

# Empowering the Iowa Girl



Leadership - Culture - Character - Performance



# Empowering the Iowa Girl

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

## Leadership

*Featuring*  **EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY™  
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The Robert D. and  
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## Contents

Introduction	5
CHAMP Approach	11
Relationship-Building Activity – Electricity	14
Teamwork Activity Workout – Leaders you Admire	16
Leader-to-Detractor Workout	19
Derek Sivers Video Workout	22
Optimal Performance Reflection – Leadership	23



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## Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union

5000 Westown Parkway • Suite 150 • West Des Moines, Iowa 50266

Phone: (515) 288-9741

[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.



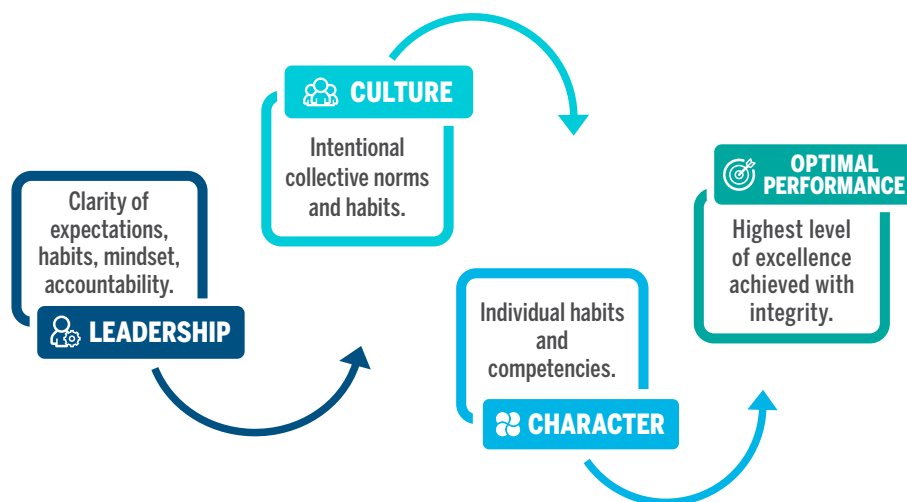
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Coaches have always known the importance of teamwork, leadership, accountability, work ethic, and resilience. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths 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.**

