

# Empowering the **Iowa Girl**



Leadership - Culture - Character - Performance



# Empowering the Iowa Girl

**Leadership. Culture. Character. Performance.**

## Communication

*Featuring*  **EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY™  
TOOLS & ASSESSMENTS**

**Drake**  
UNIVERSITY

The Robert D. and  
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# Empowering the Iowa Girl

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## Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union

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[ighsau.org](http://ighsau.org)

Every Iowa Girl deserves the opportunity to participate in athletics and activities that positively impact her growth and development physically, mentally, and socially.

For decades, coaches across the state have worked tirelessly to provide that experience, and have shaped the lives of thousands of Iowa Girls. As part of the IGHSAU strategic plan, we want to provide additional educationally-based resources to help our coaches continue to do this important work.

The Iowa Girl's High School Athletic Union is proud to offer these culture-shaping and leadership development resources for coaches of all Iowa girls' athletics. The topics addressed in these resources were chosen by coaches across the state, and the content shaped by feedback from coaches and other stakeholders. These resources are not a program. They are tools to be adopted and adapted in support of the great work you are already doing. Use these materials to help you shape the culture of your program and enhance the experience of the Iowa Girls on your team.

Empowering the Iowa Girl today, to lead tomorrow!

Erin Gerlich  
Executive Director

Taylor Anderson  
Assistant Director



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## INTRODUCTION

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The materials in these resources are based on 25 years of applied research and development in various educational, workplace, and sport environments by Matthew L. Davidson, Ph.D., Vladimir T. Khmelkov, Ph.D., and their colleagues at the Excellence with Integrity Institute. Over the years, we expanded our grounded theory framework, designed new assessment instruments, and developed and implemented a vast range of instructional resources that help leaders develop the strengths of culture and character needed for optimal performance.

We received feedback from many athletes and coaches who successfully implemented our work in competitive collegiate athletics and in pre-collegiate settings. We are also grateful to our talented partners at The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University. Special thanks to Scott Raecker who has contributed to our theory, practice, and assessment since the very first versions of our work. We are especially grateful to Jeff Kluever, whose extraordinary talents and abilities have helped shape these resources.

### Our Approach

In 1969, the University of Nebraska hired Boyd Epley as the first intercollegiate strength coach at a time when most everyone believed that strength training would *undermine* athletic performance. Less than a decade later, the National Strength Coaches Association was formed in 1978, still fighting the prevailing opinions of the day, which believed that building strength would undermine rather than aid athletic performance. Fast forward to today, strength and conditioning programs are an essential component of every college athletic department, every professional and Olympic sport, and most high school and pre-collegiate experiences. What started with one coach in Nebraska is now the art and science of diverse strength practices that are customized to the athlete, the sport, the style, and conditions.

At the Excellence with Integrity Institute, we believe that the science and practice around the formation of character, culture, and leadership has the potential to impact pre-collegiate and intercollegiate athletics much like the physical strength field has done over the last 50 years. What was once defined by myths, half-truths, and un-truths is now becoming a critical facet of individual and team performance, with the potential to enhance or undermine physical strengths, athletic ability, and team strategy. Physical strength and conditioning is essentially the art and science of proactively designing programs to target and develop the strength, endurance, flexibility, and mobility needed to avoid injuries and achieve success. ***Avoid injuries and achieve success:*** these twin goals form the foundation of the work to intentionally shape the art and science of strength and conditioning for culture and character.



