

SECTION 09

TEACHING LIFE SKILLS



09



CANADA
BASKETBALL



9.0 TEACHING LIFE SKILLS

Steve Nash Youth Basketball prides itself on providing quality basketball programming that not only develops young athletes on the court, but molds them into better individuals off the court. As a coach, you play a vital role in this development process.

Through your Steve Nash Youth Basketball program, you have the opportunity to build and develop the life skills of your athletes. Introduced in the FUNdamentals stage and built upon through the Learn to Train stage, life skill development goes a long way in developing an athlete as a whole. Work with your athletes and ensure that you help them along the way in their journey to develop the skills they need for life.

9.1 - ATTITUDE

Is: an individual's mentality/judgments towards a person, place, thing or event; generally can be positive or negative.

Communicate it: Coaches and parents should strive to create a positive athletic environment through the promotion of positive attitudes. Every child participating in sport should bring a positive attitude to every practice and game and a willingness to learn. Be a role model and be positive yourself - smile, laugh and do not dwell on the negatives! Encourage positive communication amongst teammates and parents and help out whenever possible.

Celebrate it: Aspire to have the team with the best attitude! And make sure your team knows it! When you see your athletes cheering along the sidelines, helping out an injured player and/or encouraging players after they make a mistake, give them high fives and let them know that's what you like to see. Conversely, if you're noticing players displaying a poor attitude, talk to them about it and find out why. Let them know it's unacceptable to bring a poor attitude to the court.

POSTIVE ATTITUDE	NEGATIVE ATTITUDE
Enthusiastically participating	Moping and disengagement from peers
Offering encouragement to others	Making rude comments to those who made a mistake
Coming to practices and games on time and prepared	Being late and missing practices
Asking for assistance from teammates, coaches, and parents when needed	Not taking the initiative to improve; settling to subpar results

Coach's Activity: Provide your team with Certificates for A+ Attitudes, following a season where you noticed they demonstrated positive attitudes throughout.

Player's Activity: Before a practice, brainstorm and write down five positive feelings that you associate with having a great attitude (i.e. happy, encouraging, optimistic). Following practice, refer back to the sheet and reflect on whether or not you felt these feelings were achieved during practice. Were you around certain people when you experienced these feelings? Take note, and this will help you maintain a positive attitude in future sessions.



9.2 - BALANCE

Is: finding a state of equilibrium between two or more states of being.

Communicate it: Young athletes should be encouraged to find an equal balance between sports, school, family and friends. Get a good night's rest and eat a balanced diet. If you notice that someone's performance is slipping, talk to them and their parents: are they getting enough rest? Are they eating properly? Are they over stress from school work? Help to identify the problem and ensure that just the right amount of time is being spent on the basketball court. Encourage parents to come out and watch practices and games – make youth sports a family affair!

Celebrate it: When the optimum balance is reached, you will see results on the court. Talk to the parents and let them know how much they're helping their child by making sure that they are maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Show interest in the athlete's life outside of basketball: ask about their academics and other extracurricular. Recreational sports should be a privilege; if they're doing well in school, they're going to do well on the court!

BENEFITS OF A BALANCED LIFESTYLE	CONSEQUENCES OF A NON-BALANCED LIFESTYLE
Well rested	Tiredness, exhaustion
Healthy diet	Poor eating habits
Strong academics	Bad grades
Ample time for extracurricular activities	Overworked, stress
Healthy relationships	Strained relationships

Coach's Activity: Have your athletes keep a weekly log of what they eat, how long they sleep, how much time is spent on their studies, and how much time is devoted to basketball and other sports. At the end of the week, have them analyze the results. Are there areas that needs more attention and devote more time to? How can improvements be made to help them achieve a more balanced lifestyle?

Player's Activity: Keep a weekly log of how you're spending your time, including homework, sports, reading and time spent watching television. At week's end, tally up the amount of time you spent doing each of the above activities. What do you spend the most time on? Talk about this with your parents. Is there something that you want to make time for? Have your parents help you out with this.

