIONS WITH GIRLS

One of the most important things a sports program can do to promote girl-friendly policies is to invest in the people who will be part of that girl's experience. A healthy relationship with a caring adult, like a coach, can make a girl feel like they belong in sports, and help fuel her positive development. Coaches can model good decision-making, provide support when things are hard and share their own experiences so that girls understand that what they are going through is normal.

Most importantly, a coach can help show a girl what is possible through sport!

Teammates can also be a source of inspiration and drive engagement for girls. Peer influence is important, especially during adolescence, and it can be a powerful tool to get girls excited about sports, and help girls feel welcome and safe in a sports environment that might otherwise feel new and different. Relationships with peers are also more likely to stay with a girl outside of sport – to provide a protective layer of support off the court, as well as on.

Because girls aren't always supported to play sports in the same way boys are, creating connections with parents and other adults in the girl's life is also important. Every time we help the adults in a girl's life see how valuable sport can be for them, the more likely they are to support her when she wants to play.

COACH'S CORNER

GIRLS RECRUIT GIRLS

When Coach Jill was starting a new program at Philly Girls in Motion, she engaged a group of girls to be in charge of recruiting. They created flyers and encouraged girls in their schools and community to participate. They had the best attendance of any new PGIM initiative.

FAMILY MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO INSPIRE (AND PLAY!)

At PowerPlay NYC, Coaches encourage each girl's family members to get involved by hosting kids vs. adults scrimmages and hold a celebratory banquet at the end of the year (with plenty of good food).

3. LET GIRLS COMPETE

Competition has not been viewed as one of the primary motivations for girls to play sports. The myths that girls are there to lose weight or socialize have existed for decades. And, while it's true that girls prioritize relationships in sports, this has come to be understood as somehow in conflict with the idea of competing. The two are not mutually exclusive. It turns out girls are most motivated by coaches who can do both – create meaningful relationships and challenge them to improve and compete.[10]

Competition comes in many different shapes and sizes. Coaches have the ability to set up sports experiences so that girls have the chance to experience, become comfortable with and excel at all of them. Competition can be motivating for girls and coaches should not shy away from challenging girls to improve as individuals, as a team, and against others. When a coach's approach to competition focuses on individual and team improvement and not just the final score, their feedback to players is more personalized and engaging.

[10] Women's Sport Foundation

COACH'S CORNER

PLAYERS TRACK AND CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Coach Claire from We Coach has her girls keep a team score for free throws using a fun game that they play every day. Over the course of the season, the team sees its progress and supports each other in getting better.

4. FOCUS ON PROGRESS, NOT THE FINAL OUTCOME

Girls want coaches who create positive environments that encourage safety, fun, skill-building and healthy competition. They want feedback that is relevant to their development and not only based on the team's win-loss record. In a mastery approach, coaches focus on the effort and process behind learning a skill, not the outcome. It focuses on the things that are within an athlete's control – the progress and not the performance of the athlete and team.

The process of seeing yourself get better at something is incredibly powerful. Unfortunately, though, that power is wasted if girls aren't conscious of the fact that they've improved. It's our job as coaches to make sure they see their progress and undergo the transformation from feeling like they "can't" and start believing that they "can."

When coaches focus on progress and not performance outcomes, the definition of success changes. Not only are girls rewarded for winning games, but they are also celebrated for making progress on key sport and life skills that help them perform. Being celebrated for their improvements helps build their confidence and encourages them to try new things and take risks, something that girls really like about participating in sports.

COACH'S CORNER

A MASTERY APPROACH FOCUSES ON THE PROCESS OF LEARNING A SKILL

Coach Marti uses the Positive Coaching Alliance's ELM tree of mastery, which encourages coaches to 1) focus on effort (E), 2) look at all experiences as a chance to learn (L), and 3) help kids bounce back from their mistakes (M)!

IMPROVEMENT TAKES INTENTION AND TIME

Coach Alecia from Girls in the Game in Chicago starts every season by asking each girl to pick one skill she wants to improve that season. They take two minutes every practice to work on the skill and Coach periodically records how each player is doing. At the end of the season, each girl sees how she's improved.

5. ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO BE BRAVE, NOT PERFECT

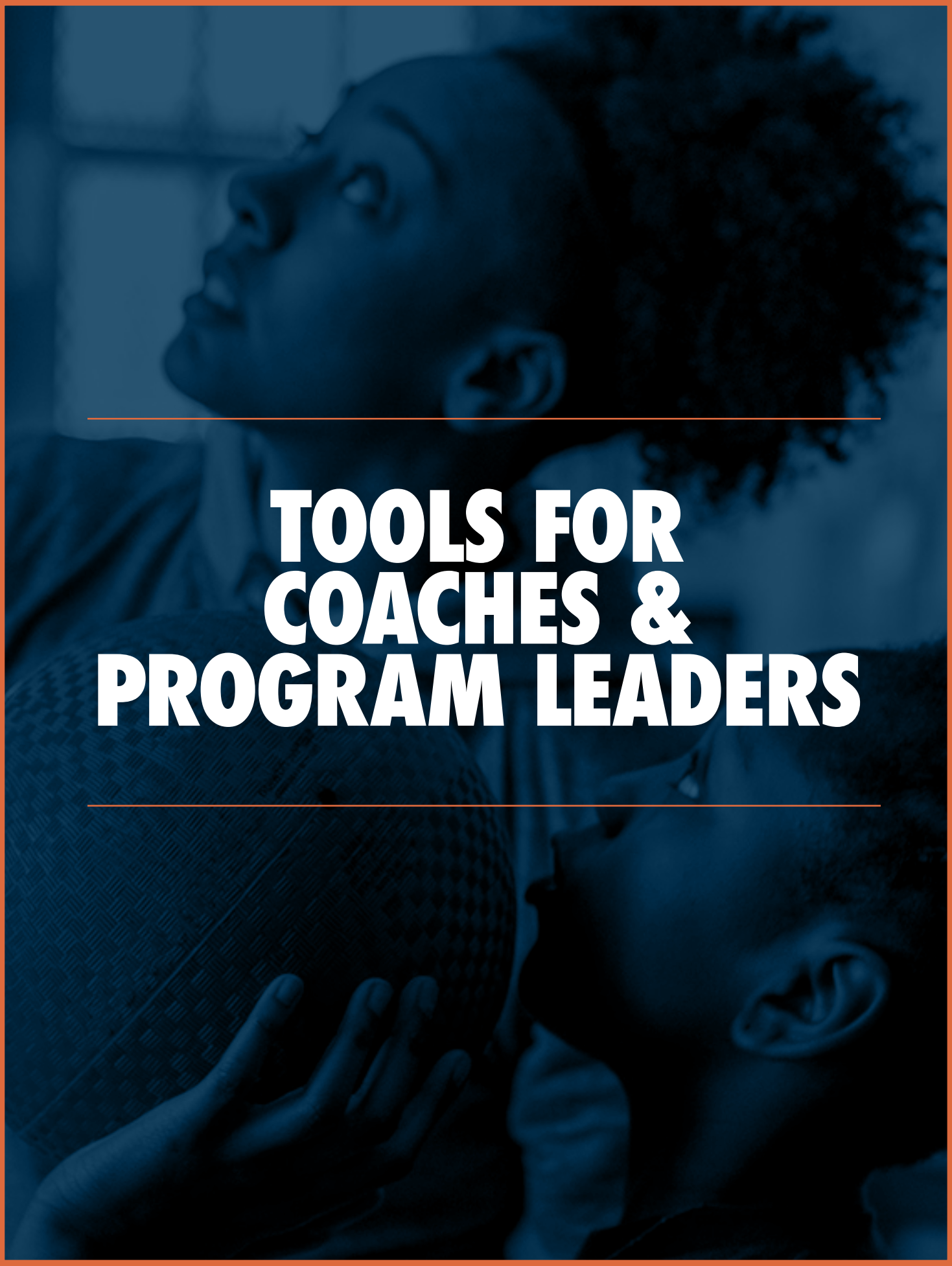
For many girls, there is significant pressure to portray themselves in a positive light. Girls feel a lot of pressure to be perfect, from adults who reward them for accomplishments only, or from social media where the pressure to have the perfect look and life is intense. Girls are socialized not to take risks and try new things, which means that they are less likely to engage in things where they aren't sure they will be successful. You can't learn something without being willing to take a risk.

For girls to be willing to try something new, we have to create environments that reward bravery, not perfection. Girls have to feel safe to take risks, knowing that they won't be judged and that the courage they use to take a risk will be rewarded. They have to know that what they bring to the team is valued and that their contribution matters. Coaches do this by setting expectations, giving their positive attention to, and shouting out girls who try new things even more than those who perform skills well. When everyone understands that trying, even if they fail, is among their team's most important values, you see girls who feel safe to take risks.

COACH'S CORNER

TEAMMATES ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO TRY NEW THINGS

Coach Lindsey from Soccer Without Borders always has her team do shout-outs at the end of practice. To start, she always asks "Who wants to shout-out a teammate for trying something new?" before she moves on to general shout-outs that can be about anything.



TOOLS FOR COACHES & PROGRAM LEADERS

GIRL-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS CHECKLIST

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (PROGRAM LEADERS)

Set up a regular schedule to run through the checklist – e.g., before the season, mid-way through the year and at the end of the year. Share the tool with coaches and create a two-way dialogue about successes and challenges. Coaches should share how they think they are doing and what support they need from the program leaders. Program leaders should share feedback about where they see coaches being successful and ask how they can be more supportive.

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST (COACHES)

Use the tool to check in regularly about how successful you are at providing the right environments for girls. Be sure to ask them to weigh in on what they see working and what could be improved. If something needs to change that is outside of your control, advocate to your supervisor or the league administrators about making a change.

SAFE, WELCOMING SPACE & TEAM CULTURE

- ☐ Girls are safe when arriving at practice or games. Entrance and activity space are hazard-free, well-lit and appropriately supervised.
- ☐ Girls' bathrooms are accessible and appropriately stocked. Garbage cans and hygiene products are accessible.
- ☐ Girls are actively and intentionally welcomed to the space and included in activities.
- ☐ Girls see pictures of female role models or other girls being active in their sport spaces.
- ☐ Girls see grown women who look like them when they participate in sports.
- ☐ Girls have the opportunity to be active in space that is reserved just for them.

APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT

- ☐ Girls have access to sports equipment that works for them: the right size, appropriate to the rules of their sport, etc.
- ☐ Girls have access to personal items, like sports bras, hair ties and sneakers or cleats, which enable them to participate in sports. If they don't have these items, the coach or program leader attempts to secure these items on their behalf.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- ☐ Girls (and boys) are referred to in gender-neutral terms. Coaches don't refer to all players as "guys."
- ☐ Girls hear coaches refer to positive female athlete role models – when naming teams or giving examples of great performances.
- ☐ Girls hear coaches acknowledge important female sports events, like WNBA playoffs, the U.S. Open, or the Women's World Cup.

