

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Mastering the 5 Cornerstones of Athletic Improvement

By David Benzel

The Growing Champions for Life philosophy was built from the idea that the youth sports experience is most effective in meeting its true objectives when coaches, parents, and administrators create the most positive learning environment possible for today's youth.

I liken youth sports to life's "sandbox" when it comes to youth development- it's a laboratory for learning what works in life. With so much pressure being placed on young athletes these days to win at all costs, it's not hard for sports parents, coaches and athletes to lose focus and neglect to take advantage of the learning opportunities within the rich laboratory of youth athletics. Lessons in self-control, humility and character have the potential to help child athletes discover their guiding principles and apply those lessons to live a values-driven life.

To guide athletes along the journey, we created five cornerstones for athletic improvement that address fundamental issues of sport AND life. Mastering these five skill sets yields improved performance in sports, AND personal maturity for making good decisions in life.



Live by Your
Values



Be Coachable



Stick to It



Manage Your
Thoughts



Stay on Your
Path

The below exercise includes a statement relating to each of the five cornerstones for athletic improvement listed in the image above. It is followed by three questions that will help athletes (as well as parents and coaches) to better understand what inhibits them from learning all they can from sports, and applying that knowledge to enhance their athletic performance and overall growth. So grab a pen and paper, or open up a blank document on your computer and get started!

1. Live by my values

I wonder how I can resist the temptation to compromise my values despite peer pressure, self-doubt, and fear.

What are my current obstacles to doing this?

What are my strengths and possible resources for doing this?

And lastly what are my action steps?

2. Be Coachable

I wonder how I can overcome my distractions.

What are my current obstacles to doing this?

What are my strengths and possible resources for doing this?

And lastly what are my action steps?

3. Stick to it

I wonder how I can continue to move forward in spite of my obstacles or any adversity.

What are my current obstacles to doing this?

What are my strengths and possible resources for doing this?

And lastly what are my action steps?

4. Manage my thoughts

I wonder how I can feel good about myself when I don't perform my best, or win.

What are my current obstacles to doing this?

What are my strengths and possible resources for doing this?

And lastly what are my action steps?

5. Stay on my path

I wonder how I can see and appreciate now the positive outcome that today's work will have on me six months down the road.

What are my current obstacles to doing this?

What are my strengths and possible resources for doing this?

And lastly what are my action steps?

This exercise suggests that athletes have the answers within them if they just know what questions to ask themselves. Athletes and their parents should keep these answers on hand to review a few months from now to see how they were able to put the knowledge gained from this exercise into practice. –

Much gratitude to Julie Learner, a sports therapist in the Chicago area, for her assistance in creating this exercise. www.julielearner.com

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic:

<http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com/coachdavid>

David Benzel is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](#), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience.

David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"* www.growingchampionsforlife.com