



A FAIRER **COACHING**

Coach Resource



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Contents

Introduction and Partners

Module 1:

A holistic coaching mindset – the foundation of fair coaching

Module 2:

Relationship and Communication - Coaching and Power

Module 3:

Positive Coaching Behaviour: *Creating a positive motivational climate*

Module 4:

Responsibility and safety

Module 5:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Module 6:

Rules & Regulations

Thank You and Contact



A Fairer Coaching is an Erasmus+ funded project aiming to contribute to the key priority of the Programme “**Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education, training, youth and sport**”, specifically addressing the Horizontal Priority in the field of Sport “Promoting education in and through sport – promoting the quality of coaching and staff”.

Through AFC we aim at increasing **equality, inclusion, diversity and fairness of coaching** in the European sports system by **promoting an inclusive and equal overall model of coaching**, empowering coaches themselves and specifically those who work with young athletes and youth sectors, as well as sport organizations and institutions to work towards this objective and, therefore, towards a more balanced coaching system in Europe.

Through combined actions of capacity building, awareness raising and networking among coaches, sport organizations, sport society in Europe, **the project wants to enhance cooperation among coaches and organizations** that represent and employ them to improve their impact in overcoming inequalities and distortions that still persists in many different fields of this role. One of our main and crucial objectives, to be reached through all these project actions, is **to bring more women and people with disabilities in sport and in coaching**.

The "A Fairer Coaching" resource

This resource for the "A Fairer Coaching" project aims to empower coaches working with youth in grassroots sports to promote equality, inclusion, and prevent abusive or discriminatory behaviours in sports. Also focused on supporting and bringing more women and athletes with disabilities in sport and coaching, this resource offers coaches the skills and knowledge to create inclusive environments and foster positive coaching practices. The modules that coaches will be able to explore in this resource are:

Module 1: A holistic coaching mindset – the foundation of fair coaching

Module 2: Relationship and Communication - Coaching and Power

Module 3: Positive Coaching Behaviour: *Creating a positive motivational climate*

Module 4: Responsibility and safety

Module 5: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Module 6: Rules & Regulations

This resource adopts a person-centred approach, strengthening the capacity of coaches and their associations to foster positive, inclusive sports environments across Europe, ensuring the sustainability of its impact beyond the project's duration. Check A Fairer Coaching project on our website to know more: <https://afc.assistitaly.eu/>

Project Partners:



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Module 1: A holistic coaching mindset – the foundation of fair coaching

Module Aim:

The main aim of this module is to help you think through the meaning of the phrase “holistic coaching” and what it means to be a holistic coach, especially when coaching female participants or participants with a disability. You will also be able to make the connection between a holistic coaching mindset and fair coaching

The module is split into 4 sections:

- 1.1: What is holistic coaching and why it is important to become a fair coach.
- 1.2: Holistic coaching in practice
- 1.3: The science behind holistic coaching
- 1.4: Summary and Conclusions

1.1: What is holistic coaching and why it is important to become a fair coach.

What is Holistic Coaching?

The idea of holistic coaching has become quite popular over the last 15 years. When coaches are asked about what holistic coaching means, the answers tend to go along the lines of: “it’s about developing the whole person not just the athlete” or “it’s about putting people before performance”.

The answers are, of course, valid, but much less is known about exactly what it means to coach the whole person or how to put the person before the athlete.

This is especially important when coaching female participants or participants with a disability who may have encountered more barriers to their participation or suffered from low self-confidence or perceived competence due to a lack of support from a sport system that tends to be geared for male, able-bodied participants.

Research has investigated how to create some clarity about what goes into being a holistic coach, and how clubs and coaches can become more holistic in their approach (Sargent-Megicks et al., 2023). These researchers created a definition of holistic coaching:

“Holistic coaching aims to maximise athletic development, while promoting and maintaining physical and mental wellbeing, and enhancing life-readiness”.

Athletic Development: The development of skills – such as technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial – needed to play sport. This has been the traditional focus of sport coaches.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing: A positive state of body and mind which allows us to function normally, meet the regular demands of daily life and be resilient to them. Wellbeing must be promoted, developed and safeguarded at all times. This is a human right and cannot be neglected.

Life-Readiness: The development and application of transferrable attitudes and skills - such as teamwork, planning, goal setting, resilience and leadership – required to succeed in and out of sport, now and in the future.

1.2: Holistic coaching in practice

Regardless of the reasons why people do sport – performance, health, socializing, trauma recovery – coaches have a responsibility to work holistically and help participants improve their athletic skills, their wellbeing and their ability to deal with day-to-day life.

There are two key reasons for this

Sport has the inherent power to do all this, and thus we should maximise it.

Humans are an integrated system of body and mind, and we cannot dissociate them. Changes in the body will have an impact in the mind and vice-versa. Coaches need to be aware of this connection and use it in a positive way.

Now, coaching holistically is not easy. Researchers (*Sargent-Megicks et al*) have identified 6 key areas to think about:

Redefining success as holistic development: Being a holistic coach involves a commitment to equally supporting the three goals of holistic coaching – athletic development, wellbeing and life-readiness. If at any point, we are sacrificing any of the three, we are not being holistic, and our coaching may have a negative impact.

Community alignment: For holistic coaching and development to happen, everyone around the athlete has to be onboard, not just the coach. The club's leadership, the athletes' parents, support staff, everyone must be on the same page. It is very difficult for a coach to be holistic if the rest of the environment is against it.

Appropriate and continuous challenge: A common misunderstanding around holistic coaching is that you have to be less demanding on the athlete. This is not true. In fact, for any development to happen, athletes need to be exposed to appropriate and continuous levels of challenge that promote improvement and development at all levels. The art of coaching is to know when and how hard to "push" athletes, and how to support them, so they can continue to grow in safe manner.

A caring climate: When athletes feel that the coach and everyone else in the environment cares deeply about them, they can put all their energy into their training and competition and typically flourish in the knowledge that everyone has their back and is there to support them.

A long-term approach: Development takes time. We must see a holistic development as a long-term strategy. Achieving an athlete's full potential takes time and the amount and type of support they need will change along the way. Coaches need to carefully plan how they are going to support their athletes' development over time. Small daily gains accumulate to make a big difference in the end.

Integration of life-skills: For life-skills to develop, they need to be integrated into the athlete's life through daily practice. For example, if we want them to learn to goal-set, we have to facilitate them do it in and out of sport and help them review the process and how they can improve it. The same for all other life-skills like time management or self-organization.

1.3: The science behind holistic coaching

In this research summary, you can delve deeper into how to create holistic coaching environments. Although the report is focused on talent development environments, the identified principles are applicable to any context from grassroots to elite.

Using the following links, you can read & download "[Beyond Performance: Guidelines to Create Holistic Talent Development Environments](#)", the [Executive Summary or the complete version of the Research](#) part of the Erasmus+ co-funded project [ICOACHKIDS+](#).

Participant-centred coaching as the foundation of holistic coaching?

Holistic coaching is rooted in what has been called participant-centred coaching, that is coaching that is first and foremost about prioritising the needs and wants of the athlete, not the coach, not the parents and not the club. This is also the foundation of fair coaching and central to supporting female participants and participants with a disability.

In other words, you cannot be holistic without being participant centred. Now being a participant centred coach requires coaches to develop some key attitudes and skills such as:

Observation

Empathy

Questioning

Self Awareness

And especially, participant-centred coaches will empower their athletes by giving them a safe space to use their voice and express their feelings or ideas of how to make their sport experience better... and more importantly by listening to those views and doing something about them.

This is very relevant when coaching female participants and participants with a disability who may find it difficult to speak their mind due to the reasons presented earlier.

In short, participant-centred coaches shift the balance of power towards the athlete and become partners in the athletes journey.