TIME TO REFLECT

- ☐ Girls have the chance to reflect on their experiences in formal and informal ways.
- ☐ Girls have the chance to provide feedback to the coaches about their experiences.
- ☐ Girls see their coaches reflect on their bias about girls in sport and actively work to change it.
- ☐ Girls see their coaches intervene when they hear comments or see actions that minimize girls' ability to participate in sports.

KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

1. LEARN NAMES

As simple as it sounds, too many coaches don't learn their athletes' names, take too long to learn them or simply don't use them. Coaches should have a strategy for learning names and shouldn't be afraid to admit to their team that they are working hard to learn all the names. But it's not enough to just learn the name. Use them for every player at every session.

2. CIRCLE UP

Circles create inclusion and safety. Circles put everyone on the same level, including coaches. Girls are more likely to connect with one another and with their coaches when they feel equally valued and heard. Circles also help players feel safe – there's nothing going on behind them, someone's watching their back – so they can relax and pay attention to what's happening with the team.

3. ASK QUESTIONS

Show you're interested in girls and engage them in their learning by asking questions instead of always giving instructions. When a young girl answers a question, she is building her still-developing rational thinking and decision-making skills.

4. CELEBRATE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTRIBUTIONS

High-performing teams get contributions from every player, not just the coach, captain and best athletes. Not all athletes contribute in the same way. Some do it through encouraging comments, some do it by modeling a great work ethic, some do it by rising to the challenge during competition. Encourage your athletes to find the unique things that they can contribute to the team. Be sure to highlight and reward contributions that don't always get attention. It's important for the team to see that everyone's contribution is not just nice, but necessary.

5. LET GIRLS SET THEIR OWN GOALS

Encourage girls to set their own goals for what they want to accomplish and help them identify goals that are within their control. They may not be able to control the outcome of a game on their own, but they can control how they prepare for that game and the kind of effort they put out for the game. Helping girls focus on things that they can influence, like working hard, sticking with something and trying to be brave, will also result in better team and individual performance.

6. CREATE A COMPETITIVE CULTURE

There are lots of ways to be competitive. Be sure to mix up your practices so that girls have the chance to compete against themselves, and with and against their teammates. Have them try and set "personal records" – which will encourage them to focus on their own progress as much as their progress against their teammates or opponents. Giving girls the chance to practice being competitive in lots of different ways will set them up for success when the big game comes!

7. PRAISE THE RIGHT THINGS, THE RIGHT WAY

As coaches, we have tremendous power to set the tone and priorities of the team. The things we reward become the things that the players will care about. Don't just say, "good job." Be sure to call out and specifically acknowledge the behaviors that your players exhibit that contribute to the team. These should be things that players have control over, so they start to believe that they have the power to get better and learn new things.

8. PRIORITIZE BRAVERY

Many girls feel pressure to be perfect at whatever they do. That focus on perfection can keep them from trying new things, especially when they don't know if they'll be able to master it. In order to encourage girls to take risks and try new things, make a conscious effort to reward bravery. Make being brave the most important thing a player on your team can be by calling it out and having girls celebrate it in each other. You could even go from having a Most Valuable Player to a Bravest Player award.

9. LET MISTAKES GO

If girls are too scared to try new things, they will never have the chance to experience the confidence and joy that comes from tackling something new. Nothing is more powerful for girls than to know that you are not perfect. It means that they don't have to be. Share your mistakes so that they feel safe to make their own. Encourage girls to move on from mistakes by engaging in a physical gesture that she can use to remind herself that mistakes are ok and to get ready for the next play.

10. MAKE TIME FOR GIRLS TO TALK

Coaches should carve out time at the end of every practice where girls get to talk about what they want to talk about. Give girls the chance to have their voices heard and learn more about and connect with their teammates.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

For many coaches and programs, thinking about how to create great environments for girls starts with creating single-gender opportunities, especially for girls. We know there can be value in this approach (particularly where marginalized girls have the chance to participate without the glare of the boys that sport favors). However, there's no reason these strategies can't be applied to a mixed-gender teams.

The Women's Sports Foundation recommends that prior to puberty – when variation tends to be among individuals, not genders – that they should compete with and against each other on mixed-gender teams. Further, they go on to recommend that, under the right conditions, there is value to continuing this practice even after puberty.[11]

The strategies in this toolkit focus on the things that research shows are most important to creating a good experience for girls in sport. Many of them address historical barriers that women and girls have faced in sport and support coaches in overcoming typical pitfalls that come from centuries of bias about female athletes. However, there's no reason these strategies can't be applied to mixed-gender team.

Strategies that work well and enable a great experience for girls are often strategies that work well for boys and mixed-gender teams too.

At the core, the strategies are about prioritizing relationships, encouraging young people to take risks, focusing on the process of learning and providing every athlete the things they need to be successful. And while we may need to work harder to ensure that every female athlete has the tools she needs to be successful, providing these supports does nothing to diminish the experience of male athletes.

[11] https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/issues-related-to-girls-and-boys-competing-with-and-against-each-other-in-sports-and-physical-activity-settings-the-foundation-position.pdf

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MIXED-GENDER TEAMS

Girls and boys often experience sport differently. Boys may be more inclined (and encouraged) to try different things. Some players may find it easier to access opportunities to play than others. Bullying and teasing can be a problem. Parents, caregivers, coaches and even players themselves can have conscious and unconscious biases that affect the experience. As the coach of a mixed-gender team, here's what you'll want to think about:

1. PAY ATTENTION TO GROUPINGS

As with any team, a mixed-gender team will have a natural range of skill and competency. The environments that best support the development of young people at every level are those that consciously group participants around their skill and experience level, not by grade, gender, size or age.