9.3 – COMMUNICATION

Is: the process of conveying information; strive to do so openly, positively and clearly

Communicate it: Create an athletic environment whereby players and parents feel comfortable to talk to each other. Encourage the notion that more communication is better than less. When talking to others, ensure you do so in a calm and professional manner, and always practice active listening. Remember that 93% of communication is non-verbal. Carry yourself in a professional manner, and encourage your players to do the same.

Celebrate it: Effective communication will transfer into success. Let them know that by asking questions, they will learn more and learn effectively. When you notice that your players are seeking results on the court, praise them and encourage them – that is yet another way to continue communication with your team! Communication is a never-ending process – never stop talking to your team and make sure they never stop talking to you.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	POOR COMMUNICATION
Make eye contact	Using inappropriate language (i.e. name calling)
Stand up straight and use appropriate facial expressions	Slouching and not smiling while communicating
Use a warm and welcoming tone	Being aggressive or hostile
Be an active listener: not only do you hear what the person is saying, but you try to understand the entirety of the message	Not listening to others; becoming distracted; ignoring other people
Be approachable	Failing to ask for assistance when needed

Coach’s Activity: For this activity, make sure that there is a safe area where your players are not going to bump into anything. Blindfold all your players. Tell them to line up in order of their: a) birthdays, and then b) ages (oldest – youngest). The blindfold demonstrates a ‘barrier to communication’ and is a good physical example of how difficult communication can be. Note how long it takes them to accomplish these two line-ups and discuss what could have made the process easier.

Player’s Activity: Communication can naturally be easier with people that you know; strive to get to know new people every practice. During warm-ups, ask someone who you do not know very well a question: Who’s your favorite basketball player? What’s your favorite movie? When did you start playing basketball? This will help you to practice your communication skills, and possibly make some new friends too!

9.4 – CONFIDENCE

Is: the belief in one’s own abilities.

Communicate it: Young athletes must have confidence in their abilities on and off the court. Help them build their confidence by structuring practices appropriately so they have ample time to practice a skill. The more they practice, the greater the chance they will succeed, and the higher their confidence will climb. Create a culture where athletes not only have confidence in their own abilities, but with each other. Remember to comment regularly on all the positive things that your athlete is doing and offer encouragement and advice on what they can improve on.

Celebrate it: Get everyone involved! Ensure that all the kids get equal playing time. This will allow them to all develop their skills and to realize that even if they are making mistakes, they are still going to play. Intentionally make at least one positive comment to each athlete during practice and games – this will boost their confidence further. Don’t forget: Positivity is contagious!

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS	CONFIDENCE BASHERS
Positive Feedback	Harsh criticism
Equal playing time	‘Benchwarmer’
Complimenting others on a job well done	Making fun of other people’s mistakes
Keeping things simple	Tackling too many complex tasks
Concentrating on the positives	Dwelling on the negatives



Coach’s Activity: Have your team “Play it Forward”. When someone does a good deed for them, encourage them to pay it forward instead of repaying the person who committed the good deed. For example, if someone shares their basketball with them during practice, they might pay it forward by offering to help someone else who they see struggling with their jump shot. This exercise will help spread positivity and in turn boost everyone’s confidence, as everyone is doing something good for someone else.

Player’s Activity: Everyday, give someone a compliment. Take note of how good it makes them feel, and how good it makes YOU feel. You can improve someone’s confidence with the smallest gesture!

9.5 – FOCUS & DETERMINATION

Is: concentrating one’s whole energy in order to achieve something; giving 100% of one’s attention and effort.

Communicate it: There is no better example of focus and determination than yourself: if you are determined to help/coach your young athlete, they will be determined to learn from you and succeed. If you notice someone is struggling, help them out, encourage them to stay focused and let them know it’s ok to make mistakes. It’s easy to lose focus as the season progresses – monitor everyone to make sure all the athletes stay dedicated.

Celebrate it: Young athletes should take great pride in their accomplishments – when they maintain focused and dedicated, anything is possible. Share that with them and recognize them for their determination and effort. Following a practice, talk about the good things that were accomplished, and the thing that need further improvement. With greater focus and determination, those improvements will be made and further praise can be given.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A FOCUSED & DETERMINED PERSON	CHARACTERISTICS OF A NON-FOCUSED & DETERMINED PERSON
Hard working	Lazy
Motivated and enthusiastic	Non-enthusiastic and de-motivated
Persistent	Gives up easily
Set goals	Lacks a clear vision
Identifies weaknesses and strives to improve	No desire to improve; careless & indifferent

Coach’s Activity: Write down the words ‘focus’ and ‘determination’. Have the athletes share other words and characteristics that they associate with these words and discuss ways to become a more focused and dedicated person.

