



*Dodgers*  
**DREAMTEAM**



**COACHES  
PLAYBOOK**

**LIVING JACKIE'S NINE  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NIKE**





# DEAR COACH,

No matter where a young person plays throughout our great city, they belong. As part of the Dodgers Dreamteam, each person's role is celebrated, trying new things is always encouraged, and relationships are more important than any win/loss record.

None of this happens automatically. It only happens when every young person on every team on every diamond at every park in every corner of the city has a great coach.

### And what exactly makes a great coach?

A great coach creates a baseball or softball environment where all young people feel safe—an environment drenched in the ideals promoted by a legendary American hero, Jackie Robinson. Jackie's nine core values, which include courage, determination, teamwork, persistence, integrity, citizenship, justice, commitment, and excellence, pave the way for young people to become leaders in the game and in their communities.

A great coach knows that when young people feel supported on and off the field, they have the courage and determination to reach their goals. Through risks and mistakes, young people learn that persistence, commitment, and teamwork help you overcome any obstacle. The hurdles they face on the field strengthen their ability to bounce back from adversity, which builds integrity and excellence in the game and beyond.

A great coach creates an inclusive atmosphere for all young people where citizenship inspires them to look out for their fellow players. No matter how different a young person is from their teammates, justice is a prevailing theme that encourages them to treat each other with dignity and respect. A coach helps them believe in one another in a way that transcends the field and seeps into friendships that will last beyond any season.

With the help of partners like the Dodgers Training Academy, the Positive Coaching Alliance and the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport, we've renewed our commitment to coaching. We ensure that coaches have what they need to make the best possible experiences for young people. We've spent months digging into the research, listening to Dodgers Foundation staff and partners, and most importantly, learning from the great coaches already out on the field, to create this playbook. In these pages, we have uncovered the core elements- or the DNA- of great Dodgers Dreamteam coaching.

We hope you'll find something that reinforces the great things that you're doing and adds valuable techniques to your toolkit. If you're brand new, we hope these strategies build the confidence that you need to create a magical experience.

With excitement,

Nichol Whiteman  
Chief Executive Officer  
Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation

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## THE DODGERS DREAMTEAM APPROACH

*At the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation, we do things a little differently—you realize that when you coach with us.*

We invest deeply in partnerships to drive equitable access to sports programs. We bring experts to the table who can help ensure that every sports experience our young people have is positive and inclusive. And we stand on the shoulders of the iconic Jackie Robinson, whose core values—**courage, determination, commitment, persistence, integrity, justice, teamwork, citizenship, and excellence**—are embedded in everything we do.

We do all of this because we believe that sports CAN be an uncommonly powerful tool to promote positive youth development. But not simply by existing. While there are some things about sports that are intrinsically good, most of the good of sport comes from the intentional work of a coach—someone who is helping young people engage and discover the lessons that come from working together towards a shared goal and learning to perform under pressure, together.

Unfortunately, too often in youth sports, the coach's intention is not directed at the things most important to a young person's development. The emphasis on winning





dominates the culture of sports inhibiting the coach's ability to support youth as they grow into young adults. Young people, especially girls, are dropping out of sports at alarming rates because sports environments are not meeting their needs.

### The Dodgers Dreamteam Approach is simple.

It's about taking the most powerful parts of sports: having a caring adult coach, protective team relationships, and learning to manage challenges. It's about creating **CONNECTED COMPETITORS**—making sure that every young person feels like they belong, not in spite of who they are, but because of it. The Dodgers Dreamteam Approach is about reclaiming the idea of competition so that it isn't about winning at all costs, but about having the courage to take risks—learn new things and how to utilize what you learned when it matters.

In order to support young people to become **CONNECTED COMPETITORS**, we need to attend to the unique needs and strengths of each individual. And that's hard work when you're working with a whole team. However, there are some strategies that we know will support the process.

THE COACHING STRATEGIES ARE OUTLINED WITHIN THE PLAYBOOK'S FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

1.  CREATE SAFE SPACES
2.  LIVING JACKIE'S NINE
3.  DOUBLE DOWN ON MOMENTS OF CONNECTION AND HEALTHY COMPETITION
4.  LEVERAGE THE POWER OF BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL





Building positive connections and focusing on the right parts of competition are the double helix of the Dodgers Dreamteam Approach.

That's why you'll see them come to life throughout the four strategies laid out within this playbook. Sometimes, it's hard to separate one from the other – they are so inextricably linked. However, as you work your way through the strategies and think about the team you're preparing to coach, we ask you to consider the following coaching wisdom that has been proven both by research and in practice:

**Girls Connect to Compete  
Boys Compete to Connect**

Boys often have more experience with sports at younger ages because their parents or the adults in their lives “nudged” them into sports naturally. This means they are more comfortable in sport environments and more willing to just “jump in” to a given sports experience. They then turn the shared experience of playing into more meaningful connections.

Girls, on the other hand, are not as likely to be pushed into sports. Programs often have to pull girls into sports environments (which were originally created for men, by men). When something is new and unfamiliar, it's natural to be on guard. Feeling safe and having people who they can trust is essential to them trying this new experience.

**We hope you'll find the tools in this playbook useful as you help us create the *CONNECTED COMPETITORS* of the Dodgers Dreamteam!**



**CREATE SAFE, INCLUSIVE SPACES**

A young person who has their guard up is not able to connect with others or learn new things. That's why it's essential to create spaces where young people feel safe. Safety means more than avoiding physical injury (although that's important, too). It also means that athletes are surrounded by people they trust, have control over their experiences and know what to expect.

Spaces that integrate the following elements are good for all kids. They are critical for kids who are more likely to come to programs with their guards up—guarded young people generally have experienced overwhelming stress or trauma in other parts of their lives.