1.4: Summary and Conclusions

This section will allow you to review the key points to remember in relation to holistic coaching.

“Holistic coaching aims to maximise athletic development, while promoting and maintaining physical and mental wellbeing, and enhancing life-readiness”

Most importantly, it’s about integrating these three elements in the way we go about our coaching. None of the three elements are more important. All **three need to be taken care of at the same time.**

There are 6 key areas to consider when aiming to coach in a holistic way:

Redefining success as holistic development

Community alignment

Appropriate and continuous challenge

A caring climate

A long-term approach

Integration of life-skills:

Holistic coaching is rooted in what has been called participant-centred coaching, that is coaching that is first and foremost about prioritizing the needs and wants of the athlete, not the coach, the parents or the club.

Participant-centred coaches shift the balance of power towards the athlete and become partners in the athlete’s journey. This is also the foundation of fair coaching and central to optimising the benefits of sport for **female participants** and **participants with a disability!**

Reflection Task:

Think about how you integrate the three holistic coaching elements - **athletic development, physical and mental wellbeing** and **life-readiness** - in your coaching. Write down some examples where you have done this well, and areas for development in your coaching practice.



Module 2: Relationship and Communication – Coaching and Power

Module Aims:

This module aims to guide coaches on how to build and establish a **safe and supportive relationship with their athletes**. The module is split into 6 sections:

- 2.1:** Violence as a structural phenomenon with the risk of being violent
- 2.2:** How to make an excellent person first to make an excellent athlete flourish
- 2.3:** How to identify an abusive relationship and abusive communication
- 2.4:** How to build positive relationships through positive communication with athletes
- 2.5:** Rules and regulations
- 2.6:** Violence against people with disabilities

2.1: Violence as a structural phenomenon with the risk of being violent

The concept of violence, especially in the context of gender-based violence, often extends beyond physical acts to include structural or systemic violence. Structural violence refers to the ways in which social structures or institutions harm individuals or groups by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.

According to the Istanbul Convention, formerly known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence:

Violence, especially against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, inequality across differences in age, race, social class, economic status, religious beliefs.

You can find out more about the Istanbul Convention [here](#).

Person first-athlete second: Help to grow an excellent person to let an excellent athlete flourish.

In the world of sport, we need to pay attention to the power dynamics between coaches and athletes.

Power implies the term FIDUCIARY BOND and EDUCATION.

THE COACH IS A POWERFUL REFERENCE FIGURE FOR THE ATHLETE.

No one can flourish in a violent relationship.

There are specific violent interpersonal dynamics that can occur in the coach-athlete relationship.

2.2: How to make an excellent person first to make an excellent athlete flourish

In 1 out of 5 cases, the author of the violence is the coach.

Watch Mary Cain's story [here](#). discover how and why she exposed the abuse she suffered during her time at the Nike Oregon Project, run by infamous coach Alberto Salazar.

In research conducted across 6 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Spain, UK), with 10,000 athletes, findings showed that:

- 75% had experienced at least 1 episode of violence before the age of 18.
- 65% had experienced psychological violence.
- 44% had experienced physical violence.
- 35% had experienced non-contact sexual violence.
- 20% had experienced sexual violence with contact.

2.3: How to identify an abusive relationship and abusive communication

How can we safeguard elite athletes from interpersonal violence in sports? An exploration of the issue and potential solutions are proposed by researchers and psychologists in the field through “[Power and Scaffolding](#)”.

There are multiple forms of violence:

Psychological Violence:

Non-contact behaviours that threaten an athlete’s mental health, safety or development.

Physical Violence:

Actions that have the potential to harm an athlete physically.

Sexual Violence:

Actions of a sexual nature without consent, or without the ability to consent.

Neglect:

Failure to provide for an athlete’s basic needs or safety



2.4: How to build positive relationships through positive communication with athletes

REMEMBER: A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP IS VISIBLE THROUGH A POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

As a reference figure for the athlete, the coach is felt as a protector, a guardian, a defender: A person to trust unconditionally.

The responsibility of the coach for the wellbeing of the athlete is enormous; the coach is an educator, as a teacher or a parents.

The coach can totally influence the mental health and so the entire life of the athlete.

Our top tip on how to build a positive relationship and communication with your athletes are:

Encouragement: Encouragement fosters confidence and resilience in athletes. It's not just about praising success but also motivating them through challenges.

Always value the progress: Celebrate even the smallest victories. Recognizing progress, not just perfection, keeps athletes motivated and focused.

Fair words, emotional control: Imagine a scenario where an athlete makes a critical mistake during a competition, causing the team to lose an important match. Instead of reacting with anger or frustration, the coach stays calm and says:

Coach: *"I know that was tough, and I can see you're disappointed. Mistakes happen to everyone, and this is a chance to learn. Let's focus on what we can improve for next time. You've been working hard, and I believe in your ability to bounce back."*

Praise, not judgmental: *"You gave it your best effort out there, and that determination is what matters most—let's build on that for the next game."*

Underline the correct point: When giving feedback, focus on what was done right before addressing mistakes. This builds confidence and helps athletes improve incrementally.

No isolation ever: Isolation as punishment can be psychologically damaging. Always keep athletes involved, even when addressing mistakes.

No devalue, always appreciate: Never criticize an athlete's worth. Even in difficult times, showing appreciation for their effort helps maintain their self-esteem.

Coach: *"I appreciate the effort you put into your training; even if the results weren't what we hoped for, your hard work shows your d Set Gradual Goals: Achievable, step-by-step goals ensure sustainable*

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Lao Tzu, founder of Taoism

Always welcoming and hospitable: A welcoming environment fosters trust and mutual respect, helping athletes feel supported and valued.

Coach: *"I'm so glad to see everyone here today! Remember, this is a safe space where we can all learn and grow together, so don't hesitate to share your thoughts or ask questions"*

2.6: Violence against people with disabilities

People may be discriminated because of age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political ideas, race, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, language, culture or other reasons and often these reasons are overlapped and crossed in the phenomenon called intersectionality or multiple discrimination or additive/amplifying discrimination.

Therefore, intersectionality is an important concept to understand the discrimination and consequently to find the way to react.

In sport, the phenomenon of discrimination is aggravated by other distinctions in specific categories.

So, the lack of gender equality is aggravated due to the hierarchy that still divides athletes of the different disciplines into sub-classes, such as the distinction between amateurs and professionals, between Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines, and between Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

Young people, women athletes and women athletes with disabilities are the most exposed.

Some general data:

Women with disabilities face double discrimination on the basis of their gender and disability.

UN data on disabilities reported that up to 93% of women with disabilities do not participate in sport. Therefore, it is not surprising that women only make up one-third of athletes with disabilities involved in international competitions.

Beyond the realm of sport, women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, and suffer from extremely low literacy rates. These two factors, along with many others, work against individual development and ultimately contribute to cycles of exclusion.

Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence. According to research by the Italian Federation for Overcoming Handicap (FISH)[1](opens in a new tab), 65.3% of women with disabilities have suffered at least one form of violence.

Psychological violence is the most recurrent, suffered by 54% of women with disabilities, followed by sexual harassment (37%), physical violence (24%) and economic violence (7%). The issue of violence against women is often associated with the difficulty of reporting the incident by the victims. In the case of disability, credibility becomes a huge problem. Even more if the abuser is the caregiver. Added to this are the difficulty of communicating (in the case of sensory disabilities) and architectural barriers (for physical disabilities).

In addition to the fact that "it is necessary to facilitate access to the reporting numbers, flanked by emails for those who cannot call or by voice dictation systems. However, we need to talk about it, violence against disabled women is an eventuality that is often not considered".