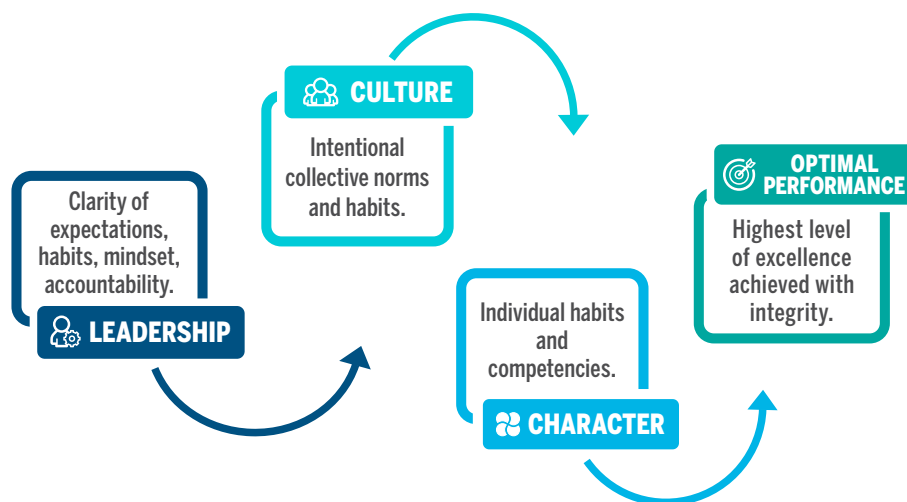
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Coaches have always known the importance of teamwork, leadership, accountability, work ethic, and resilience. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths or weaknesses of culture and character on that team. We have a very good understanding about the strengths of culture and character that contribute to optimal performance, as well as an understanding of the most common culture and character weaknesses that undermine optimal performance and lead to psychological and moral injuries.

The emphasis and importance of athletics has increased. Student-athletes compete more, and the competition is intense, with more media coverage, public interest, scrutiny, and pressure. That is why coaches need to work more intentionally and deliberately to ensure that their teams and student-athletes have the culture and character needed for the pressure and intensity of today's competition to maximize the potential of their team and student-athletes to avoid injuries and achieve success.

What is culture? In simple terms, culture is your **collective values in action, your way, your collective norms and habits**. Culture is your values in action—not simply your stated values, but your operational values, what you truly value as reflected in your actions. For example, I can say my team values accountability, but if team members are rarely or inconsistently held accountable for their actions, then our operational value (loose standards and expectations) is more real than our stated value of accountability. Knowledge of your values isn't enough to shape culture; you must practice your values every day. That's how culture is intentionally created and improved. **Leaders shape culture, culture shapes (or corrupts) character, and character drives optimal performance—the highest level of excellence we can achieve with integrity.**