**PREDICTABLE SPACE THAT MEETS ATHLETES' NEEDS**

- Athletes are safe when they arrive at practice and games. Entrances and activity spaces are hazard-free, well-lit and appropriately supervised.
- Youth know where to go and what to do when they arrive.
- Players understand who will be present in the space; i.e., will they share with another team? Will other activities be going on?
- Bathrooms or locker rooms are accessible. Private space is available to any young person who wants it.
- Youth have access to items that meet their basic needs, like water, snacks and menstrual products.
- Athletes have access to sports equipment that is appropriate for their age and sport.
- Players are allowed to dress in ways that are culturally and religiously appropriate.
- Coaches are predictable—they are able to stay calm and not lose their cool.

**WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE TEAM CULTURE**

- Players are actively and intentionally welcomed to the space and included in the activities.
- Accommodations are actively made for athletes with different physical abilities.
- Youth are referred to in gender-neutral terms. Coaches don't refer to all players as “guys.”
- Coaches use each players' preferred pronouns. Coaches share their pronouns with the team to establish a norm of proper pronoun use.
- Important information is shared in languages that meet the needs of the athlete and their families.
- Kids see adults who look like them when they participate in sports.
- Athletes see pictures of diverse adult role models in spaces where they participate in sports.
- Players see their coaches reflect on their biases and work to change them.
- Kids see their coaches intervene when they hear comments or see actions that minimize someone's humanity.

**CHOICE, CONTROL AND CONTRIBUTION**

- Kids are given opportunities for meaningful contribution, no matter what their sport skill level.
- Players are provided with opportunities for leadership (captains, choosing activities, etc.)
- Athletes are invited to participate. They are always given the opportunity to opt out.
- The team has established routines for kids who need to reset. Needing to reset is seen as a normal part of the activity.
- Reflection is part of the experience. Kids are encouraged to reflect on their experiences.
- Players are encouraged to provide formal and informal feedback to coaches about their experiences.





## LIVING JACKIE'S NINE

**Jackie Robinson, the iconic baseball player who broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball, was not only known for his athletic prowess but also for his exemplary character and commitment to social justice.**

In his autobiography "I Never Had It Made," Robinson outlined nine core values that he believed were essential for personal and societal growth—**courage, determination, commitment, persistence, integrity, justice, teamwork, citizenship and excellence.**



### Jackie's Nine

#### 1. COURAGE:

Doing what you know is the right thing, even when it's hard to do

#### 2. DETERMINATION:

Staying focused on a plan even though the path to its end may be difficult

#### 3. COMMITMENT:

Making a promise and following through on it

#### 4. PERSISTENCE:

Working toward a goal and continuing to move forward even though you face obstacles

#### 5. INTEGRITY:

Sticking to your values regardless of what others think you should do

#### 6. JUSTICE:

Treating all people fairly, no matter who they are

#### 7. TEAMWORK:

Working with other people toward a common goal

#### 8. CITIZENSHIP:

Making a contribution that improves the lives of others

#### 9. EXCELLENCE:

Doing the best you possibly can

On the next page, you'll see examples of the behaviors you might see on the baseball or softball field that show us if a young person is living these values.

**Connecting the values to concrete examples and celebrating when you see these "Values in Action" is how we make sure that kids develop a deep understanding of what it means to play the Dodgers Dreamteam way.**

#### COURAGE IN ACTION

Taking risks on the field, such as attempting a steal or making a diving catch, even if failure is a possibility.

Taking on leadership roles, such as being a team captain or speaking up in team huddles.

Bouncing back from errors, whether it's a missed catch, a strikeout or a bad play.

Learning from mistakes and using them as opportunities for growth.

Trying new positions, even if they are outside their comfort zone.

#### DETERMINATION IN ACTION

Players put in maximum effort during drills and exercises, even when they are challenging.

Players welcome feedback about how to improve their skills.

Players bounce back quickly from setbacks like striking out or making errors.

Players set goals for themselves and work to achieve those goals.

Players take advantage of formal and informal opportunities for extra practice (additional leagues, camps, practicing at home, etc.)

#### COMMITMENT IN ACTION

Players actively participate in drills, exercises and team activities.

Players demonstrate genuine love for the sport through energy, enthusiasm, and dedication.

Players put in extra effort by practicing outside of scheduled sessions, working on weaknesses and seeking additional instruction.

Players accept responsibility for mistakes and learn from them.

Players maintain focus and discipline during practices and games.

#### PERSISTENCE IN ACTION

Players always give their best effort until the final out.

Players strive to improve through regular practice, seeking feedback and dedicating themselves to learning.

Players bounce back from setbacks with a positive attitude.

Players are flexible and adapt to challenges as needed.

Players refuse to quit, even when facing tough opponents or odds.

#### INTEGRITY IN ACTION

Players tell the truth, whether admitting to mistakes or being truthful about their abilities.

Players follow the rules of the game and adhere to the team code of conduct, even when no one is watching.

Players play by the rules and display good sports-personship.

Players accept decisions made by umpires, coaches and officials gracefully.

Players take responsibility for their actions.

#### JUSTICE IN ACTION

Players respect the rules of the game and adhere to the principles of fair play.

Players identify disparities or inequities that exist within baseball or on their team.

Players stand up against unfair treatment, discrimination or bullying.

Players embrace diversity and work to include players of all backgrounds.

Players apologize when their action have caused harm to a teammate.

#### TEAMWORK IN ACTION

Players communicate with each other on the field, like calling for a catch, signaling plays, or providing encouragement.

Players support and encourage each other, both during successes and failures.

Players work towards shared goals.

Players ask each other for help when they need it.

Team members respect and appreciate each other's differences.

#### CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

Players serve as a positive role model for younger players in their actions on and off the field.

Players engage in team and community events.

Players share their knowledge and experiences with younger or less experienced players.

Players are inclusive and welcome individuals from all backgrounds and with all experiences.

Players recognize that their actions reflect not only on themselves but also on team, organization and Dodgers Dreamteam.

#### EXCELLENCE IN ACTION

Players invest significant time and effort into practice to improve their play.

Players pay close attention to detail, including proper footwork, hand positioning and situational awareness.

Players set high standards for themselves and work hard to meet their goals.