2. AVOID DIFFERENT STANDARDS

Many programs think they are "leveling the playing field" by changing the standards for girls. They double the points scored by a girl or set a minimum number of minutes a girl has to play. Rather than elevating the girls' role, this serves only to call attention to differences. Instead, make the requirements the same for boys and girls. For example, in a mixed-gender basketball league, require that in the first half, each team must play with 3 girls and 2 boys; in the second half, 3 boys and 2 girls.

3. WATCH WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

Our natural biases often show up in the form of rewarding behaviors that we think of as characteristic to a specific gender identity. When coaching girls and boys together, it's even more important that we avoid reinforcing these stereotypes and praise everyone for the things we prioritize most. For example, a coach should cheer just as loudly when a male or female player tries something new as when they score a point or win a race.

GENDER SPECTRUM

As norms around gender identity change and young people bring a more fluid approach to identity, it becomes even more important for coaches to acknowledge sports' history of binary characterizations and male preference. Considering skill and experience over gender identity creates a more inclusive environment for young people on all parts of the spectrum.

PRACTICE PLAN

HOW TO USE THE PRACTICE PLAN (PROGRAM LEADERS):

One way to ensure that coaches remember some of the key concepts you shared at the training is to use a standard practice plan template that reinforces those concepts. Share the template below with coaches so that they can find the right moments to integrate the strategies we know will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great practice focuses on building sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.

HOW TO USE THE PRACTICE PLAN (COACHES):

As a coach, you're in control of each practice. And creating a consistent structure for practice will help you build the right coaching habits and the best environment for your players to thrive in. A practice plan will help ensure you find the right moments to integrate key coaching strategies that will help girls make the most of their sport experience. A great practice builds both sport skills and essential life skills that girls can use on and off the field.

TIME (90-min practice)	PRACTICE COMPONENT	COACH FOCUS
5 MIN	**CIRCLE UP** Establish a routine, so girls know what to expect (e.g., how practice will start every day). Give players an outline for the day and let them share anything that they are thinking about before practice!	Always form a circle: Circles put everyone at the same level and make us feel safe – someone's always got your back! Ask Questions: Check-in and see how players are doing!
10 MIN	**WARM-UP** Make your warm-up consistent, active and focused on connection. It's even better if it's something the girls take control over after the first few practices. This is the time when girls can shake off whatever's been happening during the day and get focused on practice.	At the beginning of the season, use this time to focus on learning names!
15 MIN	**TEAM BUILDING** This should be a high-energy, physical activity that really gets the blood pumping. It should also be a time when players have the chance to work with different teammates and solve problems together or get to know something about one another.	Catch players doing something good and call out their contributions: Offer specific praise to players for things they can control, like supporting their teammates, working hard, and most importantly, trying new things!
15 MIN	**SKILL BUILDING** Introduce your skill of the day. Start with a simple drill and add difficulty. Provide challenge by: 1. Increasing speed (e.g., dribble the ball faster) 2. Adding pressure (e.g., dribble against a defender) 3. Introducing fatigue (e.g., dribble after an intense activity)	Help girls set goals for themselves! Remind players that mistakes are part of learning and, instead, encourage them to focus on the progress they've made by asking, "How did you do that?"
30 MIN	**GAMES** Transition into games that reinforce the skill you are working on. Get creative and plan for lots of activity! Make sure you leave time to scrimmage – tweak the rules of the game to highlight the skill you are working on!	Mix up the competition- challenge players to beat personal records, combine for a team record, or find the day's winning team. Remember to call out players who are being brave, taking risks, and trying new things! It matters that you focus on this when it counts!
15 MIN	**COOL DOWN AND CIRCLE UP** Consistently follow your end of practice routine to cool down from the day's activities and get ready to transition out of practice. Give the players time to connect with each other and talk about whatever is going on for them.	Instead of telling players what you thought of the day, ask questions – What did they notice about the day? What did they like? What would they do differently? Let them talk about what they want to talk about!

HOW TO TRAIN COACHES
PROGRAM LEADERS

Now that you know what girls need out of their sports environment, how do you make sure that your coaches are delivering it? Below is a list of four high-impact changes to consider as you build a coach training program:

1. CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

You can't give what you don't have. We find this to be particularly true for coaches, who most often coach the way they were coached. And since we're asking most coaches to coach differently than the way they were coached, they have to know what it looks and feels like. This means modeling the kind of coaching we want to see. Here are some ways to do that:

How to Create Connection

- Ask questions: Start debriefs with questions, ask coaches to say more when they have something to offer, create structured opportunities for them to answer questions with a partner or in a small group.
- Debrief or instruct in circles so that everyone is at the same level and part of the circle.
- Treat our teammates the way we want them to treat their co-coaches and the way we want the girls they coach to treat each other.

How to Encourage Coaches to be Brave, Not Perfect

- Always give encouraging answers – avoid criticizing someone's contribution and thank them for sharing.
- Invite, never force, participation: allow coaches to have some control over their experience so that they will allow players some control over theirs.

How to Focus on Progress, Not Outcomes

- Establish a baseline: Provide coaches with the opportunity to reflect on where they are starting.
- Ask coaches what new things they are committed to trying.
- Follow up: reminding coaches of the new things they've tried and asking them, "How did you do that?"

How to Let Coaches Compete

- Model different ways to be competitive (against a goal, as a personal or team record, or against another team) during training.
- Create fun competitions for the not-fun parts of coaching, such as turning in timesheets or lesson plans on time.

And most importantly, if what we're doing isn't working for a coach, then it's on us as program leaders to change, not on them to "get with it." If we aren't reflective about how we're setting up the program and supporting coaches, we can't expect them to be reflective about how they are setting up practice and supporting players.