Some general data in the field of sport:

The UNESCO e UN Women handbook (the United Nations Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Agency), aims to create in-depth knowledge of the problem and support the development of effective policies to address violence in sport.

For this reason, the handbook is aimed at politicians and sports workers, including social workers, mental health specialists, lawyers and law enforcement officers. The document includes testimonials, case studies and recommendations that illustrate the problem and the urgency of action; an urgency that does not only concern high-level female athletes, as violence can occur in any sporting context, both amateur and international, as evidenced by some interesting statistics taken from the document:

- about 21% of women have suffered sexual abuse at a young age in sport, almost twice as many as male athletes (11%);
- during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, 87% of female athletes were the target of outrageous messages on Twitter;
- only 13% of coaches at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games were women;
- women receive significantly less funding and prizes than men in many sports, for example in the UK, bonuses paid to English Football Cup winners were around £1.5 million compared to £5,000 for female winners.

These statistics highlight the need for effective policies to address gender-based violence and discrimination in sport.

According to a survey conducted by Nielsen[2](opens in a new tab) in Italy, 32.4% of athletes have abandoned the activity due to violent acts suffered; Gymnastics and tennis are among the most affected disciplines. In 80% of cases, the acts of violence suffered during sports practice had a consequence.

Unfortunately, there are still no data on violence in sport against women with disabilities. Due to the intersectionality, the data on the general population and on female athletes in particular let imagine a very high percentage.

Coaching Women Athletes with Disabilities:

Generally speaking, most coaches already possess the necessary technical skills and knowledge required to coach athletes with a disability. Typically, the only piece missing in their coaching “toolkit” is a basic understanding of a few key aspects that are unique to people with a disability, together with the awareness that, as we pointed out, the intersectionality of discriminations between gender and disability adds the need for a specific focus and attention when coaching this group.

At all levels of sport, but particularly within the disability sport context, there is a clear need for greater representation of women in leadership positions. A 2021 scoping review revealed that the majority of disability sport coaches identified as able-bodied men from Western countries, demonstrating a distinct lack of diversity. Women Paralympic athletes have described their desire to work with women coaches throughout their careers and recommended that more women be involved in Para sport to provide this opportunity for the next generation of women athletes with disability.



Effective Communication between coach and athlete(s) with disabilities:

Active Listening:

The coach must listen carefully to the concerns and feedback of the athlete. This includes paying attention to the specific needs related to disability.

Clear and Accessible Communication:

Use clear and accessible language. Avoid complex technical terms and ensure that the athlete fully understands instructions and goals.

Empathy and understanding:

Show empathy for the unique challenges the athlete may face. Acknowledge and value his or her efforts and successes.

Adaptation of Strategies:

Communication must be geared towards enhancing the athlete's perceived competence, therefore training strategies must be adapted to individual needs. This may include modifications/adaptation to exercises or the use of special equipment.

Emotional support:

Offer emotional support and create a safe environment where the athlete feels comfortable sharing their emotions.

Active involvement:

Involve the athlete in decisions regarding his/her training and competitions. This increases the sense of ownership and responsibility.

Constructive Feedback:

Provide feedback that is specific, constructive and motivating. Avoid criticism that may demoralise the athlete.

Continuous Education:

The coach should keep up to date on specific needs and issues related with the particular conditions of his/her athletes, including disabilities. Life-long learning, as well as sharing experiences with colleagues and peers, is essential.

Promoting Well-being:

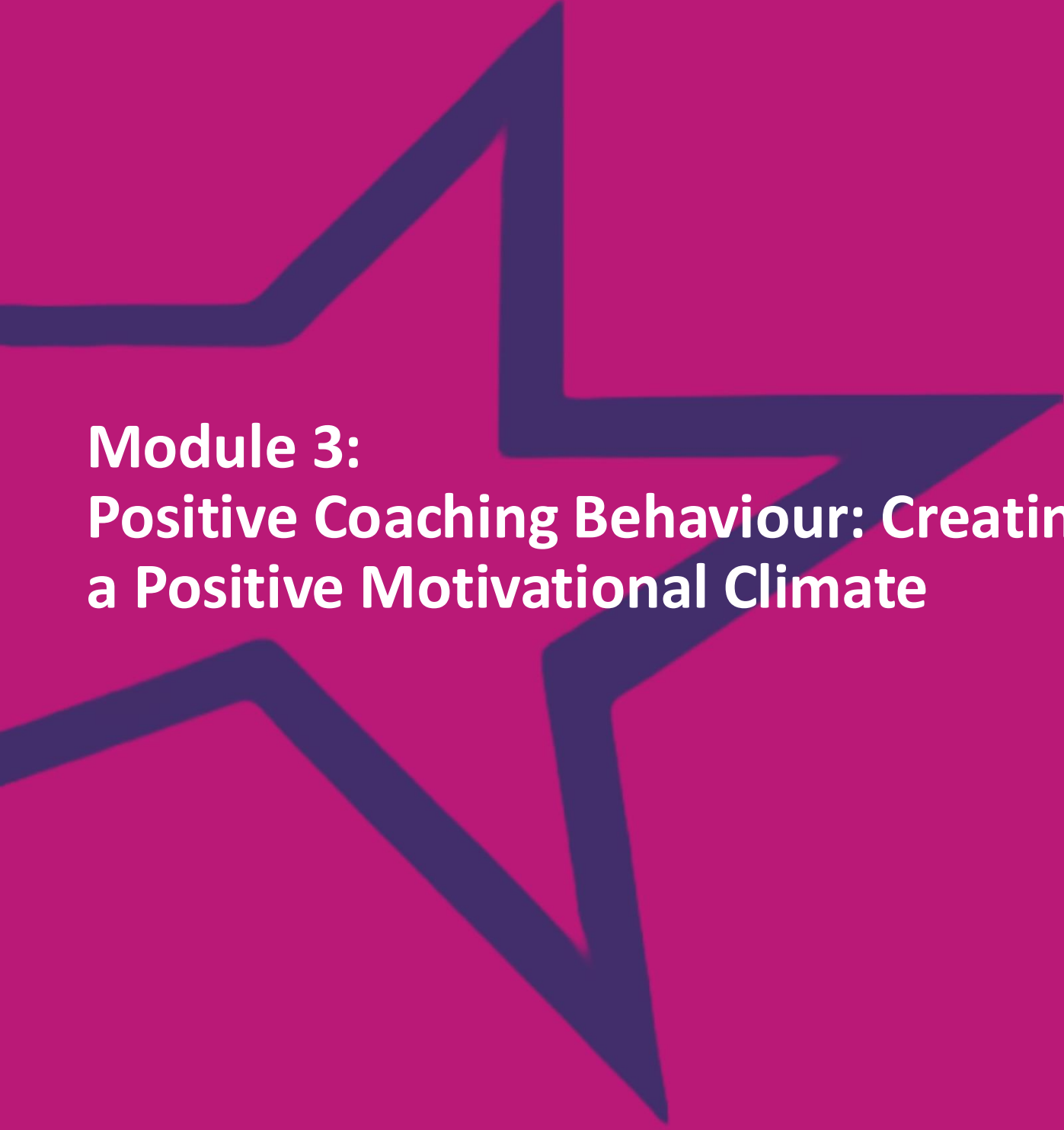
Ensure that the athlete's physical and emotional wellbeing is a priority with frequent and constant dialogue also on the athlete's family and school sphere. It is essential to create a safe environment to prevent all forms of violence as well as direct or indirect channels of dialogue to facilitate the emergence of discomfort.

Collaboration with Experts:

Collaborate with disability experts, such as physiotherapists and psychologists, to provide comprehensive support to the athlete.

Reflection Task

Think about how “**person first-athlete second**” means in your coaching practice. Write down some examples where you have done this well, and areas for development in your coaching.