Players are adaptable and coachable.

Players show respect for all aspects of the game – their teammates and opponents, coaches and officials.



While all of Jackie's nine values are worth emulating, it's important to know that you don't have to get through all of them at once.

In fact, it's better to focus on a few but find as many opportunities to integrate them as possible. That way, they can really become "sticky" for your players. Which of these values do you want to prioritize this season? Remember, your players will focus on what you focus on – what they know is important to you. If you consistently talk about the importance of courage – they will understand that it's worthy of their attention.

### HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE INTEGRATING JACKIE'S NINE

#### SAY THE WORDS

Players pay attention to the things that coaches prioritize. Be intentional when quoting whichever of Jackie's Nine values you are focusing on during opening and closing circle, throughout practice, etc. You'll know it's working when you start hearing your team using the words, too.

#### CELEBRATE WHEN YOU SEE JACKIE'S NINE VALUES IN ACTION

Connecting behaviors to concepts is one of the best ways to make those concepts "sticky". Celebrate young people when they act in ways that exemplify the concept. Check out the "values in action" page for example behaviors that match to each of the values.

#### INTEGRATE JACKIE'S NINE INTO TEAM REFLECTIONS

During opening or closing circles, prompt the team to reflect on the concepts and behaviors associated with Jackie's Nine Values.

##### Use the following prompts (and insert your chosen values) to encourage team discussions:

What does determination mean to you? What about courage?

Did you do something to show commitment today during practice?

Can you remember a time when you had to work with a teammate today? What did that teamwork look like?

When did you notice a teammate being persistent at practice today? What did they do? Why was it important to have persistence?

Who do you think showed integrity today?

Trying something new takes courage-let's shout out our teammates who showed courage today.

Supporting our teammates when they make a mistake is one of the ways we show teamwork-can you think of a time that a teammate encouraged you after a mistake?

There are a lot of chances in softball/baseball to be persistent. What about in other parts of your life? When is a time when you had to be persistent?

Did you notice any of your teammates being good citizens today?

Using our finger scale of 1 to 5, how much determination do you think you showed today?

Thumbs up, down, or straight-how good at teamwork were you today?

Excellence is doing the best you possibly can. How does our team rank on excellence today? On a scale of 1 to 5.

As a team, how did we do with teamwork today? How could we do better tomorrow?

#### SHARE EXAMPLES OF JACKIE'S NINE WITH A YOUNG PERSON'S ADULTS

When one of your players does something that really lives the values, share it! Make sure you tell the adults in their lives what you noticed about their young person.

#### INTEGRITY UMPIRES

**Integrity:** Sticking to your values, regardless of what others think you should do.

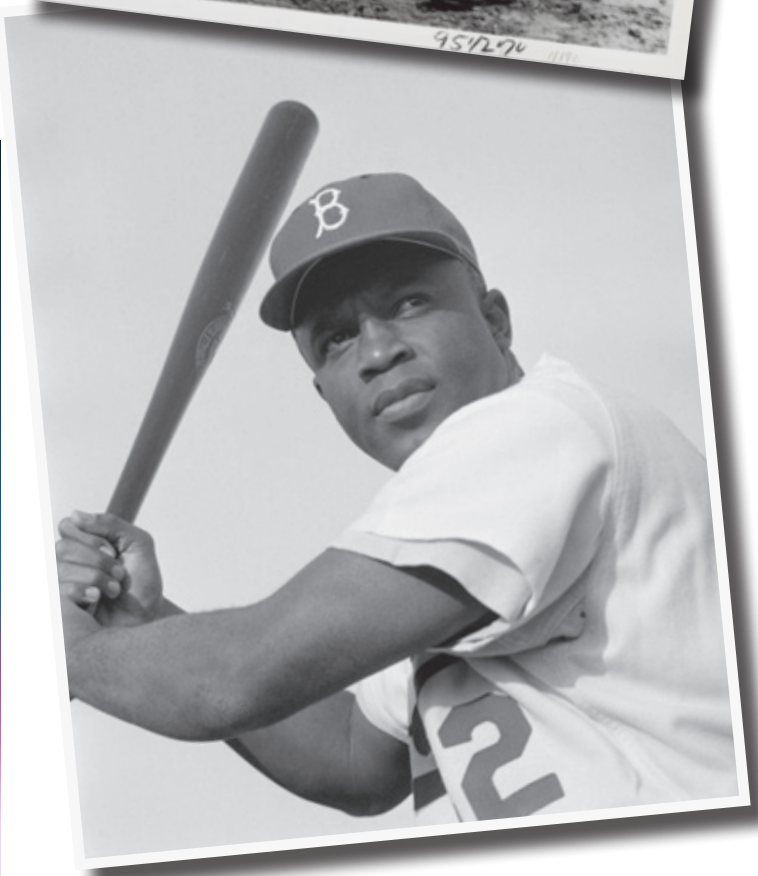
It is also a value that comes to life in the relationship between players, coaches, and umpires. The Dodgers Dreamteam partners bring this to life by making our umpires "Integrity Umpires." It's not unusual for umpires to be charged with maintaining the honesty and integrity of a game. What's different in the Dodgers Dreamteam is that we not only use the umpires to make critical determinations in the game, but we also charge them with calling out, celebrating and rewarding young people when they act with integrity.

Integrity Umpires celebrate kids in the moment for showing integrity and they are able to award a "Dodgers Dreamteam Point" to one or both teams at the end of the game that counts towards an end of year team incentive.

#### COACH AWARDS

One of the best ways for young people to learn values is to be around people who exhibit those values every day. That's why leagues have the option of awarding coaches with end of year recognition for living Jackie's nine as members of the coaching community

- Commitment Award:** Coaches who has gone above and beyond to better themselves (through training, attending meetings, responding to communication), spends extra effort supporting their team.
- Excellence Award:** Demonstrates excellence in all aspects of creating connected competitors.
- Citizenship Award:** The coach who contributes the most to the coaching community by building up other coaches, encouraging players who aren't their own, and engaging with the umpires, families and members of the community.