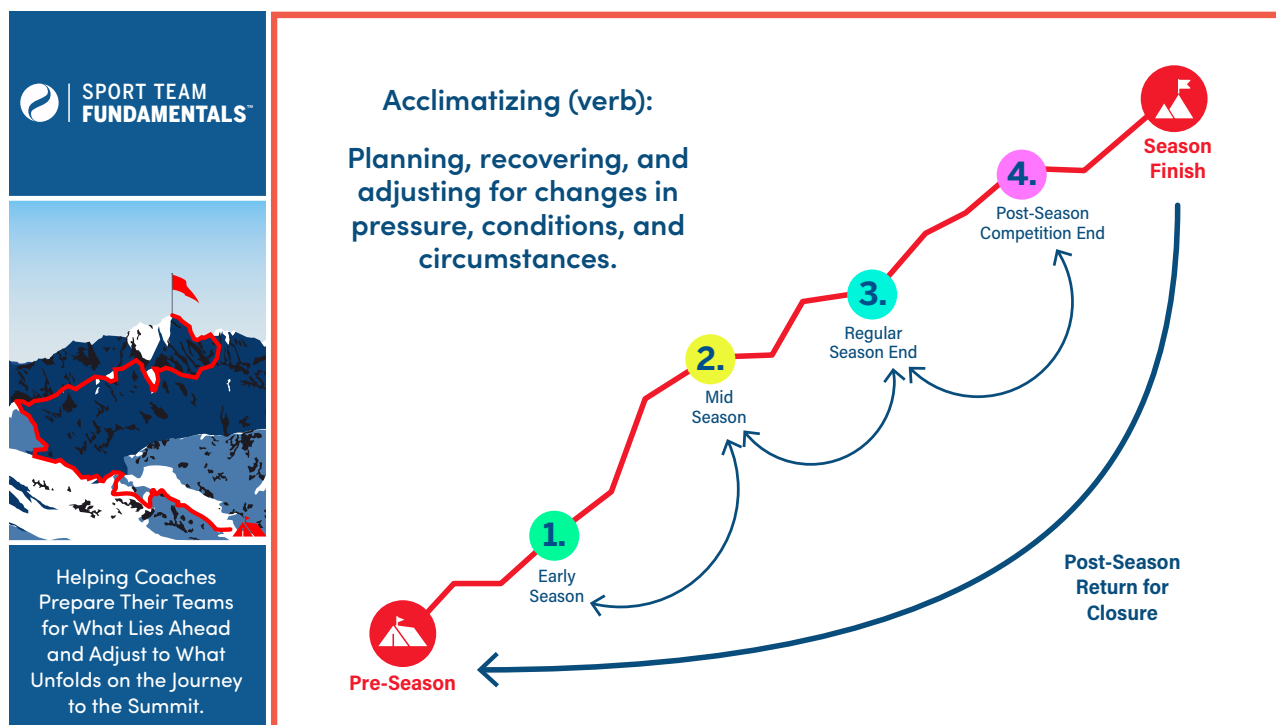




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This model helps to frame the *what* and *how* of shaping culture and character. But what is also essential is an understanding of *why* and *when*. Why are coaches shaping culture and character in competitive teams? So that teams and their team members 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 developing skills like leadership requires the use of four separate but connected coaching processes.

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

Second, everyone on the team must have real opportunities to practice putting leadership 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 leadership 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): leadership 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 leadership is below, but you should use the blank CHAMP tool provided in each category to think about how you want to coach leadership on your team. To coach leadership 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. Prioritizing the needs and goals of the team.
2. Working hard to ensure the success of teammates.
3. Providing positive energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement to teammates.



#### HABIT

1. Doing whatever the team most needs that you can offer (even it isn't what you like).
2. Make others around you better.

### Leadership



#### ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Seek feedback from teammates and coaches.
2. Figure out what the team needs and how you can help.
3. Reflect on how I have led today and how I can lead better tomorrow.



#### MINDSET

1. Leaders focus on our goals and improving others.
2. We can choose lead from where we are—whatever our role or abilities.



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



**CLARITY**



**HABIT**



**ACCOUNTABILITY**



**MINDSET**





## RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITY – ELECTRICITY

**Scope:** 10-20 minutes; the activity can be replicated with different questions as desired.

Electricity is a relationship-building game that incorporates an element of competition. You can ask any questions you like. The questions below are focused on leadership.

### Sample Questions

- What's the best thing about being a leader?
- What's the hardest thing about being a leader?
- Describe someone who you believe is a good leader. What makes that person an effective leader?
- How are you currently demonstrating good leadership on your team?
- What could you do better or differently to demonstrate leadership on your team?
- How do you demonstrate leadership at home, school, practice, games, in the community, etc.?

### Activity

1. Split your team in half.
2. Have each half form a line, facing each other. Each person in line should be facing one person across from them.
3. 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.



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4. Tell your team that they are now competing against each other—one line vs. the other line. On the command, “Go,” the person on one end of the line will high-five the person standing next to them, who will then high-five the person next to them, and so on – each person passing a high-five to the next person like a wave of electricity.

When the last person in line gets their high-five, they are going to reach for an object (like a ball works) that you have set on the ground. The first line to pick up the object wins.

5. After playing the game, the losing line must move one person to the left so that everyone has a new partner. The last person in line must move to the far end of their line.
6. Ask another question and play another round of electricity.

*Note: lines must rotate in different directions to ensure you have a different partner for each round.*

7. Continue asking questions and playing rounds of electricity as desired.

## Extension

Ask student-athletes to create questions to use in relationship-building activities. You can also ask students to practice leadership skills by designing and leading their own relationship-building activities for your team.