Module 3: Positive Coaching Behaviour: Creating a Positive Motivational Climate

As a coach, your influence extends far beyond the technical skills and strategies you impart; the way you interact with your athletes plays a critical role in shaping their performance, mindset, and overall experience. In this module you will learn how to establish an atmosphere where every player feels valued, empowered, and inspired to reach their full potential.

The module is split into 6 sections:

- 3.1:** Positive Coaching Behaviour: Create a positive motivational climate
- 3.2:** The pillars of a positive motivational climate
- 3.3:** The impact of a positive climate on intrinsic motivation, performance and athletes' wellbeing
- 3.4:** Balancing challenge and support
- 3.5:** Mistake correction and support
- 3.6:** Evaluating and optimizing a positive motivational climate

3.1: Positive Coaching Behaviour: Create a positive motivational climate

Task:

What do you think constitutes a positive motivational climate? Write down your thought below:

Continue to the next page to find out more.

A positive motivational climate is “an environment that promotes growth and well-being by encouraging personal improvement, effort and mastery over competition. It support autonomy, provides constructive feedback, and fosters a sense of empowerment, helping individuals stay motivated and engaged in their tasks”.

3.2: The pillars of a positive motivational climate

The aim of this section is to identify the key elements that support a positive motivational climate:

Autonomy and Empowerment: Encouraging athletes' independence and initiative by giving them the **freedom to make decisions** and take **ownership** of their actions.

Competence and Progression: Valuing personal effort, improvement, and mastery rather than focusing solely on winning or comparison with others.

Connection and Social Support: Strengthening bonds between athletes and creating an **atmosphere of trust**, mutual respect, and collaboration.

Positive Feedback: Offering constructive, motivating, and specific **feedback** that focuses on effort, improvement, and strategies for **further growth**.

3.3: The impact of a positive climate on intrinsic motivation, performance and athletes' wellbeing

A positive climate in sport has a significant impact on several aspects of athlete motivation and performance, including:

Intrinsic Motivation:

A **positive climate** fosters intrinsic motivation, i.e. the pleasure and satisfaction that athletes derive directly from playing sport. When coaches and teammates create an environment that values effort, learning, and personal development, athletes are more likely to:

- Commit to their sport voluntarily.
- Feel personal satisfaction, regardless of external results.
- Have a deeper desire for continuous improvement.

Performance:

A **motivating and caring environment** also enhances sports performance. When athletes evolve in an environment that emphasizes personal progress rather than excessive comparison or competition: They are more willing to take risks to progress without fear of failure.

- They develop more stable and lasting self-confidence.
- Their concentration and perseverance increase, leading to better execution of their skills.

Mental Health and Well-Being:

A positive climate has a direct effect on athletes' emotional and mental well-being.

The following components are often observed:

- Reduced performance-related stress and anxiety.
- Increased satisfaction with sport, which can prolong their commitment over the long term.
- Enhanced self-esteem, as athletes feel supported and valued for their efforts, not just their results.

3.4: Balancing challenge and support

The aim of this section is to understand the importance of balancing challenge and support to maintain motivation and promote athlete development. Keep in mind that each athlete has different ways of communicating.

The Role of Challenge:

How setting the right challenges can push athletes to reach their potential.

Providing Support:

Techniques for providing the necessary support to help athletes overcome challenges without feeling overwhelmed.

Tailoring Challenges and Support:

Adjusting the level of challenge and support to suit each athlete's individual needs.

Encourage a growth mindset:

Help athletes see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats.

Case Studies:

Examples of effective balancing of challenge and support in different sporting contexts.

The balance between challenge and support is crucial to being a good coach because it directly impacts athletes' development, motivation, and overall well-being.

If challenges are too easy, athletes become bored and disengaged, missing out on growth opportunities. On the other hand, if challenges are too difficult and not met with adequate support, athletes may feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or lose confidence, leading to burnout or quitting.

How setting the right challenges can push athletes to reach their potential:

By carefully tailoring challenges to each athlete's skill level, coaches can create opportunities for growth that are both motivating and achievable.

Positive coaches balance difficulty with support, ensuring athletes are stretched without feeling overwhelmed.

This approach encourages perseverance, builds self-confidence, and helps athletes develop resilience. When athletes successfully meet these challenges, they experience a sense of accomplishment, reinforcing their belief in their ability to progress and succeed.

Techniques for providing the necessary support to help athletes overcome challenges without feeling overwhelmed:

- Clear communication is key—breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps makes challenges more approachable.
- Offering positive reinforcement and celebrating small successes along the way boosts confidence and keeps athletes motivated. Active listening ensures that athletes feel heard and understood, allowing coaches to offer tailored advice and emotional support. Encouraging self-reflection helps athletes identify their strengths and areas for improvement, while mentorship and peer support foster a sense of belonging and trust.
- Providing these types of support helps athletes stay focused, resilient, and empowered to tackle challenges.

How to help athletes to see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats:

Coaches can foster this mindset by emphasizing effort, learning, and improvement over winning or perfection. When athletes understand that skills are developed through persistence and practice, they become more resilient in the face of setbacks.

By praising progress and effort, and reframing failures as learning experiences, coaches can shift athletes' focus from fearing mistakes to embracing challenges as essential steps in their development. This mindset not only enhances motivation but also builds long-term success and personal growth.

3.5: Mistake correction and support

How mistakes are handled can significantly impact an athlete's motivation, confidence, and overall development.

Proper correction, paired with constructive support, helps athletes view errors as learning opportunities rather than failures. This approach fosters resilience and a growth mindset, encouraging athletes to stay engaged and improve without fear of judgment.

By balancing feedback with encouragement, coaches create a positive environment where athletes feel supported, motivated, and more likely to reach their full potential.

Keep in mind gender when you communicate with your athletes. Many see themselves as athletes first and women second. They want to be pushed as hard as male athletes and demand the same expectations. That said, the athletes we spoke to, acknowledged that women are different than men; for example, they will talk more and more inquisitively. As such, as a coach you may need to tailor the way you communicate with the athlete or team to meet these needs but still train them as hard and with the same technical rigour as a male athlete.



Task

Consider how you use a positive approach to deal with the following situations:

<p>A soccer player makes an erroneous pass that leads to a goal for the opposing team</p>	
<p>An athlete shows irritation or impatience towards a teammate during a team exercise</p>	
<p>An athlete is disappointed by their performance in a competition</p>	

Top Tips on how to build a positive relationship and communication with your athletes:

- Listen to your athletes and ensure you are involving them in decisions that affect their training and performance.
- Keep lines of communication open
- Explain the logic behind what you ask. It will help them understand your goals in training and help them in achieving them.

3.6: Evaluating and optimizing a positive motivational climate

Learn to assess the effectiveness of a positive motivational climate and adjust approaches according to athletes' needs through:

Tools for measuring athletes' perceptions of the motivational climate:

- Use surveys, questionnaires (e.g., the Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire), and one-on-one interviews to gauge athletes' views.
- Observe behaviours, communication, and emotional responses during training and competition.
- Assess how well athletes feel supported, challenged, and connected.

Gathering constructive feedback from athletes to improve climate:

- Regularly solicit feedback through anonymous forms, team meetings, or open discussions.
- Encourage athletes to share insights on what motivates them, what challenges they face, and how they feel about the current climate.
- Use feedback to pinpoint areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments.

Adapting strategies to suit team dynamics and individual personalities:

- Customize motivational approaches based on the team's dynamics and each athlete's personality, skill level, and goals.
- Build flexible strategies that can shift between group cohesion-building activities and individualized support when needed.
- Recognize when to apply different levels of challenge and support based on athlete feedback and performance.