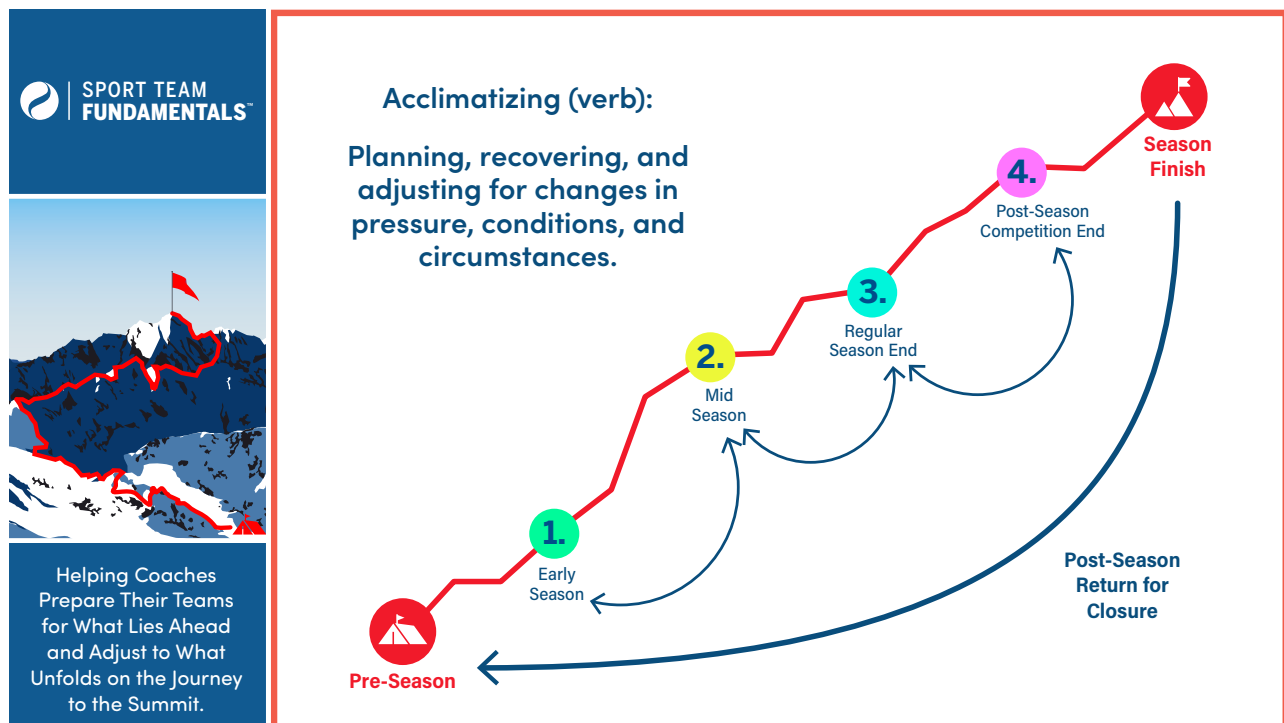




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This model helps to frame the *what* and *how* of shaping culture and character. But what is also essential is an understanding of *why* and *when*. Why are coaches shaping culture and character in competitive teams? So that teams and their team members have the strengths of culture and character to achieve their goals—without injuries. We think about a team journey as the process of “acclimatizing team cultures to summit.” Competitive seasons are a journey from base to summit, from the pre-season to the post-season. Pursuing summits safely is what coaches and teams are striving to accomplish. Coaches operate as expeditionary leaders guiding their teams towards new heights, new challenges, and uncharted territories, and they have a responsibility to ensure that teams can summit safely—without physical, mental, emotional, or interpersonal meltdowns or breakdowns.



The famous quote says, “It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.” Competitive teams need lofty goals and the challenge of new summits to overcome their weaknesses and forge new strengths of culture and character that simply will not be developed pursuing the “low peaks.” Competition means “striving with”—with teammates and with worthy opponents—to bring out new levels of strength and to develop our abilities fully.

So, we develop the strengths of culture and character to summit safely by using the journey of a season to continuously prepare for what teams will encounter at the summit: further elevated pressure at the end of a long journey marked by the inevitable highs and lows, victories and defeats that are part of a typical season.





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We believe that strength and conditioning for culture comes to life when coaches understand that they are building strengths that can withstand the pressure of competition needed to summit safely. Coaches aren't just doing some good, nice, important work on culture and character. They're developing the strengths of culture and character needed to summit safely. If teams don't have sufficient culture and character assets for the pressures and duration of a competitive season, then breakdowns and injuries are inevitable! It's not about developing some nice assets that could help in life in the future; it's about developing the strengths of culture and character **needed for** the journey from base to summit for this team in this season. If we don't properly target and develop assets like psychological safety, leadership, resilience, self-awareness, accountability, then we should not be surprised when we don't reach our performance goals. More importantly, we shouldn't be surprised when we see breakdowns and psychological injuries within the team and among its members.

There are many nuances to the emerging art and science of shaping culture and character strengths needed to summit safely. But the essence of the approach can be summarized quite simply as the continuous intentional process of balancing **demandingness and responsiveness**. On the journey of a season, from pre-season to post-season, coaches must apply pressure sufficient to forge the team and individual assets needed for the challenge. But they must be able to temper, adjust, and respond when the demandingness is no longer landing or working with the team. What was optimal in the pre-season may not be in the middle of the season. What was too demanding in the pre-season may be perfect as we approach the post-season (or vice versa).

 **SPORT TEAM FUNDAMENTALS™**



Helping Coaches  
Prepare Their Teams  
for What Lies Ahead  
and Adjust to What  
Unfolds on the Journey  
to the Summit.