2. START WITH A COMMON LANGUAGE

If you can, it's great to get all your coaches referring to the same materials before the official kick-off meeting or training. Having something to reflect on and refer to ensures everyone is speaking the same language and sets a tone that learning is encouraged and expected.

Nike and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee recently collaborated to build How to Coach Kids (howtocoachkids.org), an online coaching hub with a series of modules that create this common language and fundamental knowledge base. Have your coaches take the How to Coach Kids course and the Coaching Girls module to kickstart the season.

3. ACTIVELY RAISE AWARENESS OF BIAS

Remember, it's been just about 50 years since race organizers tried to physically stop Katherine Switzer from running the Boston Marathon and fewer than 25 years since the start of the WNBA and growth of other professional leagues. Therefore, it's not hard to see why many coaches (and athletes) show up to practice with preconceived notions of women's roles and value in sports. So, while it's natural to have biases, we also know that these biases can impact the behavior of coaches and interfere with their ability to create the best possible sports experience for the girls on their teams.

The good news is that simply being aware of and reflecting on bias is a great place to start. A Harvard study of teen girls and leadership bias found that simply being aware of bias is a critical part of challenging those biases[12]. Creating an open dialogue with coaches, encouraging them to be reflective and challenge some of the things that "have always been done" (like referring to groups of girls as "guys") are good first steps. If you have more time, you can kick-start the reflection process with an activity in this toolkit or use other activities[13] that help start conversations on unconscious bias.

4. PRIORITIZE LEARNING

Like any educational process, coach training works best when the conversation doesn't stop after one training. Coaches and athletes flourish in cultures where learning isn't just a bonus, it's a fully integrated expectation. Learning shouldn't be one-way, from programs to coaches. We can't expect coaches to spend time getting feedback from their players if we don't spend time getting feedback from them. To really prioritize feedback is to do more than just send out a survey at the end of the season. It means creating feedback loops where coaches receive specific and personalized feedback and are asked to provide the same kind of detailed, thoughtful feedback to the program or league administrators. Feedback can't be an after-thought; it should be part of the season plan and implemented consistently in formal and informal ways.

To best prepare coaches, we need to create as many touchpoints as possible that reinforce the kind of coach we want them to be and encourage them to be reflective about their growth. Making small changes to interactions – asking the right questions and sharing the right information – can have an outsized impact.

HOW TO TRAIN COACHES
PROGRAM LEADERS

These touchpoints don't need to be resource- or time-intensive. They can be as simple as text messages that remind coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect. It can be as easy as replacing "What was the score?" with one question that causes them to stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, or one thing that really worked well (or didn't work at all) at practice that week.

Programs might try some of the following to build good learning habits:

- Schedule a short one- to three-question survey to arrive at a coach's email or phone at the end of every practice where they reflect on what worked and didn't work at practice. Run a contest with a significant reward for the coach who has the best answer rate.
- Send a text message that reminds coaches to do something to help girls be brave and not perfect or another reminder from the behavior bank in this toolkit.
- Replace "What was the score?" with one question that makes a coach stop and reflect on how they supported or challenged their girls to take risks, like "Who surprised you today?"
- Implement "Think Tank Tuesday" where you share a video, podcast or article that would be interesting to the coaches and highlights ways that girls and women are defying expectations.
- Make trainings mandatory and, if applicable, pay or incentivize coaches for their time. If you work with volunteer coaches, incentivize participation with an in-kind item like gear, food or the chance to win some kind of prize.
- At every meeting or training, ask coaches to shout-out another coach for something they saw or heard that the coach did well.

The best thing we can do to train coaches is to think critically about how we want them to interact with their players. What kinds of relationships do we want them to have with their players? What should their priorities be? How should they handle adversity and what should they do to create supportive but challenging environments? We have to start by modeling all of these things in the ways that we interact with them.

[12] https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/leaning-out
[13] Activities for addressing bias: https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/tt_sports_gender_stereotypes_09.pdf (gender bias in sport) https://cultureplusconsulting.com/2018/08/16/a-ha-activities-for-unconscious-bias-training/ (general biases)

BEHAVIOR BANK: HOW TO USE

THIS SET OF BEHAVIORS CAN BE USED BY PROGRAM LEADERS TO INSPIRE THEIR COACHES.

TIP OF THE DAY

Provide one of these tips for every active day of the season so that a coach is reminded to attend to girl-specific needs every time they interact with their team (this might be printed on practice plans, in a coaching manual, or might be delivered via email, text, app, etc.)

ESTABLISH COACH EXPECTATIONS AND HELP WITH THE OBSERVATION

Choose the behaviors that are most relevant to your program or the areas in which you think your program most needs to grow. Share these behaviors with coaches directly to illustrate your expectations. This can include creating a tool that allows administrators or coach developers to observe the coaches while coaching. Use these observations to start an ongoing conversation with coaches about how to build their skills, so they deliver on every expectation.

BUILD THE HABIT OF REFLECTION

To help coaches reflect and create consistent feedback loops, require coaches to answer a few short questions related to the behavior bank after every practice. They will be reminded of what is important and build the habit of asking themselves what worked and didn't that day.

BEHAVIOR BANK

LEGEND

- CREATE CONNECTION
- BRAVE, NOT PERFECT
- PROGRESS, NOT OUTCOMES
- GIRL CHECK
- LET HER COMPETE

1. LEARN NAMES

Players should have the chance to identify what they want to be called. Quiz coaches to make sure they know the names of every player they work with.