Strategizing for long-term monitoring and continuous improvement of motivational climate:

- Develop a long-term plan that includes periodic evaluations and adjustments.
- Implement regular climate assessments, check-ins, and progress tracking for individual athletes and the team.
- Make continuous improvements based on data and feedback, fostering a dynamic, evolving motivational climate that adapts to changing team needs.

Top tips to follow include:

- Say YES more. YES opens doors. Don't close them. YES pushes us. NO keeps us safe at home. Imagine all the opportunities waiting for a YES.
- Let go of expectations. You've done your best to prepare. Now, let go. There's no one way your life should unfold. Enjoy the journey.
- Welcome diversions. The most rewarding adventures often start with an unexpected detour. Perhaps that distraction will guide you onward.

Module 4: Responsibility and Safety

"Responsibility" in sports refers to the obligation of all participants—athletes, coaches, staff, and organizations—to act ethically, follow rules, and contribute to a positive environment.

This includes being accountable for one's actions, promoting fairness, and ensuring the well-being of others.

"Safety" in sports means creating and maintaining an environment where physical and emotional harm is minimized. It involves proper training, equipment, and policies to prevent injuries, as well as fostering a culture of respect and protection from inappropriate behaviour, bullying, or discrimination. Together, **responsibility and safety** ensure a supportive and safe environment where everyone can participate, enjoy, develop and succeed. Promoting diversity among coaches and ensuring that everyone **genuinely feels welcome** helps advance responsibility and safety in sports. After completing this section, you will know what the term safe sport means, understand the safe environment in sport and how to act responsibly as a coach.

Every Individual has the right to:

- Experience the joy of sports.
- Be treated equally and fair.
- Act in a physically, mentally and socially safe environment and atmosphere.
- Participate in a fair game of sport, where you compete and act according to the rules and do your best to achieve a fair result.
- Act in accordance with their own goals and starting points and to be valued as a person and an athlete.
- Take part in healthy and clean sports.
- Raise any grievances they have experienced.

The module is split into 6 sections:

- 4.1:** Key features of safe sporting environments
- 4.2:** General Guidelines on human rights and ethical guidelines in sport
- 4.3:** The coach's field of responsibility
- 4.4:** The coach's operational environment
- 4.5:** Ethical and safety coaching – How can athletes be touched?
- 4.6:** What is safeguarding?

4.1: Key features of safe sporting environments

Creating a safe sporting environment is essential for the well-being of all participants. As a coach, it is important to recognise the general issues that play a role in creating a safe environment. The coach then works with the athletes to create their own training and competition environment based on these issues. Characteristics of a safe sporting environment in general include:

Clear codes of Conduct:

Clear expectations for behaviour, outlining what is acceptable and what is not. Codes of conduct for athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators to promote respect, fairness, and safety.

Qualified and Trained Coaches:

Coaches who are well-trained in both the sport and the emotional and physical safety of athletes. Continuous education on safety protocols, injury prevention, and recognizing signs of abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

Inclusive and Respectful Atmosphere:

Zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, or discrimination. A culture that promotes inclusion, respect for diversity, and equal participation regardless of age, gender, race, or ability.

Open communication channels:

Clear and easy ways to report safety concerns or inappropriate behaviour in a safe way. Open communication between coaches, athletes, parents and staff about the safe environment in sport and any inappropriate behaviour.

Mental and Emotional Support:

Know and identify the support systems available for athletes with mental or emotional difficulties, including access to counsellors or sports psychologists. Promoting a healthy balance between performance and well-being.

Risk management and security protocols:

Policies and practices relating to misconduct. Sport emergency policies (e.g. first aid, injury plans). Responsibility of coaches to ensure that participants have the correct equipment and safe training or competition conditions to minimise the risk of injury. Attention to the safety of facilities and the maintenance and regular servicing of equipment.

Regular review and implementation:

Consistent review of the safety environment and public safety issues and procedures to ensure that they are up to date and effective. Strict enforcement of rules and consequences for violations to maintain a safe environment.

Together, responsibility and safety ensure a supportive and safe environment where everyone can participate, enjoy, develop and succeed.

4.2: General Guidelines on human rights and ethical guidelines in sport

As a coach, it is also important that you are familiar with general guidelines on human rights, children's rights and the safe environment in sport.

You can find out more about this topic using the links below:

[Declaration of Human Rights](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[International Safe Sport Principles and Standards](#)

4.3: The coach's field of responsibility

Sport and physical activity touch a large number of people. Coaches, athletes and all those involved in sport and physical activity have an important role to play in communicating and building responsible and ethically sustainable practices, both in sport and physical activity and in our society.

In all our activities, we comply with the legislation in force, the rules and regulations of sports organisations, the ethical rules or guidelines issued under them and the general standards of behaviour in society.

Coaches have a responsible role in their area of activity to act in accordance with the rules and principles of society, the sporting community, the sports federation, the club and their own coaching team. The most important environment for a coach is, of course, his/her own coaching team and the sports club where the coaching takes place.

In well-functioning clubs, there are commonly agreed and constructed rules, coaching guidelines, team codes of conduct and ethical principles.

The community for a given sport is made up of the sport's clubs, sports academies, regional organisations and national federations. It is primarily the federation, often the international federation of the sport, that defines the rules and general ethical guidelines for the sport. The national sport federations are responsible for guiding their sports, training clubs and coaches or providing guidelines for training. Clubs, coaches, athletes and other persons involved in sport are bound by these rules. The whole sporting community is made up of all national federations, national Olympic committees, sports federations, regional federations/actors, other sport-related organisations and interest groups. Collectively, the sporting community is committed to fair play and clean sport.

As a coach, it is therefore important to identify the whole field of sport and to be familiar with the rules and guidelines governing it.



4.4: The coach's operational environment

Physical safety, Mental safety and Social Security are the 3 pillars of a safe environment:

Physical Safety:

In a physically safe environment, health and the body are protected from injury and damage. The coach knows how to organise exercises so that they are safe and take into account all levels in the group.

- Mastering the right Training Methods: It is important for **physical safety**. Physiological differences between male and female athletes, such as strength, endurance, muscle mass development and hormonal cycles, can affect training methods. For example, female athletes may have specific strength training or recovery needs and the coach must **take these factors into account** when designing training programmes.
- Training Conditions: The coach must consider **how ready the athletes are** for a particular type of training in terms of development as well as sport skills. Training **conditions must be safe and equipment must be adequate**. The coach must ensure that the specified protective equipment is used during practice and games.
- Physical Training: It is important for the coach to know how to train in such a way that the sport can be **performed safely**. The coach's task is also to **teach and educate athletes** to respect other athletes and thus promote physical safety in sport.

Mental Safety:

In a mentally safe environment, the athlete feels seen, heard and accepted for exactly who they are.

- Athletes' mental health: In a mentally safe environment, athletes have the courage to express their opinions, experiences and feelings. They have the opportunity to experiment and learn in order to improve. Feelings of fear, shame, anxiety or guilt are not part of an emotionally safe environment, either in training or in competition.
- General acceptance: In certain sports or in boy/girl dominated sports, mixed teams are commonplace and can be very unequal between the sexes. This always requires a coach to have special skills in how to build self-confidence and a sense of belonging, if the sport does not generate general acceptance in the child's social environment or social status in the group of friends. It is important to ensure that the child does not perceive himself or herself as somehow different in the group.

Social Security:

A socially safe environment is about relationships and team spirit, the relationship of the individual with other people. A socially safe group is built on good relationships, a positive atmosphere, a sense of belonging and a sense of community.

- Providing positive experiences: Sport provides positive experiences for all those involved. Abusive treatment, bullying, discrimination, name-calling, name-calling, physical and mental abuse, humiliation, belittling, sexual and gender-based harassment, discrimination and racism have no place in sport and physical activity - not even when dressed up as humour.
- Safe environment: In a safe environment, the coach can take into account linguistic challenges and any special religious considerations. Many children and young people today are diagnosed with a wide range of concentration disorders or other issues requiring special attention. These also present challenges for the coach and require planning to ensure that the training environment works safely at all levels.