**ACCLIMATIZING TEAM CULTURE FOR  
OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE**

**Coaching that is both  
Demanding and Responsive**  
to changes in the team,  
**which creates**  
**Collective Safety and Confidence**  
that are needed to summit—to achieve  
**Excellence with Integrity!**





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Optimal performance coaching, or coaching to summit safely, is the art of balancing demandingness and responsiveness, which requires an ongoing dialogue between coaches and team members. *Demandingness* reflects the coaching practices used to forge a culture of competitive excellence and drive the team towards greatness; *responsiveness* is how coaches listen, observe, and engage the team in dialogue to determine necessary adjustments to the intensity, duration, and tactical effectiveness of coaching practices and strategies. Optimal performance coaching isn't just what you do, it is *how well your demandingness lands with your team*. Coaches ensure their coaching is landing, by being demanding **and** responsive.

## Resources

The “workouts” presented in this resource are activities designed to help you engage your team in the culture work *needed for* the journey of a season from base to summit, from pre-season to post-season. Culture is always a work in progress. These workouts can help you shape your team culture consistently and intentionally, and will ultimately help drive the performance of your team.

The workouts are organized into the following broad categories: leadership, teamwork, accountability, work ethic, communication, and resilience. Within each category you will find several short, focused workouts to conduct with your team. The workout categories are not scaffolded as a sequence, meaning you need not start with a certain workout, then progress to another in the order, and so on. You can start with any workout and move between categories as you see fit. Likewise, each workout can be conducted in a variety of environments: the court, the field, the locker room, a classroom, a film session, or even on the bus. If time is an issue, each workout can be divided into shorter, multiple segments.

The keys to effectively using this resource:

1. **Target where you are on the journey from base to summit.** If you're in the pre-season, you might have more time to select particular workouts, dig deeper, or return for several workouts. If you're in the middle of the season having just experienced a couple of tough losses or big wins, you might choose a different workout or focus.
2. **Be consistent.** Like strength conditioning, a heavy dump in the pre-season won't inoculate your team. To truly impact your culture, you must consistently address culture where it is most needed, targeting weak areas like you would weak muscles or weak strategy. As Pete Carroll once said, “If you're not coaching your values each day, then those aren't your values.”



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Each topic includes an activity to engage your team in active learning that incorporate research-based tools and strategies. Relationship-building questions and activities can be found throughout the workouts, so that your team can form connections with one another. Each category also includes optimal performance self-studies, so your team can reflect on how they are demonstrating the key values of your culture as individuals and as a team.

Finally, there are workouts you can use to engage parents, who are key stakeholders in the culture of your team. Some of the team workouts for student-athletes can also be extended to parents if desired. And there are two workouts to help get feedback on the culture of your team. Culture is ever-changing, so having simple, effective ways to gather information from student-athletes, other coaches, and parents regarding their perceptions of team culture is a useful tool.

In short, we've sought to include everything you need to consistently and positively shape your culture with simple, direct, and meaningful workouts. **Leaders shape culture, culture shapes character, character drives performance.** Now, the work is up to you. Your journey begins by working more intentionally to develop the strengths of culture and character needed to summit safely! Onward and upward!

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

*~ Laozi*

*Traveler, there is no road; you make your own path as you walk.*

*~ Antonio Machado*



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## CHAMP APPROACH

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Building and sustaining culture requires intentional coaching. The Excellence with Integrity CHAMP approach suggests that coaching skills like communication requires the use of four separate but connected processes.

First, coaching for optimal performance requires establishing CLARITY of expectations specifying what communication looks, sounds, and feels like for your team in the various times and situations it will be required. Communication is a big concept with many potential applications, so don't assume everyone on the team agrees with what communication means — get clarity, about what resilience in action is, and is not!

Second, everyone on the team must have real opportunities to practice putting communication into action. As the ancient wisdom asserts: *We are what we repeatedly do*—not what we repeatedly know. “Do this, don't do this” HABITS that simulate the skills we will need under game circumstances must be created, along with mentoring feedback on the deliberate practices.