Player’s Activity: Who is the most focused and dedicated person you know? Write a one-page response to this question, and share with your teammates. How can you become more like them? Can their characteristics be transferred on and off the court?



9.6 – GOAL SETTING

Is: the process of establishing specific and measurable objectives; time-measurable (i.e. setting goals for the week, the month and/or the season); helps to challenge oneself and can help identify and improve weaknesses in order to maximize potential.

Communicate it: Kids need to know how to come up with a proper goal and what to include: share with them that goals need to start out small, be measurable and achievable. Help them to establish a plan for achieving their goals – talk to them about allotting sufficient time for practice, and for study. They should be encouraged to set weekly, monthly and seasonal goals and to evaluate regularly. Remember, all kids have goals. They just may not communicate them properly. Encourage them to share them with you so you can help them attain them and to ensure that they aren't setting themselves up for disappointment if they are unrealistic.

Celebrate it: Monitor their goals, and talk to them when the deadline approaches. Have they attained their goal? If yes, praise and encourage them to set up their next goals. It can take many weekly and monthly goals in order to reach the larger goal. Help them to re-evaluate their goals so they can attain them. Did they not allow themselves enough time? Did they fail to seek help from other resources that could have helped along the way? Identify the issues and let them know that obstacles and mistakes are part of the goal-setting process and can often be the best way for them to learn.

WELL WRITTEN GOALS	POORLY WRITTEN GOALS
"Becoming a better free-throw shooter by practicing free throw shots for 15 minutes everyday for a month. Aim for 30 consecutive shots by month's end."	"I want to become a better basketball player"
"Make the high school varsity team by attending all try-outs and practicing on my own for an hour on days between try-outs."	"I want to become a professional athlete."
"Get an 'A' on the upcoming history test, by studying for an hour every night for a week prior to the test."	"I want to be a straight A student this year."

Coach's Activity: It's important that your teammates realize that adult set goals too. Discuss some of your own goals with the team and ways that you plan on achieving them. Share past goals that you have attained, as well as goals that you failed to reach and discuss why this may have occurred.

Player's Activity: Prior to the beginning of the season, write down 3 goals that you would like to achieve pertaining to your performance on the court. Also, write down 3 academic/social goals. Break them down further by creating monthly goals that will ultimately help you to achieve them. Chart your progress and re-evaluate at month's end, and season's end.



9.7 – HARD WORK & DISCIPLINE

Is: the concept of exerting a lot of effort and perseverance to develop a skill or accomplish a task.

Communicate it: It takes hard work and determination to accomplish a task, and discipline to stick to it. Persistence is vital – the harder you work the better you'll develop your skills. Don't let players give up on themselves, or each other. Encourage them to learn from their mistakes and get right back up to try again. Encourage a routine – they'll be less likely to falter if they have a routine to stick to.

Celebrate it: Nothing is more fulfilling for a young athlete than to finally accomplish what they have set their mind to after a great deal of hard work. What makes it that much better is when someone recognizes what they have accomplished and praise them for their effort. Tell them how much you appreciate them for coming out to every practice and how much it will pay off for them in the future. When other kids witness the benefits of hard work and discipline, they too will start trying harder!

CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELL-DISCIPLINED HARD WORKING PERSON	CHARACTERISTICS OF A POORLY DISCIPLINED LAZY PERSON
Shows up on time to every practice and game	Constantly late
Never misses a practice	Inexcusable absences from practices and games
Create a practice schedule and sticks to it	Lacks a clear vision
Set goals	Unenthusiastic and de-motivated
Team player and motivates others to try their best	Very passive

Coach's Activity: Show video clips to your team featuring successful sports teams. They do not all have to be from one sport and they do not all have to feature winning, championship teams. Show a variety to demonstrate where hard work can take you; but that winning isn't everything.