Task

Take a moment to think about your own coaching environment and what it looks like. Write down, below, the issues that affect your coaching and how you have taken them into account to provide a safe and interesting training environment for all.

When you reflect on your own coaching environment, consider how your coaching would change if your group were different. For example, what adjustments would you make if your group included para-athletes?

4.5: Ethical and safety coaching – How can athletes be touched?

Touching an athlete is a sensitive matter, and there are specific rules and ethical guidelines that must be followed to ensure the athlete's physical and mental integrity is respected. There are many different situations where touching may occur in sports, but the general principle is that all touching must be appropriate, respectful, and purposeful. Below are some key principles and situations where touching an athlete may happen:

Coach and Athlete Interaction:

- **Technical Guidance and Instruction:** In some situations, a coach may touch an athlete to help demonstrate proper technique or movement. This touch should only occur if necessary, and the coach should ensure the athlete is comfortable with it.
- **Consent and Comfort:** The athlete must always feel safe and respected. It's essential for the coach to ask the athlete's permission before touching, especially in situations where it's not obviously required. This can include assisting with stretching or correcting movements.

Physical Contact in Sports:

- **Contact Sports (e.g., football, hockey, combat sports):** In these sports, touching is part of the game or performance, but rules ensure that contact is fair and safe. Illegal, aggressive, or injury-intended contact leads to penalties and as a coach, you need to address these.
- **Non-contact Sports:** In sports where physical contact is not typically part of the competition (e.g., tennis, swimming), touching an athlete during a game is rare, except in cases of accidental contact.

Celebration and Encouragement:

- **Team Spirit:** In sports, it is common to see teammates or coaches and athletes touching each other in supportive ways, like giving high-fives or pats on the shoulder during celebrations or encouragement. These gestures should be light-hearted and ensure that all athletes feel comfortable with them.

Sport Injuries and Care:

- **Medical assistant:** Touch by coach, sports doctors or physiotherapists is typically necessary for treatment, massage, or injury assessment. In these cases, professionals should always act ethically and with expertise, and the athlete has the right to refuse if they feel uncomfortable.

Emotional and Ethical Integrity:

- Touching should never make an athlete feel uncomfortable or distressed. Any touch should always align with the athlete's personal boundaries, and coaches, medical staff, and other athletes should always respect these boundaries. No touch should ever be sexual or offensive in nature.

Touching an athlete is acceptable only when it is necessary and respectful. Ethical guidelines emphasize the importance of consent and respect, whether it involves coaching, injury care, or contact during competition. Within the training group, it is important to have a joint discussion on these issues with the athletes, parents, coaches and experts involved, especially in the new training group.

4.6: What is safeguarding?

Key concept and elements

Safeguarding in sport refers to measures and practices that protect athletes, especially children and vulnerable individuals, from harm, abuse, neglect, and violence. Safeguarding encompasses a wide range of actions, such as developing policies, providing training, assessing risks, and monitoring to ensure a safe and positive environment for everyone involved in sports.

Key elements and concepts of safeguarding in sport include:

Policies and Rules: Clubs and organisations create and implement policies that define how to act in case of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct and how to operate to ensure effective safeguarding.

Training and Awareness: Coaches, instructors, and other staff are trained to prevent, recognize and appropriately respond to potential threats or abuse. Training is the best way to prevent inappropriate behaviour.

Background Checks: Clubs must ensure that all individuals working with children and young people are properly vetted, including obtaining criminal background checks.

Safety and supervision: During sporting events and practices, it is essential to ensure that the environment is safe and supervised to minimise the risk of damage or abuse. All those involved in the activity are aware of measures to protect athletes, particularly children and vulnerable persons, from abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Accountability operations: The responsibility of clubs and organisations to ensure that safeguarding measures are in place in club operations and properly implemented.

Reporting and Reporting Mechanisms: Sports clubs and organisations should have clear procedures and responsibilities in place to report and address any misconduct or dangerous situations.

Monitoring and Supervision: Continuous evaluation and oversight of sports activities to ensure that safeguarding is effective and risks are properly managed.

Collaboration: Cooperation between various parties, including clubs, parents, coaches, and authorities, to ensure safeguarding is upheld.

Safeguarding is a fundamental part of responsible sports activity, aiming to ensure that all participants have a safe and positive experience in sports. These concepts above form the foundation of safeguarding in sport to create a safe and positive environment for all participants in sport.



Main protocols/processes

It is important for the coach to know how to react to inappropriate behaviour in club activities. A coach's own coaching team can follow the same principles.

Addressing inappropriate behaviour is based on rapid response and mediation, as well as prevention. There are four steps to dealing with incidents: prevention, intervention, mediation and possible follow-up. Cases are assessed for any need for improvement and for prevention. An essential element of each case is also the follow-up of the case, in order to react quickly to a situation where the problem was not resolved in the first mediation. All parties must be listened to on an equal footing in the handling of cases and the handling must be documented in a secure manner.

The club should have a problem-solving path, which explains how the club will act if problems arise. This way, club members, their parents, coaches and other stakeholders will know how to act and who to contact when they encounter inappropriate behaviour, for example.

This is a summary list of how to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour within the club. Coaches can follow a lighter version of this in their own coaching group:

To Listen: The recipient of a complaint of misconduct shall listen to the person who made the complaint without delay and take the concerns expressed seriously. The listener will take note of the matter or, if appropriate, request a written complaint from the person concerned.

To inform: The contact will be informed of the way forward and when the next contact will be made.

To Define who will take care of the situation: Internally, the sports club will decide who will take the case forward. It is important for the club to have pre-designated individuals who will handle complaints as a priority (e.g. board member, head of coaching, executive director). If the club does not have the means to deal with the case itself, it can seek help from its own sports federation or other bodies that deal with such matters.

To prevent further issues: Any further misconduct should be prevented immediately.

To Hear all the parts involved: All interested parties will be heard and, if minors are involved, their guardians must be asked for permission to be heard and should be present. Guardians should always be informed afterwards of what has been discussed and what measures have been taken.

To Try to Mediate or to Proceed with further actions: The first priority is to resolve the matter through mediation between the parties concerned, but if this is not sufficient or possible, a decision on further action should be taken. The resolution will take into account the group rules, club rules, sport/union rules and any labour law measures. If the incident is related to sexual harassment or violence that meets the definitions of the Criminal Code, the appropriate authorities should be informed.

Consequences: The club will decide on the consequences: e.g. reprimand, warning, suspension from the group/activity, termination of employment, dismissal from a position of trust, suspension from officiating/competition or expulsion from membership.

To Archive documents: A written summary of the proceedings will be drawn up and a decision will be taken as to where it will be kept and the relevant persons will be informed. A follow-up of the case will be planned to ensure that the inappropriate behaviour is not repeated.



Module 5: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



In this module you'll learn how to address diversity in coaching, to become a better coach for your team, to create a **group that works well together, to develop the right mindset** and make coaching **inclusive of all people and perspectives**.

“A good coach can change a game, but a great coach can change a life” – John Wooden

We'll start by saying that to ensure equality and diversity in sport, the first step is to **involve diverse coaches in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and ability**. Change is also a matter of replicating what I see and if I don't see diversity, I will not be ready for diversity.

The second step is to look at coaching through a few key lenses and be able to define your own coaching style and learn about others.

The module is split into 5 sections:

- 5.1:** What are we trying to achieve?
- 5.2:** With increased awareness, more diversity in sports
- 5.3:** Move from coaching to PURPOSEFUL COACHING
- 5.4:** Driving inclusion
- 5.5:** The 4 P's of inclusion facilitation

5.1: What are we trying to achieve?

