



FACTSHEET

How to Intentionally Teach a Life Skill in a Youth Sport Program: A case study example based on recommendations made by Kendellen et al., 2016

It is important to deliberately structure community-based youth sport programs in a way that explicitly provides opportunities for youth to develop life skills in a psychologically safe and supportive environment that allows for youth voice.

This case study provides practical strategies that youth sport programmers and frontline workers can use to foster life skills development within youth sport programs in a way that also encourages the transference of these skills to other life contexts (i.e. with family, at school, in community).

THE CONTEXT

Meet Hannah, leader of a local community youth basketball program.

Hannah decides to update the basketball program for the upcoming season to integrate life skills learning along with the existing technical and tactical basketball activities. Her first step is to select a few life skills that align with the sport of basketball. Hannah decides that teamwork, communication, goal setting, and respect are all life skills to be integrated into the program. She decides to only focus on one life skill per session to ensure a balance between sport and life skills, and so that youth will not feel overwhelmed.

PROGRAM DAY

Integrating Life Skills with Sport Activities

The first day of the program has come and Hannah feels well-prepared. She has selected communication to be the first life skill to focus on. She introduces this concept at the beginning of the session and asks for youth input on what 'communication' means to them. Additionally, she asks the youth: "How can you communicate with your teammates within basketball? Why is this important?"

Throughout the rest of the session, Hannah uses strategies to teach the life skill of communication in a way that is integrated with the physical and basketball skills. She integrates the life skill into the program activities in two ways:

- **By incorporating communication** into the specific basketball activities that she designed (e.g., passing, plays). For example, while doing the three-man weave she notices a breakdown in the drill among participants. Hannah uses this as a teachable moment and tells the youth that it is crucial that they communicate both verbally and with their body so that this drill can be successful. She discusses with the youth how this can be done.

- **By using a life skills activity** to further emphasize the importance of communication. Hannah has the youth engage in the Human Knot activity, which encourages the youth to communicate and work together as a team to achieve the goal of becoming untangled.

At the end of the session, Hannah holds a short 2-5 minute debrief with the youth as a way to reflect on how they communicated effectively throughout the session and discuss with youth how communication can be applied in various contexts of life outside of basketball (e.g., school, home, with peers). Specifically, she asks the youth: “What did you learn today about the life skill of communication? Can you give some examples of how you demonstrated good communication in today’s session? How can you ensure good communication at school? At home?”

SUMMARY OF GUIDING QUESTIONS

01 Introduce the life skill at the beginning of the lesson

We are working on our communication today. Why is communication important in basketball? Can anyone tell me what good communication includes? What would happen if you had poor communication with your teammates?

02 Integrate strategies to teach the life skill throughout the lesson

Utilize intentional life skill activities and highlight teachable moments with participants

03 Debrief the life skill at the end of the lesson and discuss transfer

Who do we communicate with outside of this program? Why is communication good communication important with teachers? Parents? Friends? How can improving your communication in sport help you in the classroom? At home?