Player's Activity: Think of two situations: one where you worked hard and were dedicated and one where you were not. Write a one-page response on the key differences of each and which situation worked out better. Why did you not try your best? Identifying the reasoning's.

9.8 - LEADERSHIP

Is: the process by which a person influences others to accomplish tasks and goals and directs them in an effective and efficient manner; setting positive examples, and inspiring others to do the same.

Communicate it: exercise both forms of leadership in order for young athletes to prosper, and recognize that both forms are equally important: encourage them (relationship-based leadership), and provide instruction when needed (task-oriented leadership). Create a comfortable environment where everyone feels they can participate – you want them to feel like they can speak their mind, not take a passive stance. It's a fine line between blending in with the pack and setting themselves apart; make sure they are encouraged to step-up and not to give in to any peer pressure tendencies.



Celebrate it: Don't simply tell young athletes to exhibit leadership qualities. Whenever a leader steps forward, commend them for doing so. Leaders exhibit various characteristics: they're dedicated, humble, assertive, and creative. If you see one of your athletes displaying one or more of these characteristics, commend them and share with the group that there is a leader amongst them!

GOOD LEADERSHIP	POOR LEADERSHIP
Provides encouragement	Being critical when a mistake is made
Provides instruction	Not assisting others when you recognize that help is needed
Being open to new ideas	Being aggressive rather than assertive
Being creative – think outside the box	Being passive, and “going with the flow”
Have a clear vision	Not taking initiative
Take responsibility for one's own actions	Blaming others

Coach's Activity: Share with your team some experiences you've had in regards to leadership – whether this be on the court or off the court. Encourage discussion amongst the group and make sure to re-iterate why these stories of leadership, whether they enforce good or poor leadership skills, have stuck with you.

Player's Activity: Who is your favorite leader in the sporting world? Write a one page response on who you rate as your favorite athletic leader, and explain why you have chosen this person. Highlight what makes them a leader, and how you think they exhibit leadership qualities on and off the court/field. Do you relate with him/her?

9.9 - RESPECT

Is: being honored and/or showing positive attitudes towards others.

Communicate it: the best way for children to learn accepted behavior and language is to observe it. Exhibit respectful behavior when interacting with all players (teammates and opponents), coaches, parents and fans.

Celebrate it: if you notice your team using respectful language or reacting in a respectful manner, let them know that you're proud of them for choosing the right way to handle themselves.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR	DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR
Exhibiting actions of self-control	Arguing with officials
Using (age) appropriate language	Using offensive language
Shake hands and say “good game” following a game	Failing to shake hands; hand slap, and mumbling after a game
Showing support for a teammate after they make a mistake	Making unnecessary comments to a teammate or being their back after they make a mistake



Coach's Activity: Have the kids brainstorm answers to the following questions: What is respect? How do you show respect on the court and off the court? Compare the kids answers and come up with a list of respectful behaviors that can be taken home for the kids to share with their parents, and used as a reminder of how they are always expected to act.

Player's Activity: Look through magazines and newspapers for photos that show athletes being respectful, as well as athletes displaying disrespectful behavior. Clip them, bring them to practice and compare with your teammates.

9.10 - RESPONSIBILITY

Is: being accountable for one's actions; not diverting the blame/task on to someone else.

Communicate it: Teaching responsibility is one of the primary goals of sport, as it is one of the easiest traits that can transfer to other areas of life. Young athletes should be expected to follow all the rules, and to know what is expected of them. They have a responsibility to the team to attend all practices and games, play fair, be a good sport and try their best. If you as a coach fail to show up on time, use inappropriate language and do not respect others, young athletes will not understand the importance of responsibility – so be responsible!

Celebrate it: At the start of the season, make your young athletes aware that they'll be learning more than just basketball skills – it's about life skills too! When you witness a child being responsible (i.e. has never missed a practice, has never been late, etc), speak up and let them know that they're doing a great job. Be consistent – make sure all athletes are treated equal and rewarded as such. But be careful: there will be situations where kids have little control over their actions (i.e. their parents could not get them to practice on time). Make sure all parents are aware of the level of behavior that you're expecting prior to the start of the season.

RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR	IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR
Arriving to all practices and games on time	Being late
Never missing a practice or game	Inexcusable absences
Coming to practices/games mentally and physically prepared, with all equipments	Forgetting to bring equipment to practices/games
Treating all people (teammates, coaches, officials, parents) with respect	Arguing with officials
Supporting all teammates, and offering encouragement	Using inappropriate language

Coach's Activity: Throughout the season, award players with a certificate for instances of outstanding behavior. At the end of the season, reward players who have consistently demonstrated good behavior – aim to have the whole team receiving one!

Player's Activity: Do you consider yourself a responsible person? Do you consistently follow-through with all of your responsibilities? List the responsibilities that you have, on the court, at school and at home. Is there anything you can do to make yourself a more responsible person?



9.11 – SPORTSMANSHIP AND FAIRPLAY

Is: conforming to the rules, spirit, and etiquettes of sport; being as competitive as possible while still playing in the spirit of the game.

Communicate it: Treat players, coaches, officials and parents the way you want to be treated. Always demonstrate good sportsmanship. Don't just cheer for the home team; show appreciation when the opponents make a good play. Whether your team won or lost, congratulate the opponent and shake the coach's hand. Steer clear of the "win-at-all-cost" attitude. Young athletes must know and understand that it's okay to lose. The key is to have fun!

Celebrate it: Following a practice or game, discuss instances of good sportsmanship that you observed from your team. By recognizing these instances, it shows young athletes that demonstrating good sportsmanship is important to you and to all involved. Start young: young athletes should start to learn about the importance of being a good sport and playing fair as soon as they enter their first sport program, and even before. Make sure you're recognizing it early!

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP	POOR SPORTSMANSHIP
Clap for an injured player as he gets up to leave the game	Heckling and making necessary comments towards the other team (players, coaches, officials, fans)
Playing by the rules	Cheating: not pointing out incorrect calls when they go in your favor
Cheer good plays made by BOTH teams	Showing off
Win or lose, shake hands following the game with opposing players, coaches and officials.	Arguing calls with officials

Coach's Activity: Have your players watch a sporting event. During practice, discuss with them what they watched and if they notices any instances of good or poor sportsmanship. Discuss the comparisons between sports: which sport seemed to promote the values of good sportsmanship the most?

Player's Activity: Keep a log of your practices/games for the month – record instances of good and poor sportsmanship that you demonstrate, as well as any that you may have observed. At the end of the month, see which side outweighs the other – if there are more instances of poor sportsmanship, talk to your coach and see what you can all do to improve the situation.

9.12 TEAMWORK

Is: a group of people working together to achieve a common goal.

Communicate it: Basketball is a team sport. If a team is going to be successful, all team members must work together. Although individual achievements are important, to win a basketball game, you have to play as one. The basis of teamwork is trust, enthusiasm, ambition and motivation. All team members must be able to depend on each other, share a mutual enthusiasm for the game, be united in working towards a common goal, and have the drive to achieve it.



Celebrate it: If your team starts working together, you will see results! Conduct team building exercises if you feel that the group needs to get more comfortable with each other. They will see that the more comfortable they are with each other, the easier it is to work together. Commend their successes, and discuss them with the group. Highlighting group achievements will show them that those are what you value!

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK	INEFFECTIVE TEAMWORK
Taking responsibility as a whole	Blaming individuals
Have a clear vision and goal in mind	Unfocused
Clear channels of communication	Failure to communicate amongst each other
Encourage creativity	Passive and fail to contribute to the group
Able to put group goals and interests ahead of their own	Concentrate on individual interests and achievements

Coach's Activity: Have the entire team stand in a straight line side by side, should to shoulder. The sides of their feet should be touching each other. Mark beginning and end lines to show the distance they must travel. The group must travel from behind the start line to the end line, maintaining continuous contact with their feet. If anyone loses contact with their partner's foot, the whole group must start over. This exercise highlights the importance of cooperation, and can also be used as an exercise in leadership and communication.

Player's Activity: Write a one page response on a time when teamwork helped you to achieve a goal. Also include an instance when your team failed to work together. What were the key differences between the two situations? What could you do differently to ensure that your team always effectively works together?