2. LISTEN FOR LANGUAGE

Track the number of times you hear coaches say "guys" to refer to the group on a given day. It's probably more than you think. Create a competition for the staff and challenge them to insert a different term like "friends," "y'all" or "athletes."

3. ESTABLISH A LIST OF "WE BELIEVES"

Require coaches to submit a set of team "norms" or "we believes." Make sure there is explicit language about how important it is to take risks and try new things.

4. ASK QUESTIONS

Coaches who ask their players questions engage them in learning and help them practice using their "thinking brain." When observing coaches, see how many interactions with players involve coaches asking questions.

5. BUILD BELONGING

Encourage coaches to have their teams create an identity symbol for their teams, like a team flag or a team mascot. Try to dedicate a small amount of funds to print that symbol on stickers, pins or plastic bracelets. It shouldn't cost much and can go a long way.

6. TAKE A ROLE MODEL ROLL CALL

How many female coaches are part of your program? Is it equal to the number of men? How many girls' teams are coached by women? How many boys' teams? Are there women in leadership roles? Do the girls (and boys) have the chance to see these leaders in action?

7. CIRCLE UP

Watch coaches to see if they talk to their team in a circle. A circle puts everyone on the same level, encourages connection and creates safety because everyone's got each other's backs.

8. DIFFERENTIATE DEBRIEFS

Encourage coaches to mix it up! They shouldn't always ask their team to report back about their experience in big groups. Encourage "pair shares" and small group chats.

9. EXAMINE EXAMPLES

When coaches give an example of a successful athlete, are they always men? Are there pictures of female athletes around? Does the program highlight the background of accomplished female coaches as much as male coaches?

10. PLAY DOWN PERFECTION

Do coaches focus on the result or on the courage it takes to try something new? Remind coaches to offer specific praise for taking risks and learning from mistakes.

BEHAVIOR BANK

11. MAKE CONTRIBUTION COUNT

Can every girl identify what she brings to the team? Ask three players what they think they are contributing to the team.

12. SET THE TONE

Have you shared an example of a time you tried something new and failed recently? If we want coaches to be vulnerable and share their experiences so that girls feel safe to try new things, we have to make the coaches feel safe to be vulnerable. Make trying something new the topic of the next coaches' newsletter or meeting.

13. FIND OUT WHO'S ON HER TEAM

Make a list of the coaches in your program. Can you and the other administrators identify a positive connection in that coach's life? If you can't, prioritize getting to know more about those coaches. Encourage coaches to do the same for their players.

14. ENCOURAGE "GOOD GOSSIP"

Ask a coach every time you see them to share something positive about one of the girls on their team first. You can get to challenges after, but it's always good to start with positive.

15. DO A BATHROOM CHECK

Are the spaces clean and well lit? Do all the bathrooms have garbage cans for the girls to use if they need to? Be sure to ask coaches to report on what's going on with the facilities.

16. GIVE SHOUT-OUTS

Make sure to end every coach gathering with shout-outs, and give the coaches a chance to shout each other out. Check that they are doing the same at every practice.

17. DO SHOUT-OUTS FOR COMPETITION

Encourage coaches to specifically focus shout-outs on the girls who competed the best that day – either with herself, among her teammates or for her team.

18. CREATE GIRL SPACES

Look intentionally at the program's schedule. Is there ever a time in the day when girls get to be in a space by themselves, without boys? Can you carve time out to make that happen? Is it at a time that is convenient for the girls? Some girls need that protected space to feel more confident and comfortable.

19. LET GIRLS CHOOSE

Remind coaches every few weeks to let their girls work together to plan the day. They'll feel ownership and the coaches will learn what the girls like most about being part of the team.

20. GET FEEDBACK FROM GIRLS

Build a culture of feedback by formally and informally asking coaches to reflect on how the season is going. Share with coaches your plan to formally solicit feedback directly from the girls and parents, so they know what to expect. Encourage coaches to solicit feedback regularly in different ways.

21. USE NAMES FROM WOMEN'S TEAMS

If the program has set tournaments or standings, encourage all the teams to be named for professional women's teams, even the boys' teams.

BEHAVIOR BANK

22. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED

Tell coaches at the beginning of the season that you'll be periodically asking girls what they have gotten better at this season. Pick a few dates, come to practice and ask girls what they've learned. Challenge coaches to make sure that every girl can identify something they've gotten better at doing this season

23. ESTABLISH TEAM TRADITIONS

When you visit practice, do you see players participate in something that makes them feel like part of the group like a team cheer, a team name or some kind of activity that they always do together?

24. UNLEASH THE POWER OF "YET"

What happens when a girl says "I can't"? Does the coach answer with encouragement? Adults that help young people focus on the fact that they can get better at something help them build more confidence. Have your staff add "yet" to the sentence every time a young person says they can't.

25. USE A FEEDBACK BOX

Encourage coaches to give girls the chance to give feedback in private by writing down their feedback and putting it in a box. All players should submit something so all girls feel safe to offer ideas as it will be hard to tell who the feedback came from.

26. GET EVERY GIRL A WIN

Every girl has something positive to contribute and it's a coach's job to make sure that she has the chance to offer it to the team. Ask coaches how they encouraged girls to take risks, try new things and discover what they, uniquely, bring to their team.

27. ESTABLISH A WORD OF THE DAY

Set a word of the day for the whole club or program. Focus on words, such as strong or hard-playing, that girls don't always get rewarded for. All coaches should call out the things they see their players doing that day that illustrate the word of the day.

28. MAKE TIME TO REFLECT

Remind coaches to carve out dedicated time for players to reflect on the day. It should be a time when they are encouraged to share whatever is on their mind in an open way..