## DOUBLE DOWN ON MOMENTS OF CONNECTION AND HEALTHY COMPETITION

Sometimes we think that in order to have a positive impact on a young person, we have to spend a huge amount of time with them. And, while it's certainly great to invest in a deep, meaningful relationship whenever you can, it's also possible to have a significant impact on a young person in a shorter amount of time, even in just a few seconds. Every interaction matters.

Positive interactions are also cumulative—they add up. That's why one of the most important things you can do as a coach is create as many moments of connection and healthy competition as possible.

Moments of connection flood a young person's system with protective positivity.

**Moments of healthy competition help undo all the messages a young person gets about winning at all costs and gives them the chance to compete the right way.**

However, many moments you're thinking about creating are not enough. Our young people need us to jam their circuits with connection. Flood their systems with healthy competition. Pile on the opportunities to practice competing in a healthy way.

How will you know if you're doing enough? Think about how often you yell out a play or give an instruction. Now double it.



### FINDING JACKIE'S NINE IN CONNECTION AND COMPETITION-COURAGE AND TEAMWORK

While all of Jackie's Nine are worth emulating, two are particularly relevant when we consider the foundation we want to create for young people—one in which they develop into connected competitors. They are:

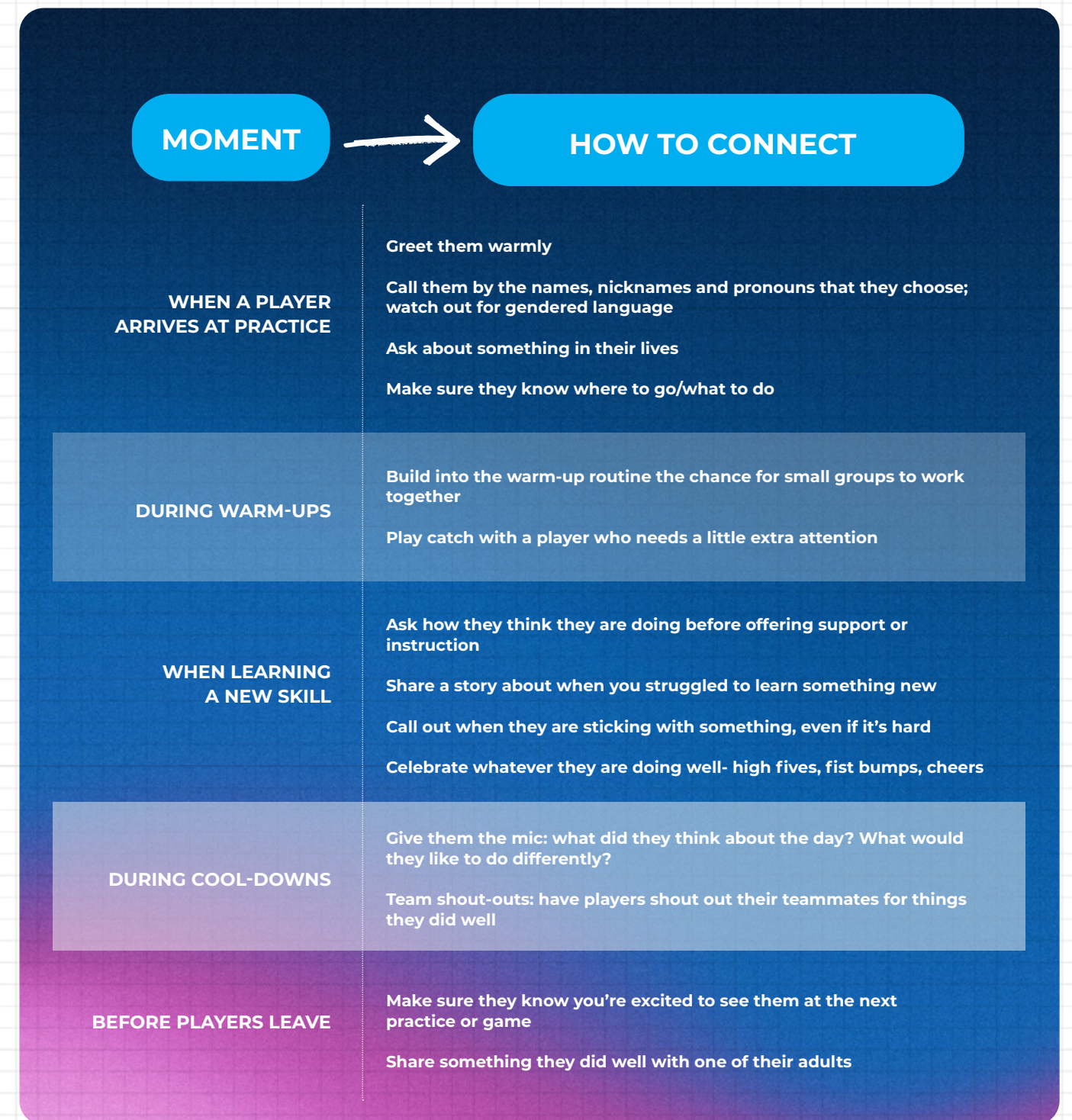
- Courage** - Doing what you know is the right thing even when it's hard to do.
- Teamwork** - Working with other people toward a common goal.

Integrating these concepts into practices and games can help us keep the focus on the most important parts of the softball and baseball experience—belonging to the team and taking risks to learn new things.

### MOMENTS OF CONNECTION AT PRACTICE

There are no bad times to connect with young people.

Below are examples of how you can make the most of different parts of practice to build connections with your players.







### MOMENTS OF CONNECTION DURING GAMES

It's even more important to find moments of connection during games as it is during practice.