As we begin this journey together we must align on three key concepts:

Equality: Equality determines that **everyone deserves the same rights, resources, and opportunities**. It works off the assumption that everyone benefits from the same support. Equality only works if everyone starts from the same starting line and has the same needs.

Equity: Equity is produced where **individual circumstances and imbalances are acknowledged**, and the exact resources and opportunities needed to create fairness are allocated. The concept of equity is synonymous with **fairness and egalitarianism**.

Social justice: When systems are corrected and adjusted, equitable access is created. This means no support or accommodations are required as inequity has been tackled. Social Justice embodies a vision of an **equitable society where all members are physically, socially and psychologically safe**.

Understanding the basics of these concepts will help us build the foundation needed for this learning journey. But this is only the first step. We recommend exploring the collection of good practices with the variety of resources available in <https://afc.assistitaly.eu/#products> to deepen your understanding.

Using these three concepts as your anchors, you will be able to **understand inclusion and implement it** to create safer spaces for all.

Remember that inclusion implies involving diverse target groups in taking part in your sports program. However, **ensuring diversity requires an organisational effort to integrate diversity into the coaching workforce**, because "If You Can't See It, You Can't Be It" and if practitioners don't see diversity in the sport clubs team, they may think that sport is not for them or that club is not for them.

Reflection Task

Consider how you, as a coach, interact with participants at your club through the following questions:

- How do you involve participants?
- How do you ensure everyone feels welcomed and gets a chance to participate
- Which development opportunities do you offer to your participants?
- How is the composition of the coaching workforce in your club?

5.2: With increased awareness, more diversity in sports

The following section aims to raise awareness, question your beliefs and create actions around:

Diversity

Norms, and

Privileges

Diversity

What does diversity mean?

WHAT? Being aware that each person has a lot of different characteristics, roles and belongs to different groups. Feeling safe and respected in sports without fear of discrimination.

WHY? Variety of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences, better chances to solve problems and be innovative. This means better results and a more sustainable organization.

HOW? Increasing knowledge and tools gives better conditions to reach diversity. *Knowledge:* Awareness of attitudes, norms and obstacles (understanding of inclusion). *Tools:* Steering mechanisms, recruitment and retaining procedures to ensure coaches with different gender, ethnicity, ability, mentoring programmes for coaches, accessibility guidelines.

Norms

SOCIAL RULES: Social rules about right and wrong when it comes to expectations, behaviour and appearance.

NORMS: Norms are tied to the time and place where we grew up or where we live. Both good and bad ones, including or excluding. Norms give us power and privileges; there are consequences when breaking norms and can lead to discrimination and other inappropriate behaviour; forming cultures.

Privileges

Acknowledge and investigate privileges, identify the ones that are taken for **granted**:

Reflect on the experience of having (or not having) a privilege

No privilege is more important than another, that for someone any privilege may feel essential

Investigate and consider **what groups may have limited access** to what privileges and effect that lack of access may have on an individual.



5.3: Move from coaching to PURPOSEFUL COACHING

Parallel to change the norms and attitudes in your club towards diversity and involve a more diverse workforce, it is crucial to adopt a coaching approach that enables inclusivity, equality and inclusion. Purposeful coaching helps coaches understand their critical role in shaping the outcomes for the teams they work with. It enables facilitators to build an inclusive environment that allows players to develop skills on and off the pitch.

The goal of this section is to focus on the role of the coach and reflect on how you as an individual coach. You will gain an understanding of the different lenses through which a coach views their team, how a coach's style influences the experience of players, and why having intuitive, empathetic, and diverse role models is essential. The lesson will also spotlight several barrier-breaking coaches who model different styles.

The range of challenges becomes even wider when your team is more diverse. Many sports teams address this by reducing diversity.

Some examples include making groups very close in age, recruiting from similar cultures or geography, only having players speaking one language, all players being at a similar talent level, or having players from similar economic means.

By reducing these differences, a wide range of challenges are eliminated, and the coach can focus solely on developing sport skills.

There are **different lenses** through which you can look at coaching. Oftentimes, we are not aware of all the different ways we can use these lenses to **create more inclusive spaces**. How you view your role informs every decision you make as a coach. It determines what you prioritize, where you put your resources, and what your players will get from their experience.

As a coach, you will make **hundreds of decisions** every season. What do you say if your group excludes and makes fun of new members who join?

How do you adapt your practice if you have very experienced players and players who are playing for the first time?

What do you do if your best player is a bully to other teammates?

Reducing diversity to avoid challenges is a quick fix, but not a long-term solution.

Inviting, involving, and including people from different backgrounds breeds an environment of increased creativity, skills, abilities, and productivity. As purposeful coaches, our priority is not solely to win championships.

We create environments for our players to build relationships, have fun, learn, develop positive identities, improve skills, obtain life experience, and feel included.

We know this is even more important when it comes to **getting women and girls in the game**, especially when we aim to reach girls who are playing for the first time. To do this well, we need to be prepared to **address the different challenges** our players face. We must develop our lenses and perspectives by **continuously seeking information and deepening our understanding** of our profession and our teams.

What lenses should you use to be a fair coach?

The Sport lens: The tactician:

A traditional or tactical sport coach focuses on the team's **skill, talent, athleticism, and contribution to the overall sporting success of the team.**

For example, in a team of 11 footballers, a coach with a strong sport lens may see:

- Three players with significant experience who are leaders on the pitch.
- Three players who are a bit out of shape and need to work on their fitness.
- Two players with raw athleticism but who do not have the ball skills they need to be effective.
- Three players who can play a specific position but have big areas of their game that they need to work on.

KEY COACHING POINT: Competence breeds confidence! Sport has many inherent lessons to teach. Building up life skills alongside the athletic ability of your players has value on and off the field of play.

The Access and Inclusion Lens: The Barrier Breaker

Getting into the game requires much more than the skill to play. Full participation in sport requires **access, permission, equipment, transportation**, and other resources.

Girls, among others, often cite transportation and safety, proper equipment and apparel, parent permission, or home responsibilities as some of the main barriers that keep them from accessing sport. **Coaches are key to spotting these barriers and designing programs to address them.** Looking at that same team of 11 footballers, a coach with a strong access and inclusion lens may see:

- Five players who go to the same school and live close to the field but who speak a different first language than the coach and the majority of other players.
- One player who lives far away and has to take the bus by herself to attend sessions.
- Two players who can only come to sessions on weekends because their parents will not allow them to attend during the week.
- Three players who are new to the team and do not have the right equipment to play, so they tend to come to sessions in their school clothing.

KEY COACHING POINT: Get them to the field! Whatever your goals are on the field, first, you need to get the players there. Consider the timing and location of the sessions, equipment costs (including gender-specific needs such as sports bras), transportation routes, and how you communicate with parents and guardians.

The Youth Development Lens: The Mentor:

Young players who like their coach are more likely to keep playing. Coaches who build team relationships, have fun, reward effort, foster integrity, and honesty, encourage learning from mistakes, and teach skills safely are key factors. A skilled youth development coach will get to know each player personally and earn the trust of all players. Trust is the foundation for sharing lessons and life learnings through sport that will stay with players forever.

Taking that same team of 11 footballers and applying a strong youth development lens, a coach may see:

- Three players who are always the first to volunteer to do anything the coach asks them to do.
- Three players who come to sport sessions, but who are often absent from school.
- Three players who never speak up in a team huddle and seem to feel timid or that their ideas are not worth sharing
- Two players who are always first to arrive and last to leave, asking for skills to practice at home.