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## TEAMWORK ACTIVITY WORKOUT – LEADERS YOU ADMIRE

**Scope:** 15-20 minutes as a pre-season or off-season activity.

### Activity

1. Split participants into groups, with no more than 10 people in each group.
2. Give each group a sheet of paper, or a piece of chart paper to put on the wall. Ask each group to draw a vertical line down the center of the paper.
3. Direct each participant to identify someone they believe is an effective leader and write down the name of that leader on the left side of the paper. Participants can choose anyone they wish—a historical figure, a politician, an athlete, a family member, a teacher, a coach, or any other person they believe is an effective leader.
4. Ask participants to identify two characteristics for each person on the list that make that individual an effective leader, and to write those characteristics on the right side of the paper.
5. Ask each group to look at the list of characteristics on the right side of the paper and, as a group, determine which two characteristics are the most important traits for leaders to possess.

### Process the Activity

First, note the different individuals identified as effective leaders. Emphasize that leaders can be from any ethnic or religious background, any gender, famous, not famous, rich, poor, old, young, and so on. In other words, one doesn't have to be a particular type of person to be an effective leader.

Then, look at all the characteristics of effective leaders. Point out that even when each group chose their top two most important characteristics, they still identified very different traits. There is no magic list of character traits one must possess in order to be



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an effective leader. To be sure, some traits certainly help people be an effective leader, but every leader has strengths and weaknesses.

So, if you don't have to be a particular type of person to be a leader, and you don't need to master a specific set of traits, what do effective leaders have in common?



EXCELLENCE  
WITH INTEGRITY

TOOLS®

## CORE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES



### 1. Commit to shared goals and the collective good

- > Demonstrate personal commitment and mastery in everything you do
- > Put the goals of the group before your own; do your part well
- > Take initiative to organize the group and show flexibility in working with others



### 2. Motivate, persuade, and empower others

- > Motivate others by your words and works
- > Persuade others to join you, to buy into your vision or plan of action
- > Empower others to be and do their best, to use their talents for the group



### 3. Hold self and others accountable

- > Accept responsibility for your mistakes or missteps
- > Stand up for your ideas and beliefs
- > Hold others accountable when they detract from the group performance

Effective leaders all:

1. Commit to shared goals and the collective good.
2. Motivate, empower, and persuade others.
3. Hold themselves and others accountable.



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Ask participants to discuss what each of those practices looks like on your team. How would we know that someone is demonstrating effective leadership? What would we see them doing?

Then, ask participants to reflect on what they can do to demonstrate one of the core leadership practices better or more consistently. Participants should not only name what they want to improve, but determine when, where, and how they will demonstrate that leadership practice.

## Extension

Ask student-athletes to interview someone they consider an effective leader. Students should prepare a list of questions in advance, focused on what leadership lessons they can learn from their interview subject. Ask student-athletes to share what they learned with you, a small group, or the team.



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## LEADER-TO-DETRACTOR WORKOUT

**Scope:** 15-20 minutes as a pre-season or off-season activity, reviewed periodically throughout the season.

The goal of this workout is to help each member of the team understand what leadership looks like in different situations and assume responsibility for putting those leadership expectations into practice.

This video link provides an overview that you can review in advance to get up to speed and/or share with your team as background as part of the workout:

<https://vimeo.com/1040434116/16acc119c8>





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In every situation, we choose the actions of one of the following:

- A. Detractor – hurts the team by not taking responsibility for their actions or the actions of others.
- B. Participant – takes responsibility for their own actions, but doesn't hold others accountable for their actions.
- C. Leader – takes responsibility for their actions and holds others accountable for their actions.

Each person on the team can demonstrate leadership by taking responsibility for their own actions and the actions of others. But, in order to do that, you must come together to clarify what leadership looks and sounds like for a specific context or situation. The Leader-to-Detractor tool and activity outline below can help you with that process.