Games introduce higher levels of pressure and it's essential that young people feel supported in order to face that pressure. Some special opportunities to connect during games include:

MOMENT	HOW TO CONNECT
WHEN A PLAYER IS ON THE BENCH	<p>Provide a learning opportunity by narrating what you see</p> <p>Ask what they notice about what's happening on the field</p>
BEFORE GETTING UP TO BAT	<p>Check in about their on-deck circle and batter's box routines</p> <p>Have them rate themselves on how they are feeling (1 to 5 or thumb scale)</p> <p>Ask them if there is anything they need from you</p>
WHEN THEY ARE ON BASE	<p>Make eye contact and give them a strong clap for getting on base</p> <p>Encourage them to stay engaged with what's going on</p>
AFTER A MISTAKE OR A MISSED PLAY	<p>Remember what they said they want when they make a mistake</p> <p>Remind them to let mistakes go- use the team mistake ritual</p> <p>Focus on the future- ask them what they think they can do next time</p> <p>High fives, fist bumps, enthusiastic cheering</p>
WHEN THEY STRIKE OUT	<p>Use us/we language: "happens to the best of us, let's focus on next time"</p> <p>Ask what they noticed when they were at bat</p> <p>High fives, fist bumps, enthusiastic cheering</p>
AFTER A SUBSTITUTION	<p>If you can, let them know when and where they might go in</p> <p>Name a specific thing you noticed about them that day- what did they do well?</p> <p>Ask them about their goals- what do they want to work on?</p>

### MOMENTS OF HEALTHY COMPETITION

Creating an environment in which young people learn to manage stress and avoid emphasizing the wrong parts of competition is not easy. It takes coaches who are willing to:

#### NORMALIZE RESETS AND RESTARTS

Give young people the chance to opt into and out of stressful situations, based on how they feel. They can always take a minute to reset.

#### CHECK IN

Where, on a scale of 1 to 5 are young people? Are they feeling good or are they feeling really stressed?

#### AVOID COMPARISONS

Keep your players from comparing themselves to one another by focusing on individual growth; shout out players who set personal records to show significant improvement.

#### BROADEN THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS:

Set goals for the game that don't have to do with the final score.

#### CALL OUT CONTRIBUTION:

Keep track of all kinds of contributions, not just the player who got the game-winning run.

#### BE AS PRESENT WITH PLAYERS IN FAILURE AS YOU ARE IN SUCCESS

Give your athletes tools for how to handle failure. Give them as much time, attention and positive reinforcement as you would if they just drove in the winning run in the championship.







## LEVERAGE THE POWER OF BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL

### TRACK MORE STATS

There are no sports more deeply rooted in numbers than baseball and softball.

Keeping track of statistics is an objective, observable way to track progress. This means that kids can't deny their strengths or hide from their weaknesses. This provides a tremendous opportunity to focus on **IMPROVEMENT**- which is the right kind of competition for young people. They can see, feel and count the ways that they are getting better.



### BROADEN THE DEFINITION OF SUCCESS BY TRACKING MORE THINGS, MORE OFTEN, FORMALLY AND INFORMALLY

**Track more things. Don't rely on only the traditional stats. Including things like:**

- Fastest base runner; have a timed race to close out the day)
- Fielding streaks: the most games without making an error
- First player to play all positions in a game (or player who played the most positions in a practice or game)
- First player to record an out at multiple positions

**Track in the moment. Don't only focus on season-long things. During practice you can track all kinds of things like:**

- Number of ground balls fielded in a row
- Number of outs one team can get before giving up a hit
- Number of innings without an error
- First one out of the dugout for each inning

**Focus on progress, not performance:**

- Don't focus on the actual number, but on the progress that a child is making. A player who raises their batting average from .185 to .225 has a lot to celebrate, even if .225 might otherwise not seem like something worth celebrating.

## COACHING GIRLS TO BE COURAGEOUS, NOT PERFECT

Focusing on helping players become more courageous, like Jackie Robinson was, is even more important for girls. Too often, the pressure for girls to be perfect, from adults who only reward them for accomplishments, or from social media where the pressure to have the perfect look and life is intense. Girls are socialized not to take risks and try new things, which means that they are less likely to engage in things where they aren't sure they will be successful. You can't learn something without being willing to take a risk. For girls to be willing to try something new, we have to create environments that reward bravery, not perfection.

Girls have to feel safe to take risks, knowing that they won't be judged and that the courage they use to take a risk will be rewarded. They have to know that what they bring to the team is valued and that their contribution matters. Coaches do this by setting expectations, giving their positive attention to, and shouting out girls who try new things even more than those who perform skills well. When everyone understands that trying, even if they fail, is among their team's most important values, you see girls who feel safe to take risks.

- From CHJS and Nike's Coaching Girls Guide





**CONNECT**

Players see the ways they are contributing to the team. Contribution is a critical part of developing a sense of belonging.



**COMPETE**

Players are less likely to compare themselves to others. They focus on the right kind of competition- the kind that drives personal improvement and growth.

**GIVE PLAYERS CONTROL OVER HOW THEY PREPARE FOR HIGH PRESSURE MOMENTS**

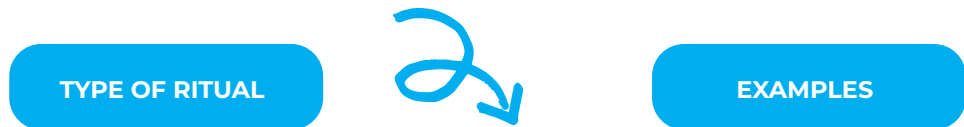
- Introduce the on-deck circle:**  
The on-deck circle is a place where players have the chance to do something that helps them focus and “get ready” for the pressure of an at-bat. Don’t assume players know what to do when they are there. Talk to players about what things help them feel ready. If they don’t know, give them some things to try, like a reset ritual, a mantra to repeat to themselves, something to think about that will take away some of the focus/ pressure, etc.
- Use the batter’s box:**  
Help players understand how to use the batter’s box. The batter’s box is powerful because it puts the player in control of when they feel “ready.” Help them get comfortable with managing that process and doing what they need to do to be ready.
- Engage base coaches:**  
One of the roles of the first and third base coaches is to check in with any players on base. When players are still learning the game, this is an important role for helping them remember what to do, but also to help them get and stay “ready” for whatever happens next.
- Focus on a “Ready Position”:**  
When a player is in the field, it can be easy to get distracted, especially if the ball hasn’t come in your direction for a while. Encourage each player to have a thing that they do- like punching the inside of their glove three times or drawing and stepping over a line in the dirt- to tune in on every pitch. Training themselves to be able to tune in and out when necessary is an important skill they will use in other parts of their lives.
- Encourage Team Cues:**  
It’s a common part of softball and baseball for players to call out the number of outs. This serves the obvious purpose of reminding players of the number of outs so that they can make the right decisions if the ball comes to them. But it is also a signal to the team that it’s time to focus. Encourage players to communicate, out loud, as often as possible so that everyone is tuned in and “ready” for whatever happens next.