KEY COACHING POINT: Coach the whole person, not only the player. Sport creates many moments where you can see who a player is as a person, or even better, who they are trying to become. You can encourage shy players to speak up. You can teach frustrated players to bounce back. Use as many of these moments as possible to show your players that you care about them.

The Trauma-informed lens: the culture keeper

Sport and physical activity have a powerful effect on mental health and, if designed with intention, can help young people to heal from the impacts of trauma in their lives. Coaches with a trauma-informed lens prioritize the emotional and physical safety of players.

They offer individualized adaptations and routines that can support their players to strengthen their own resilience and build skills such as self-regulation.

Within that same team of 11 footballers, a coach with a strong trauma-informed lens may see:

- Two players who have strong reactions to hard physical contact.
- Three players who give the coach the silent treatment if they are subbed out or not allowed to play their favorite position.
- Three players who often act out in response to authority figures.
- Three players who get so angry after making a mistake that they often walk out of the session or yell at a teammate.

Depending on the level of trauma in a player's life, even as a purposeful coach, **we will not always be equipped to help**. Coaches are not doctors, psychologist for this reason, in these circumstances, it could help to **connect the player to professional services** available in your local context.

KEY COACHING POINT: Sport plays an incredibly important role in our lives, but equally there is more to life than sport. Moments that evoke strong emotions in players include victory and defeat, referee decisions, mistakes, fouls, and points scored or lost. The stakes feel high, and emotions can be amplified by trauma in a player's life. Coaches have an opportunity in these moments to help players manage their emotions, practice positive self-discipline, and build resilience and self-regulation skills. These tools will transform players' lives when faced with challenges on and off the pitch.

5.4: Driving inclusion

It is estimated that only between 20%-30% of all coaches in Europe are women and in most sports the underrepresentation of women becomes more pronounced at the highest levels of coaching. As a sports coach and leader, one of your core roles is to guide your participants to be the best version of themselves.

Take some time to support your female athletes to start the process of becoming coaches and initiate a mentoring program to support their development within your sports program. This is the most powerful action to drive inclusion: lead by example!

Work to improve your coaching. We are going to focus on the GROW methodology. The GROW method focuses on collaborative problem-solving and decision-making. It will help you and your participants overcome obstacles, set goals, and resolve conflicts. The method can be applied by anyone, from a youth football coach to a social worker at school.

The following will introduce you to the **four stages of GROW** and will give you tips on how to apply the methodology in your day-to-day coaching practice.

GROW stands for:

GOAL: Focus on the issue participants want to address.

The goal stage encourages you to **focus on the issue** the participant wishes to address and to determine a goal for your interaction. The intention is to establish **what the participant wants to achieve**. It may only be possible to initially define a vague goal. The reality stage should provide information that allows the goal to be more focused – or it may reveal that your initial goal is no longer appropriate.

REALITY: Help participants understand what is currently happening.

In the reality stage, your **questions seek to increase awareness and understanding** of the current situation.

OPTIONS: Generate possible courses of action.

The purpose of the options stage is not to find the right answer, but to **create as many alternative courses of action as possible**. The coach will draw out these options from the participant. At this stage, **quantity is more important than quality**. In this stage, it's helpful to break away from negative assumptions such as "It can't be done like that" or "They would never agree..." to **focus solely on possibilities**. It may help to suspend belief by asking "What if?" questions to encourage creative thought. This way, the perceived problem can be **reframed as solvable**. When surveying options, ensure that each scenario moves the participant closer to the identified goal.

WILL: Take responsibility for actions to improve the situation.

The purpose of this stage is to **turn a discussion into a decision** and a way forward.

The acronym for the four stages makes it easy to remember, but keep in mind that **this method serves as a general guide** it shouldn't be applied always literally. In some situations, changing the order of these steps may be appropriate! **Really listening to the participant will help you determine what order and style is best for them**. Sometimes, it's not possible to set a goal before identifying the reality of a situation. In this case, it can be helpful to **explore the reality stage** before returning to define a goal. Remember that a goal – even if loosely defined – gives a sense of purpose to the discussion. Set a goal as early as possible.

If the participant's attempts to generate options are not going well, this may indicate that the current reality of the situation needs further exploration to generate the insight needed to think of different options.

5.5: The 4 Ps of inclusion facilitation

When players come to the pitch, they bring their skills, talents, ambitions, personalities, and challenges with them. As coaches, we should try to ensure every player is included, feels valued, and has the opportunity to play and learn.

There are four key coaching aspects that you should focus on to create an inclusive environment:

Preparation: As coaches, we must prepare ahead of time for the inclusion challenges we will face and plan activities that accommodate the different needs of different players.

Participation: As coaches, we must create ways for everyone to participate. If a player has made time to come to your activity, you must make sure they are able to participate as actively and fully as possible.

Presence: As coaches, we set the tone, culture and feel for the group. If we are welcoming and inclusive, the team will notice this. Presence includes what the players seem hear and feel when you are there.

Precision: As coaches, we are juggling many different needs at the same time. We are trying to lead a whole group as just one person and have to be clear about our expectations, instructions, plans and goals.

As a coach, you play a key role in ensuring every player feels validated and included in a sports environment—which can make the difference between whether they continue to pursue a sport or not.

The approaches presented are tools to be integrated in your personal coaching style in order to help your players to feel welcome and give the best they have for themselves and for the others and benefit from sport to the fullest.



Reflection Task

Think about how you drive inclusion in your coaching. Write down some examples where you have done this well, and areas for development in your coaching practice.

Module 6: Rules and Regulations

EU Regulations about Preventing Abuse

There are two key concepts about violence prevention in the EU:

Most measures that are related to preventing abuse in sport remain at the level of non-binding declarations and resolutions, mainly aiming to tackle racism.

Sports organisations have adjusted their internal codes to address violence through disciplinary measures, developing also awareness-raising campaigns, protection policies and manuals.

Documents issued by the relevant organisations tackling abuse in sport include:

Sport	Organisation	Anti-racism/discrimination clause	Implementation in detailed disciplinary regulations
Olympics	International Olympic Committee (IOC)	Olympic Charter Code of ethics	N/A
Football	Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)	Statutes Code of ethics	Disciplinary code Disciplinary regulations; licensing regulations
Basketball	European Basketball Federation (FIBA Europe)	General statutes and internal regulations of FIBA	N/A
Volleyball	European Volleyball Confederation (CEV)	Code of discipline	General disciplinary sanctions in Code of discipline
Tennis	Tennis Europe (European Tennis Federation)	Constitution	N/A
Handball	European Handball Federation (EHF)	Statutes Code of conduct	Negative sanctions for "unsportsman-like conduct" in arbitration regulations
Athletics	International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) European Athletic Association (EAA)	Constitution Code of ethics	N/A
Cricket	European Cricket Council (ECC)/ International Cricket Council (ICC)	ICC Global Development Programme ICC Anti-racism code and ICC Code of conduct	ICC Anti-racism code ICC Code of conduct
Camogie/Hurling	Gaelic Athletic Association Europe (GAA Europe)	Code of best practice in youth sport Inclusion and integration strategy	N/A
Cycling	European Cycling Union (UEC)	N/A	N/A
Ice Hockey	International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)	Statutes	N/A
Korfball	International Korfball Federation (IKF)	Statutes Membership declaration	General disciplinary sanctions in disciplinary regulations
Skiing	International Ski Federation (FIS)	Statutes	N/A
Speedway	European Motorcycle Union (UEM)	Statutes	N/A

There are also documents available online issued by European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Commissions, UN/UNESCO, the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee that are focused on tackling abuse both in and out of sport.

Thank You

From the "A Fairer Coaching" team we thank you for investing your time in this resource! It was a pleasure to share this contents with you and we hope that they will be useful for you in the present and future of your coaching careers.

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