29. CREATE A "TRY TALLY"

Create a form called the "try tally" and slip one to your coaches today. Have them keep track of the times they see a girl try something new and call them out during shout-outs at the end of the day.

30. FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

Require coaches to spend time every day on a routine that stresses the fundamentals of the sport. Have a routine you can provide to coaches if they want, or they can choose their own. What matters is that the girls get to practice those movements every day as a transition into practice and so they can see themselves get better over time.

31. ASK "HOW DID YOU DO THAT?"

Build the habit of asking, "How did you do that?" by asking your coaches that question regularly. Unpack for them how the question forces them to take ownership of their accomplishments and think about the process they went through in order to achieve it. Then encourage them to do it with their players.

BEHAVIOR BANK

32. SET PERSONAL RECORDS

Encourage coaches to push girls to achieve personal records (and not compare themselves to their teammates) and try to beat those records. Celebrate coaches when they help girls set a new best!

33. SCAFFOLD UP…AND DOWN

Train coaches to understand the power of dialing up and down the pressure when teaching skills. When learning a new skill, coaches dial up the pressure in order to stretch girls beyond their comfort zone in order to begin the process of mastery. What we don't do is scaffold back down after we've pushed girls outside their comfort zone. If we dial back the pressure, even for a few repetitions, girls can regain that sense of control and achievement and be ready to take on the next challenge.

34. THINK ABOUT GROUPINGS

Ask coaches during planning or reflection time how they are being intentional about groupings. Remind them to give girls lots of opportunities to work with different members of the team so that they can start to feel safe with all of their teammates. Safety promotes learning!

35. USE GROUPINGS TO ENABLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Groupings can also be used to help develop skills. Parity helps drive skill development, so encourage coaches to have girls at similar levels challenge each other and, when there is a big gap in skill, ask the girls who have mastered the skill to help support the girls who are still learning.

36. CELEBRATE A "GIRL OF THE GAME"

Find a way to publicize each team's Girl of the Game. Announce it on the website, via email or by providing some kind of award or certificate.

37. SET UP SOME FAMILY FUN TIME

Have a program-wide family day so you can really celebrate the important people in every player's life. This is a great way to build culture but also tips the scales when it comes to girls' participation – the more the family invests in her experience, the more likely she'll be to stick with it.

38. TEACH NEW SPORTS AND NEW SKILLS

Bring in experts in other sports to teach new sport clinics to your participants. The cross-training they get will help them develop as all-around athletes and a brand new sport allows kids who aren't the most skilled in their sport the chance to shine at something else.

39. FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON OFF THE FIELD

Try to keep a finger on the pulse of what's going on for athletes and be supportive.
Ask coaches what's going on in their lives and what's going on in their player's lives.
Highlight accomplishments that you hear about on any program-wide platforms.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

One bias that we often run into with coaches is the assumption that sport access is closer to equal than it really is. Despite the best efforts of Title IX in the U.S. and the growth of opportunities at all levels of sport for girls to play, we are still nowhere near parity, particularly when it comes to leadership opportunities and coaching. This misunderstanding about the reality of the experience for girls and women in sport can result in misguided assumptions from both male and female coaches, as well as program administrators and parents.

One way to illustrate the differences between men's and women's experiences is to let girls tell you about it. Encourage them to reflect on their experiences and see the similarities and differences by using the activities and speaking points below:

STEP IN / STEP OUT

Set-Up

Participants should be standing in a circle or square (use the lines of the gym or field if you can or set up lines using cones).

Introduction

I'm going to read a series of prompts to you, with instructions to step in to the circle if the first answer best reflects your experience, and to step out of the circle if the second answer best reflects your experience. There are no right or wrong answers and what other participants are doing shouldn't influence whether you step up or step out. There will definitely be similarities and differences between your experience and the experiences of the group. Try to notice some of those as we go, and we'll talk more about it at the end.

We'll be talking about single- and mixed-gender programming and about the amount of time your gender identity matched with the gender identity of the other people playing on or coaching your team. When we refer to "your gender," you should choose the gender you most strongly identify with.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

Prompts

- For this question, think about your experiences in non-structured active play, like recess, pick-up games, or camp.
  - **Step in** to the circle if most of the time (more than 50% of the time) the majority of the people you played with were the same gender as you; **Step out** if the majority of the people you played with were a different gender as you.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity; **Step out** of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender playing during a game or activity.
- For this question, think about your experience in structured youth sports (if you didn't play structured youth sports, you can just keep standing where you are).
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played on a single-gender team that matched your gender; **Step out** of the circle if the majority of the time, you played on mixed-gender teams.
  - **Step in** to the circle if you were ever the only person of your gender on a team; **Step out** of the circle if you were never the only person of your gender on a team.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time, you played on a team where the coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if the majority of the time, you were coached by someone of a different gender.
- For this question, think about your experience in competitive sports – playing at the high school, college or professional level.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played competitive sports, your head coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if most of the time, your head coach was not the same gender as you.
  - **Step in** to the circle if the majority of the time you played competitive sports, at least one coach was the same gender as you; **Step out** of the circle if most of the time, none of your coaches were the same gender as you.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

Debrief

1. Ask: What did you notice?

You will likely see a variety of experiences, but answers could include:

- That most of the men usually had male-dominated experiences (if you have men participating)
- That many women share the experience of being in the minority (or even the only woman)
- That many women were not coached by women most of the time, whereas the vast majority of men were almost always coached by men (if you have men participating)

2. Ask: If all of this is true, what does that say about who sport is created for? What does it say about who's experience, boys or girls, are most likely to be represented?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants in seeing these disparities):

- Sport is primarily created for and caters to men and boys. When girls are primarily playing with or coached by men, their experiences may not be as readily represented as those of boys and men.
- Girls often don't have opportunities where they can be in the majority and have access to positive female role models as coaches.