**CREATE INCLUSIVE RITUALS**

Softball and baseball culture is rich in traditions. They take the form of special handshakes, cheers, songs, batter’s box routines, even the way players enter and exit the dugout. Some players may not love the sport, or may never become the best player, but they will come back for the routines and rituals that help them connect with one another. Encouraging traditions, particularly ones that include everyone on the team and that the players come up with themselves, will help make everyone feel as though they belong.

Build a sense of belonging by incorporating player-led traditions that include everyone.

**DOES YOUR TEAM HAVE ANY OF THESE KINDS OF RITUALS?**



TYPE OF RITUAL	EXAMPLES
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ready Rituals:</b> Each player has something they do to help flip the switch when it’s time to focus.	Having to go “around the horn” before ending each inning’s warm-ups; players having to adjust their batting gloves before stepping into batter’s box.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Team Ready Rituals:</b> Rituals the team does as a way to bond, often used in preparation for a meaningful game or milestone.	Team dinners before a big game; decorating a new player’s locker before their first “start”; passing a lucky item to the game’s starting pitcher.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Risk-Taking Rituals:</b> Things athletes do to get themselves ready to try something new.	Special handshakes with a teammate; repeating a special mantra (like, “I am a strong and capable person”).
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mistake Rituals:</b> A routine that helps a player or team move on from a mistake; a team mistake ritual can be a powerful way for teammates to encourage each other—verbally or non-verbally, to move on after a mistake.	“Flushing” a mistake like you flush a toilet; brushing your shoulders off; punching your glove and saying “next up”; throwing out snaps (and the team throws them back).
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Team Celebration Rituals:</b> How the team celebrates when the whole team or a member of the team achieves some kind of goal.	Team cheers; home plate celebrations; ignoring a player who is pitching a no-hitter.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Reset Rituals:</b> How a player calms down, restarts, or focuses through pressure.	Players calling out (and motioning with their fingers) how many outs there are; going around the horn; stepping out and back into the batter’s box; pitcher stepping off the mound and massaging the ball.



**CONNECT**

Learning what works for individual players helps young people understand that the coach is invested in their success. That they matter.



**COMPETE**

Having strategies to deal with the pressure of practice or a game enables players to better engage and manage their reactions to stress.

**FOCUS ON BEING “READY”**

For many softball and baseball players, they experience the game in short bursts of action and pressure. There are starts and stops with every pitch. You can go from no action in the field all game, to immediately needing to throw a picture-perfect strike to home plate to keep the winning run from scoring. Multiple innings can pass before you are up to the plate. The need to be ready for anything provides a great opportunity for young people to practice controlling their emotions and being disciplined.







**CONNECT**

Traditions are like magnets. They draw people in. They make us feel like we're part of something special.



**COMPETE**

Rituals can be an important way for players to learn to manage stressful situations. When they are a "normal" part of what the team does, it helps players feel comfortable having to take a minute to focus or reset when the stakes get higher.

**EVERYONE BATS**

Unlike in other sports, there is one universal softball/baseball experience that all players share- stepping up to bat. The shared experience of being at bat makes this the perfect opportunity for young people to practice putting themselves in their teammates' shoes. Because of the nature of the game, all players make outs, and chances are good that they will make one in a situation that matters, like with the game on the line. Because it's an experience that happens to everyone, players are more inclined to understand what it feels like.

**COACHING WITH EMPATHY**

An empathetic environment is essential to learning- it's what allows players to take risks and try new things. According to the Positive Coaching Alliance, you can create this empathetic environment, by making a PACT with your youth - an every day commitment to listen to them with an open heart and an open mind.

**PACT stands for Perspective, Align, Connect, and Think. Each of component of the PACT has two action steps to help bring them to life.**



**CONNECT**

When we are able to take the perspective of our teammates, we feel more connected to them; when we're more connected, we feel safe to take risks.



**COMPETE**

When everyone knows what it's like to fail, they are more likely to support their teammates when they make a mistake or something doesn't go their way. This makes it easier to manage high pressure situations.

**USE THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING AT BAT TO BUILD EMPATHY AND CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERYONE CAN TAKE RISKS**

**Take the same approach to other parts of the game:**

Have players play different positions, bat in different spots in the line-up, come in as a relief pitcher during a game. When players have a chance to experience what it's like to do all the things that their teammates do, they are more likely to be supportive.

**Use "we" language:**

When talking about how important it is to support our teammates, say things like:

- "We all know what it's like to strike out when we really want to help our team."
- "I know we weren't able to make that last play, but we'll get it next time."
- "We've done everything we can, we've practiced hard and worked together, but sometimes the ball doesn't bounce our way."

**Talk to players about how they want to handle failure:**

Ask players how they want to be treated when something doesn't go their way:

- Do they want to talk about it immediately? Or do they want to wait until they are no longer upset?
- Do they want their team to pump them up? Or to leave them alone?
- Do they need to play catch or take a quick walk around the park?

The simple act of talking about what kids want in moments of failure shows that you will show up for them in those moments. It also validates their feelings in those moments and normalizes failure. When you know what to expect when you fail, it's much easier to try new things.