Third, there must be ACCOUNTABILITY to ensure team members hold themselves and each other accountable to the standards we have established. If we know what communication expectations are (clarity), and we know how to put these expectations into action (habits), then it is essential to make sure we hold self and others accountable.

Finally, the MINDSET must be continuously shaped so that student-athletes understand the deeper why behind our habits, expectations, and accountability, which helps cultivate buy-in and supports rapid recovery when mistakes are made or obstacles arise. Shaping the mindset is essential (why it matters and how we respond when it is put to the test): communication is important to **us, our** team, and for **achieving our goals**—but it won't happen easily or without some effort and persistence!

A sample CHAMP tool for communication is below, but you should use the blank CHAMP tool provided in each category to think about how you want to coach communication on your team. To coach communication consistently, you must be clear about what it means on your team, what it looks like, why it matters, and how you will hold each other accountable to your expectations.



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## Clarity, Habit, Accountability, Mindset → Performance

### Example



#### CLARITY

1. Saying the right thing, in the right tone, and with the right intention.
2. Respectfully holding teammates accountable for the team's standards.
3. Communicating constantly—especially when we're down.



#### HABIT

1. Just say HEARD—without explaining or complaining.
2. Ask questions to verify and clarify.

### Communication



#### ACCOUNTABILITY

1. When in doubt, speak up.
2. Say what needs to be said.
3. Hear what needs to be heard.



#### MINDSET

1. The right substance, style and timing is everything.
2. Dialogue is the antidote to whatever isn't right in our culture.



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**Clarity, Habit, Accountability, Mindset**  
→ **Performance**



**CLARITY**



**HABIT**



**ACCOUNTABILITY**



**MINDSET**



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## RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITY – CIRCLE IN A CIRCLE

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**Scope:** 5-15 minutes; the activity can be replicated with different questions as desired.

The directions for Circle-in-a-Circle are below, as are suggested questions focused on communication. However, you can do the same activity using any questions you like. The value of this activity is that it makes it easy to ensure each member of the team is interacting with different people.

1. Split your team in half.
2. Ask one half of your team to form a circle and face out.
3. Instruct the other half of your team to stand across from someone in the circle. You should have an inside circle facing an outside circle.
4. Ask your team to discuss a question with the person standing across from them. The questions can be about anything – team performance, a previous game, character skills, what they're working on in school, what they love about your sport, or any of the questions suggested in this team-building questions section.
5. After giving each person time to answer the question, ask the outer circle to rotate one or two people to the right. (How many spots they rotate doesn't matter – we just want a new partner).
6. Ask a different question for partners to discuss.
7. Rotate the inner circle to the right so you have new partners.
8. Continue asking questions and rotating circles as needed.

You can choose to process answers as a large group after each question, or simply let participants discuss with partners and move on to the next question. You can also ask your team leaders or captains to suggest questions to ask the group.



## Communication Questions

- A. What is your preferred method of communication (in-person, text, e-mail, phone call, etc.)? Why do you prefer that method?
- B. What factors do you consider when deciding which communication tool to use to communicate with someone?
- C. On a scale from 1-10, how well do you communicate with others? Why did you choose that score?
- D. On a scale from 1-10, how well do others communicate with you? Why did you choose that score?
- E. What could your teammates do better to communicate more effectively with you?
- F. What could you do to communicate with your teammates more effectively?
- G. What could coaches do to communicate with you more effectively?
- H. What could you do to communicate with coaches more effectively?
- I. Why is communication an important skill for your team to master?
- J. What aspect of communication do you need to work on most (speaking up, holding people accountable, being positive, being direct, being tactful, etc.)?

## Extension

As you put communication workouts into practice, use the circle-in-a-circle activity to reinforce the strategies found in the work outs. For example, ask student-athletes to identify a behavior that needs to change on their team, and then practice care-frontation as they discuss that behavior (attack the problem, not the person, find win-win solutions, etc.).





## COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY WORKOUT – THE HOUSE

**Scope:** 5-10 minutes, often done as a pre-season or off-season activity.

### Activity

1. Print out this picture: <http://www.clipartbest.com/clipart-7Ta6En9Lc>
2. Choose one student to describe the picture to the other students who will draw what the student describes. The student describing the picture can use whatever descriptors they like, but may not show other students the picture.
3. The students drawing the picture may ask any questions they like about the house.
4. Give students about three minutes to draw their pictures.
5. Ask students to share their drawing and compare it to the drawing the student was describing.

There are two primary processing points for this activity. First, when communicating with others, we must consider the individuals who are listening. Saying something like, “the house looks like Juan’s house,” may be true, but is only a useful descriptor if the person listening knows what Juan’s house looks like. Likewise, when asking questions, we must be specific. Asking “what does the chimney look like?” is a fine question, unless what you really want to know is how tall the chimney is. The person can only answer the question that is asked, not the question you meant to ask.

Second, though we all know what houses look like, we can’t assume that everyone has the same image of a house in mind. I can’t tell you to draw a house and be disappointed when you don’t draw exactly what I have in mind. Likewise, I can’t tell you to show respect and then be disappointed if you don’t demonstrate respect exactly how I envisioned it. We must continually work to verify and clarify what we mean in different circumstances if we want everyone to understand what we mean. Communication is a two-way street. If someone doesn’t understand what we’re asking or saying, that’s as much my fault as theirs, if not more so. And, if I don’t understand what someone asks, it’s my responsibility to ask for clarification.



## Extension:

There are multiple ways to do this activity. You can also pair students and have them sit back to back with one person describing their picture and the other drawing. You can also have students build a structure by following the spoken directions of a student. No matter the activity, the point remains the same – communication is far more than simply giving directions. We have to continually seek to understand and be understood, verify and clarify, and ask questions to achieve optimal communication.



## COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY WORKOUT – CUP STACKING GAME

**Scope:** 15-20 minutes for the complete activity, typically done in pre-season.

### Supplies

- A. Plastic cups (6 per group)
- B. Rubber bands (1 per group – tight enough to grip plastic cups)
- C. String (cut 18-24 inches long, one piece per person)
- D. Paper

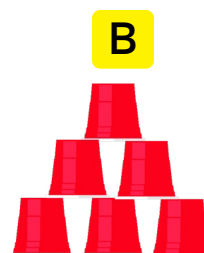
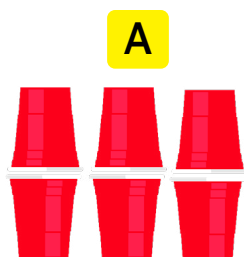
### Activity

1. Split team into even groups. Instruct each group to select one person to see you for special instructions.
2. Give each group 6 cups, 1 rubber band, and one string per person in the group (minus the individual selected for special instruction).
3. Instruct groups to tie each string to their rubber band while you give directions to the individuals receiving special instructions.
4. In private, tell the special instruction group that they are not participating in the activity. Instead, they are going to take a piece of paper and label half the paper column A, the other half column B. In column A, they are going to tally every single time a person in the group praises someone else. In column B, they are going to tally every time someone ignores, criticizes, or is otherwise negative in their group. They are not to tell anyone in their group what they are doing. Once individuals understand their directions, send them back to the group.
5. Tell each group to stack their cups as shown in diagram A. Their task is to re-stack the cups to match diagram B following these rules:



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- a. Cups can only be touched by the rubber band or string. Even if a cup falls off the table, it still can only be touched by the rubber band or string.
  - b. Each team member must have their hand on their string and only their string at all times.
  - c. Team members may not exchange strings. They can, however, change body positions.
  - d. Team members may not grab the string too close to the rubber band. Their hand must be on the back of the string.
  - e. If you, the facilitator decide a rule is being broken, you will knock their cups over.
6. Start the competition. As each team finishes the game, collect the tally sheets from the individual recording their positive and negative comments. Keep tally sheets in the order that groups finish.
7. Often, the group that finishes first will have the highest or one of the highest praise to criticism ratios. If true, talk about that with your group. However, it doesn't always work out that way. If it doesn't, instead focus on the praise to criticism ratio of all the groups which almost always is around 50/50 – 1 praise for every criticism.
8. Share with groups that according to a study published in the *Harvard Business Review*, the highest performing teams have 5.6 positive comments for every 1 negative comment, middle performing teams have 1.9 positive comments for every 1 negative, and low performing teams have 3 negative comments for every 1 positive comment.
9. Ask your team why positive feedback can lead to better performance.



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## Extension:

Ask your team to practice constructive praise and criticism by reflecting on team performance in the last week practice or competition.



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## WINNING FEEDBACK WORKOUT

**Scope:** 15-20 minutes as a pre-season activity, and then practiced continually through the season.

The ability to give and receive feedback is an important skill in life, and for teams striving to optimize their performance. After all, we can't get better individually or collectively if we don't give and receive feedback that leads to improvement. But, not all feedback is created equal. Some feedback is destructive. It's not motivating nor helpful. Some feedback is neutral; it may be positive, but it doesn't tell someone what to do better or differently. Winning feedback, however, is constructive.



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## WINNING FEEDBACK

Giving and Receiving Feedback as Fuel for Growth

### We Give Winning Feedback

*by offering feedback that is*

- specific, honest, and direct,
- solution-focused,
- and goal-oriented,

*and that delivers*

- the right substance,
- in the right moment, and
- in the right style—without blame, insult, or disrespect.



### We Receive Winning Feedback

*by being*

- open-minded,
- solution-focused,
- and growth-oriented,

*and receiving feedback without*

- embarrassment, frustration, or anger—
- arguing, complaining, or blaming others/ circumstances.



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Share the Winning Feedback tool with student-athletes and discuss what it looks like to give and receive winning feedback. Then, ask students the following questions.

1. Describe a time when feedback helped you improve. How was the feedback delivered?
2. Describe a time when feedback was delivered poorly and negatively impacted your performance. What could have been done better or differently to deliver the feedback more effectively?
3. What can you do to make sure you receive feedback without embarrassment, frustration, anger, or defensiveness?
4. What can you do to deliver feedback that is less likely to cause embarrassment, frustration, anger, or defensiveness?
5. Describe why the following statements are not winning feedback. How would you change the following statements to make them winning feedback?
  - a. "Why did you take that shot?"
  - b. "That was poor defense."
  - c. "If you play like that, I'm taking you out of the game."

## Extension:

If desired, you can combine this workout with the cup stacking activity for one 30-minute workout. Basically, use the cup stacking game as a way for student-athletes to recognize how frequently they use non-winning feedback.

You can also ask students to complete the following self-reflection to evaluate how they give and receive feedback.





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## WINNING FEEDBACK SELF-STUDY

Select a PERIOD OF TIME that  
you will focus on: \_\_\_\_\_

Part A) Rate your performance on the following:

**1 = POOR**

**10 = OPTIMAL**



1) ... offering feedback that is specific, honest, and direct, solution-focused, goal-oriented.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2) ... delivering the right substance, in the right style, in the right moment when giving feedback.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3) ... being open-minded, growth-focused, solution-oriented when receiving feedback.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

4) ... receiving feedback without embarrassment, frustration or anger.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Part B) List what you could do **BETTER or DIFFERENTLY** in the future  
for more optimal *winning feedback*:



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## CARE-FRONTATION WORKOUT

**Scope:** 15-20 minutes as a one-time activity done at any point in the year, but referred to consistently throughout the season.

Conflict and confrontation aren't inherently bad. Conflict and confrontation can be done well or poorly. When we teach our team to practice principles of what author David Augsburger calls care-frontation, we give ourselves the best opportunity to address mistakes in a positive, productive way.