3. Ask: If sport was created for and primarily caters to men, and women are not equally represented in leadership or coaching roles, what kinds of biases or assumptions might this cause coaches (men and women) to make?

Answers could include (and the facilitator can help support participants consider these assumptions):

- Assumptions that women and girls don't belong
- Assumptions that there are some things in sports that women and girls shouldn't do
- Assumptions that what motivates and challenges girls about sports is the same as boys
- Assumptions that girls and boys want the same things out of sport

4. Ask: What kind of impact could these assumptions have?

Answers could include (and facilitator can help support participants to understand):

- We miss opportunities to create the best sports environments for girls – those that prioritize the things that most motivate and challenge girls, where they can develop relationships with other girls and learn from powerful positive female role models.

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

ATHLETES ARE…

Set-Up

Split your group into two and separate them so they can't hear or see what the other group is doing. If the group is mixed gender, try and split the groups evenly. Each group should have access to some flip chart paper, a whiteboard or some other way to record their brainstorm. Assign a "scribe" from each group who can write quickly and (relatively) neatly.

Introduction

You'll have one minute to come up with as many words as you can to describe a certain group of people. Feel free to yell out your answers, but also give some time to your scribe to record everything.
We're trying to get as many words as we can in our 1-minute timeframe.

Prompts

- Have one group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Male Athletes Are…"
- Have the other group start their minute brainstorm by providing words to complete the sentence "Female Athletes Are…"

Have both groups bring their brainstorms back and share them with the whole group.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

Debrief

1. Ask: What do you notice about the two lists?

Answers could include (but will reflect a variety of answers)

- That there are some similarities (ask the participants to estimate what percentage of the activities they think are similar)
- That there are some interesting differences (ask the participants to name which words they heard exclusively on one of the other lists.

2. Ask: Is it fair to say that we might have at least slightly different perceptions of what it means to be a female athlete and what it means to be a male athlete? (Participants should agree) If so, what might those assumptions mean for coaches as they approach working with girls?

Answers could include:

- We have different expectations and may treat girls differently
- Our unconscious biases, which are normal, might influence how we behave
- We might assume that the things that work for boys will work for girls when boys and girls may have different needs
- We might assume that girls and boys have different needs in cases where they actually want the same things
- We might assume that the differences between kids have to do with their gender identity when it's really just about individual differences among kids

It's our job to understand that we all have biases and that those biases can influence our behavior. To minimize any negative outcomes that come from those biases, we have to keep reflecting on our actions and decisions as coaches and commit to learning as much as we can about what research establishes, and more importantly, girls tell us about what they really need from sports.

Modifications to this Activity May Include

1. Split the group separating men and women. Have both groups complete both prompts and then compare the lists.

2. Split the group and have both groups only complete the "Female Athletes Are" prompt to see how many of the words they use match up what research tells us about what girls want from their sports experience. Highlight words that illustrate that girls are strong, they like to compete, they are brave and try new things and focused on connection.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

PAIR SHARES AND SHARE BACKS

Set-Up

Have each participant find a partner and discuss one of the following questions. Once the pairs have a chance to chat with each other, ask if anyone would like to share back with the whole group. Follow up after you hear some of the share backs with questions that get the group to think about how different genders experience sport.

Introduction

With your partner, take turns answering this question. Make sure you leave time for both of you to answer.

Prompt 1:

- Tell your partner about a time when a coach made a positive difference for you. What did they do, what did they say, how did it impact you?
- Report out to the group about the impact a coach had on your sports experience.

Prompt 2:

- On a piece of paper, write down as many of your coaches as you can think of. Once you're done, draw a check or a star next to each of the coaches that you would consider a "good coach" – they supported you, you learned something from them or you had a generally good experience playing for them.
- Talk with your partner about what percentage of the coaches you've had in your life were "good" coaches and why you think they were good.
- Now go through and circle each of the coaches who were the same gender as you.
- Raise your hand if all of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. Raise your hand if most of the coaches you circled were NOT the same gender as you. And finally, raise your hand if NONE of the coaches you circled were the same gender as you. (You'll likely see a gender difference with men having more male coaches; if your group is just women, you'll likely see some similarities in that fewer of their coaches reflected their gender, although there will be a range).

Prompt 3:

- Think about the best coach you know about – it doesn't have to be someone who coached you, it could be a coach who you admire and who's career you've followed. Write down the top five reasons why you think that coach is so great. When you and your partner are done, talk about why you think that coach is so great. Any similarities?
- Report out to the group on any things your coaches had in common that made them great.

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTERS: GENDER INEQUITY IN SPORTS

Follow Up Questions

1. Ask: Raise your hand if you were talking about a female coach

If a small percentage of the room raises their hands, ask: Do we think there are so few women coaches because women coaches are not as good as men? NO! Then why are we talking about so many fewer great female coaches?

- Because there are fewer women coaches
- Because the media doesn't tell as many stories about great women coaches
- Because most of us had more men as coaches then women, particularly at the higher levels of sport
- We have biases that keep us from thinking of women as great coaches

Debrief

Any coach can have a positive impact on a young person, but this difference in gender is worth noting – girls are far less likely to have female coaches than boys are to have male coaches. And boys are even less likely to have female coaches. This means that most of the good lessons we're learning from adults are coming from men. Don't we want our kids to see women in positive leadership and mentoring roles?

Made
to Play
WE COACH