**P**

**STANDS FOR PERSPECTIVE**

On this team we always try to think about our teammates' experiences. In other words, we try to see the world through someone else's eyes.

**Question:**

Why is this important?

**Possible Answer:**

We all have different experiences that impact how we show up.

**C**

**STANDS FOR CONNECT**

On this team we always listen and do our best to show care and kindness to each other.

**Question:**

Why is this important?

**Possible Answer:**

We are a team and support our teammates.

**A**

**STANDS FOR ALIGN**

On this team we always believe our teammates' experience to be their truth.

**Question:**

Why is this important?

**Possible Answer:**

It is their experience and we shouldn't put our own stamp on it - we align with it.

**T**

**STANDS FOR THINK**

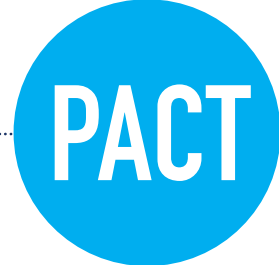
On this team we always try to use our heads and be thoughtful.

**Question:**

Why is this important?

**Possible Answer:**

It's okay to make mistakes and learn from them.







## PLAY CATCH

Playing catch is a universal part of softball and baseball. We know it's a great way to warm up our arms before practice, and to build our throwing and fielding skills. But what we often don't recognize are the tremendous social and emotional benefits. While playing catch, partners are connected and equal. Players get to choose how hard or how far they throw, and they practice working together and communicating about when to change velocity and distance while they are playing.

### USE CATCH AS MORE THAN JUST A WAY TO PHYSICALLY WARM-UP

#### Shrink the power differential:

When you play catch with someone, you have equal influence in the activity. This makes it a great thing for coaches, assistant coaches and parents to do with players. To show that everyone is on the same level and same team.

#### Build connections between players that don't know each other well:

The opportunity to take cues from a partner during catch (match their intensity and demeanor) is good practice for working together on the field.

#### Transition from one activity to another:

Players engage with catch through multiple senses- the repetitive motion and the sound. This helps bring players into the present- so that they can leave behind whatever happened at home or school that day.

#### Reset after a stressful event:

Use catch as a way to recover if the team gets off track or particularly worked up. This is easy to do at practice, but also look for ways to do it at games when you can- for the whole team or just for one or a few players.



#### CONNECT

Traditions are like magnets. They draw people in. They make us feel like we're part of something special.



#### COMPETE

Rituals can be an important way for players to learn to manage stressful situations. When they are a "normal" part of what the team does, it helps players feel comfortable having to take a minute to focus or reset when the stakes get higher.



## Self-Assessment: Do you have what it takes to be a Dodgers Dreamteam Coach?

As you can see, coaching in the Dodgers Dreamteam program is different. This means you are part of an elite group of coaches who are intentionally developing good players and good people. You are willing to do things a little differently because you know it is what is best for your young people.

Use this self-assessment to understand some of the differences between traditional coaching and the kind of youth-focused coaching required to be part of the Dodgers Dreamteam.

TRADITIONAL COACHING		DODGERS DREAMTEAM COACHING		ALREADY DO THIS	READY TO TRY
When a player shows up at the field, you (the coach) are standing off to the side with other adults (maybe your arms are folded.)	When a player shows up, you enthusiastically greet them and invite them into the space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When a player is late to practice, you make them "do laps" or something else that indicates their fault in arriving late.	When a player is late to practice, you say "I'm glad you made it, get warmed up and I'll catch you up." You address the player being late at a later time as a problem for you to solve together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When you are speaking to your team, you stand and force players to sit/ kneel while you hover over them.	When you are speaking to your team, you stand in a circle with your team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
A player strikes out or doesn't make the play and you criticize with words or body language (look away, act disappointed or angry) or immediately jump in with instructions.	A player strikes out or doesn't make the play and you encourage the effort and remind them to let go of their mistake and move on.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
When a player comes off the field, you say "you should do this next time" or "why didn't you do this?"	When a player comes off the field, you say "what did you notice out there?"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You micromanage games- give instructions while players are playing (even when players can't hear them.)	You encourage the play and use time on the bench or time outs to give instruction to a player when they are better able to be engaged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

TRADITIONAL COACHING		DODGERS DREAMTEAM COACHING		ALREADY DO THIS	READY TO TRY
When a player exhibits challenging behavior, you send them to a time out or kick them out of practice. They have 3 strikes and then they are out.	When a player exhibits challenging behavior, a coach takes them for a walk, plays catch with them or has them move their body in a way that helps them calm down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You are easily dysregulated- you're very emotional, you yell from the sideline, you get agitated and/ or fight with the referee.	You stay cool to help players stay regulated with a consistent, calm demeanor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Every activity is the same for every player.	Activities are adapted to meet players where they are.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Fitness is used as punishment- players are sometimes made to be responsible for their teammates through extra fitness.	Fitness is never used as punishment- practices are highly active; "pressure" is put on players through game-like scenarios, not the threat of running sprints.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You expect your players to do what you say with no questioning.	You invite your players to do what the coach says and give them opportunities to ask questions and express opinions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You do not seek feedback from your players.	You actively seek feedback from your players.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You do not admit when you are wrong or take responsibility for your mistakes.	You admit when you are wrong (and apologize, when necessary) and take responsibility for mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You provide positive feedback when a player accomplishes something (scores a point, wins a race, etc.)	You provide positive feedback when a player progresses in some way (beats a personal record, tries something new for the first time.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
You encourage players to "push through" whenever they are too far out of their comfort zone.	You allow players to opt in and out of play when they go too far out of their comfort zone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

So, how'd you do? Are you already on your road to being a great Dodgers Dreamteam coach? Are you excited to try? We know that you're doing lots of these things and many other great things as a coach. But we want to push everyone to go even further. To really live the values of the Dodgers Dreamteam program. To set the standard for what it means to create healing-centered baseball and softball spaces and to coach with empathy.