Care-frontation unites concern for relationships with concern for goals. "I love you, and care for you, and want the best for and from you—therefore, I must challenge you. But I do so out of love, not out of anger or with a desire to embarrass, insult, or demean."



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### CARE-FRONTATION FUNDAMENTALS

For positive, productive relationships in the quest for excellence, show  
***courage and compassion:***

#### 1 Attack the problem, not the person

Name the problem and what needs to be done differently or better. Care more to ***get it right*** than to ***be right***.

#### 2 When in doubt, do it

Speak up sooner and more consistently—conflicts delayed and deferred turn little things into big things.

#### 3 Use "I"-statements

Honestly and respectfully express your thoughts and feelings, focus on solutions, and show personal responsibility (e.g., "I think we need ...; I propose we ...").

#### 4 Avoid "You"-statements

Avoid blame, insult, and attacks, which tend to disrespect, divide, and distract, or shift responsibility (e.g., "You caused this ...; You never do your part ...").

#### 5 Seek win-win

Balance ***your*** needs and best interests ("I want ...") and ***their*** needs and best interests ("You want ...").

#### 6 Own mistakes and missteps

It won't always be smooth and perfect, so be ready to apologize, make up, and move on.

Adapted from David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*.



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Ask student-athletes to create a list of circumstances that have or could cause conflict on your team. Ideas could range from disagreements about who should take the final shot, to someone being late to practice or workouts, to someone teetering on the edge of academic eligibility, or even teammates participating in illegal activities.

Once student-athletes have generated that list, ask them to discuss what care-frontation would look like in each scenario. Participants can write, discuss, or even role-play what good care-frontation looks like for each scenario.

## Extension:

Ask student-athletes to share examples of when they modeled care-frontation or saw someone else model it. *What did care-frontation look like? What impact did care-frontation have on the situation?* Then, ask them to share a time when care-frontation was not used. *What happened in those examples?*



## OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE SELF-STUDY – COMMUNICATION

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**Scope:** 5 minutes.

Ask members of the team to fill out the following reflection about their communication. Give them a time frame to consider as they reflect (last week, month, quarter, etc.). When complete, have student-athletes share with a partner what they are doing well and what they could do better or differently to demonstrate good communication moving forward.

This activity can be done multiple times per season to help student-athletes continually reflect on how well they are doing. Likewise, you can use this reflection in multiple ways:

- You could ask student-athletes to evaluate their own communication or overall team communication.
- Coaches could also fill out the reflection to evaluate the communication of players.

The Optimal Performance Self-Studies should not be used as a weapon, rather as a way to engage in meaningful conversations about what is going well and what can be improved.



# Empowering the Iowa Girl

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## COMMUNICATION/CARE-FRONTATION SELF-STUDY

Select a PERIOD OF TIME that  
you will focus on: \_\_\_\_\_

Part A) Rate your performance on the following:

**1 = POOR**

**10 = OPTIMAL**



1) ... seeking to understand by asking questions to verify and clarify the perspective of others.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2) ... attacking the problem by offering feedback that is specific, honest, direct, and solution-focused.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3) ... being open-minded, growth-focused, and solution-oriented when I receive feedback.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

4) ... considering the best time, place, and approach when planning to communicate with someone.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

5) ... speaking up quickly and positively when I see an issue that needs to be addressed.

1

2

3

4

5

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10

Part B) List what you could do **BETTER or DIFFERENTLY** in the future  
for more optimal *care-frontation*:



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## About the Consortium

Almost two decades ago, the Excellence with Integrity Institute and The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, created a consortium partnership to advance our respective visions and missions. Together, we pursue strategic opportunities in youth leadership, employment readiness, athletics, education, and organizational development in community and workplace environments.

The Institute's main focus is on research and development of instructional and assessment tools and strategies that help leaders shape culture, build character, and achieve optimal performance.

The Ray Center's main focus is on coaching, training, and expanding our collaborative implementation projects across Iowa and around the globe.