



## TOP 10 COACHING STRATEGIES

### 1. LEARN NAMES

As fundamental as it sounds, too many coaches don't learn their athletes' names (or take too long to learn 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.

### 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 girl has to answer a question, she's using the "thinking" part of her brain- building her still-developing rational thinking and decision-making skills.

### 4. CONTRIBUTION COUNTS

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. THEIR GOALS, NOT YOURS

Encourage girls to set their own goals for what they want to accomplish. Encourage those goals to be things that girls can 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, or what 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 different 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 a coach, we have tremendous power to set the tone and priorities of the team. The things that 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 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. BRAVE, NOT PERFECT

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. REFLECTION CONNECTION

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