**Ready? Let's Go!**



**TEAM MANAGEMENT- TIPS FOR A GREAT SEASON**

Use this worksheet to plan ahead and identify team management strategies that can help ensure that practices run smoothly and young people feel included and valued.

**Team Cheer- Rituals, like team cheers, help every kid feel safe (it's predictable) connected to the team (they do it with their friends), and like they belong (their contribution counts). Examples:**

- A. Dodgers on 3...1, 2, 3...DODGERS!
- B. Dodgers on 3... Dreamteam on 6...
- C. Play Jackie's Way on 3...

Our Team Cheer \_\_\_\_\_

**Attention Getters- Attention getters help alert the team when you need them to focus. They help keep everyone on the same page about expectations during practice. You might choose:**

- A. Waterfall- coach yells "waterfall" and players say "whoosh"
- B. When I say "Dodgers," you say "Dreamteam"

Our Attention Getter \_\_\_\_\_

**Transition Tricks- Transition tricks help young people stay on task and transition from one activity to the next. Some tricks to consider:**

- A. Last One In- when a coach calls this, players have to get to the infield grass as fast as they can (and don't be last!)
- B. Whistle count-downs- alert players to how much time is left, for example: two whistles for two minutes left; one long whistle for one minute, etc.

Our Transition Trick \_\_\_\_\_

**Mistake Rituals- Using a mistake ritual can normalize mistakes as part of learning and help young people move on to what's next. A mistake ritual works best when it can be communicated without speaking (like from across a loud gym).**

- A. Brush it off
- B. Throw snaps

Our Mistake Rituals \_\_\_\_\_

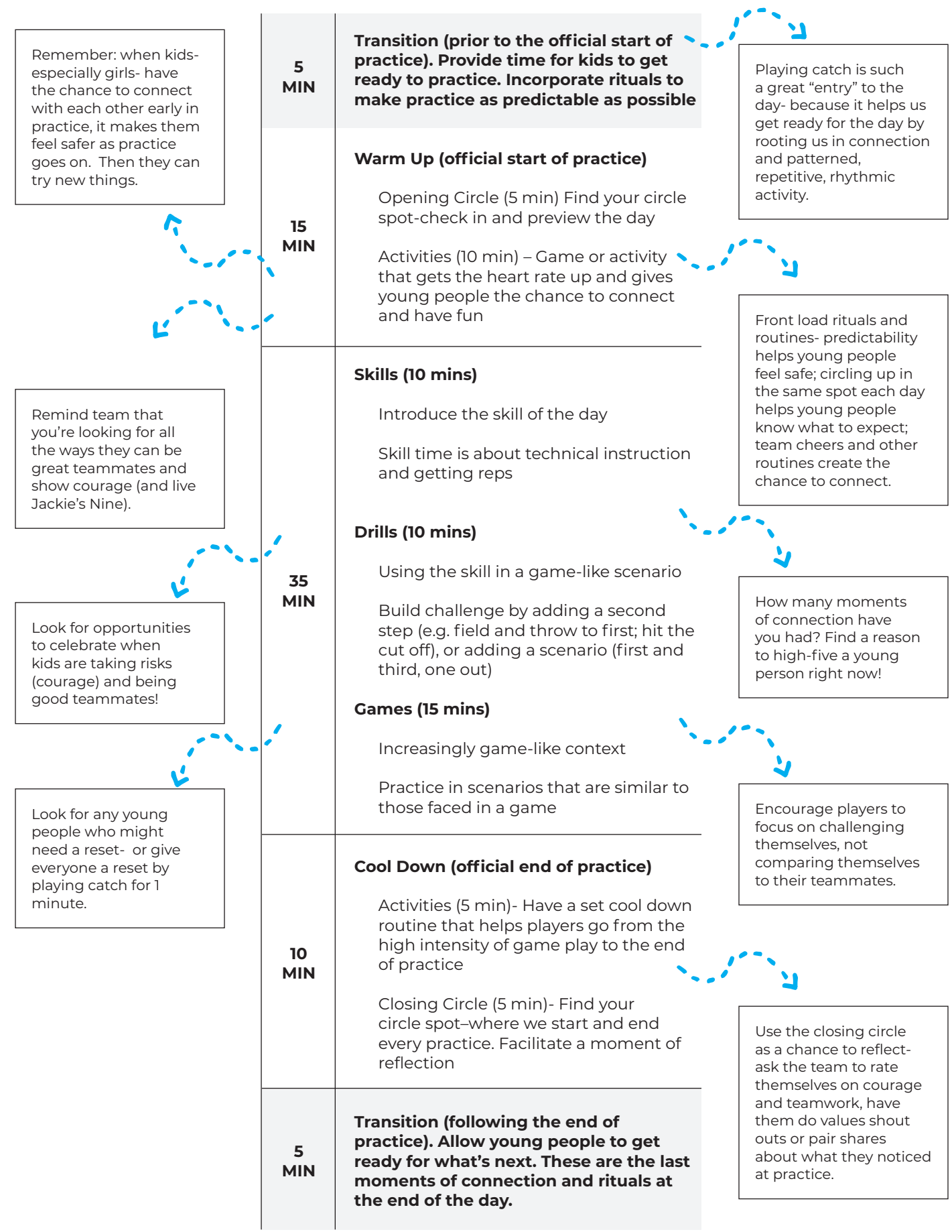
**Regulation Station- Sometimes kids get so worked up they need time and space to cool down. One of the best ways to cool down is by doing something rhythmic. Make space for a regulation station for kids who need a break. Kids can:**

- A. Play catch with an assistant coach, parent, or teammate...
- B. Work on bunts; someone tosses them and you bunt them down
- C. Hitting in a batting cage
- D. Jump rope, do ladder work, roll on a foam roller

This is a great way to engage parents to help- have a parent designated to play catch with any player that needs to take a minute away and reset.

Our Regulation Station \_\_\_\_\_

**PRACTICE PLAN TEMPLATE**















"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives".

- Jackie Robinson

EDUCATION | HEALTH CARE | HOMELESSNESS | SOCIAL JUSTICE