1. Choose a specific situation in which your team needs to define what leaders, participants, and detractors look like. It could be off season workouts, at practice, academically, outside of class, during team travel, during a game, or other meaningful contexts for your team.
2. Brainstorm behaviors or actions for leaders, participants, and detractors. Encourage them to be specific. For example, if someone suggests "be positive," ask them "be positive by doing/saying what?"
3. As you add behaviors to each category, ask your team if the action is clear and understood. If at any point there is lack of clarity or disagreement, dig deeper.
4. At the conclusion of the workout, ask your team:
  - a. Is there anything else that needs to be added?
  - b. Is there anything that is unclear?
  - c. Is there anything under leader that you cannot or will not do?
5. Optional: Some teams may choose to print their Leader-to-Detractor worksheet and ask each member of the team to sign it as a commitment to put the



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leadership actions into practice. You may also choose to post your worksheet in the locker room as a reminder of what your team agreed to do.

*Remember, you can use the Leader-to-Detractor workout for any number of situations. Use the tool again and again to define the actions of leaders, participants, and detractors in multiple environments. This is a great activity to do with your captains or leadership group and with your coaches as well. You can even use the Leader, Participant, and Detractor anchors to define behaviors for parents and families connected to your program.*

## Extension

Once you've completed a Leader-to-Detractor worksheet, it is important to periodically return to your expectations and analyze what you're doing well and what needs to be improved. Depending on the number of student-athletes on your team, ask each member of your team to share how well they met the Leader-to-Detractor expectations. If you have a large team, ask assistant coaches to meet with groups of student-athletes. Challenge student-athletes to provide specific examples of a time they met expectations well, and when they could have done something better or differently. These conversations can happen daily, weekly, or at any other checkpoint you establish. Coaches should also identify what they could do better or differently.



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## DEREK SIVERS VIDEO WORKOUT

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Scope: 10-15 minute activity done at any point in the year.

Show participants the Derek Sivers “How to Start a Movement” TED Talk, found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V74AxCqOTvg>. At the conclusion of the video, ask participants the following questions:

1. What lessons about leadership did they learn from the video clip?
2. Are they the lone nut, first follower, or both on your team? Why?
3. When are they the lone nut? When are they the first follower?
4. Why is the first follower another type of leadership?

Additional Process Point: At various points in the video, there is a woman in a yellow tank top who sometimes can be seen in the shot. At one point, she stands up and looks like she’s about to join the crowd. However, she looks back at the person she’s with, and that person isn’t standing, which stops her, at least temporarily and perhaps permanently, from joining the group. The person sitting on the ground doesn’t grab her or otherwise prevent her from joining the group, and yet their inaction is enough to stop her from doing something she would otherwise do.

Can participants think of examples on your team where someone sets a poor example and leads people down the wrong path?

### Extension

Ask student-athletes to find and share another video clip that illustrates an important leadership lesson. The video can be a real-life example or taken from a movie or television show, and can be a good or poor example of leadership. Students should find the clip and be prepared to share what lessons they learned from the clip that they can apply to their own leadership.



## OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE REFLECTION – LEADERSHIP

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**Scope:** 5 minutes daily, weekly, or at any other consistent time period.

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

This activity can be done multiple times per season to help students continually reflect on how well they are doing. Likewise, you can use this reflection in multiple ways. You could ask students to evaluate their own leadership or overall team leadership. Likewise, coaches could use the reflection to evaluate the leadership skills of players. The reflections should not be used as a weapon, rather a way to engage in meaningful conversation about what's going well and what can be improved.



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## LEADERSHIP 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) ... being committed to team goals and collective good.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2) ... motivating and empowering others on the team.

1

2

3

4

5

6

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10

3) ... holding myself to team expectations, modeling what to do for others.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

4) ... holding others accountable to team standards.

1

2

3

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10

5) ... making difficult decisions with efficiency and effectiveness.

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 *leadership*:



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at 515-271-1910 or [raycenter@drake.edu](mailto:raycenter@drake.edu)

## 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.