

Challenging Conversations Worksheet

While creating a positive youth sports experience for athletes is a rewarding task, there are times that coaches may need to relay information to an athlete that can have a negative impact on them. To maintain a positive experience, coaches should approach these conversations with intention, positivity, and care to help athletes build independence and resilience. The following worksheet is meant to help coaches navigate the challenging conversations that they may need to have - i.e. a player may not be starting the next game, they need to improve on a particular skill, or they may be expected to respond differently to certain situations.

Considerations Prior to Having a Challenging Conversation

When and where would you have the conversation?

What has the athlete been going through that may have led to the need for the conversation?

How will you start the conversation with empathy?

How will you respond if the athlete isn't receiving it well?

What is a positive goal you can set at the end of the conversation? How can I engage the athlete in helping develop a positive goal?

Tips to Keep in Mind

- Model self-regulation by taking a deep breath and ensuring you feel ready to approach the conversation
- Strive for a calm, caring tone while maintaining positive body language
- Consider impact vs. intent - words that cause harm aren't excused by good intentions. Apologize if you feel that you caused harm - coaches are not above making mistakes and can model humility