

Empowering the Iowa Girl



Leadership - Culture - Character - Performance



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Leadership. Culture. Character. Performance.

Parent Workouts

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

Drake
UNIVERSITY

The Robert D. and
Billie Ray Center





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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

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 IGHS AU 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

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.



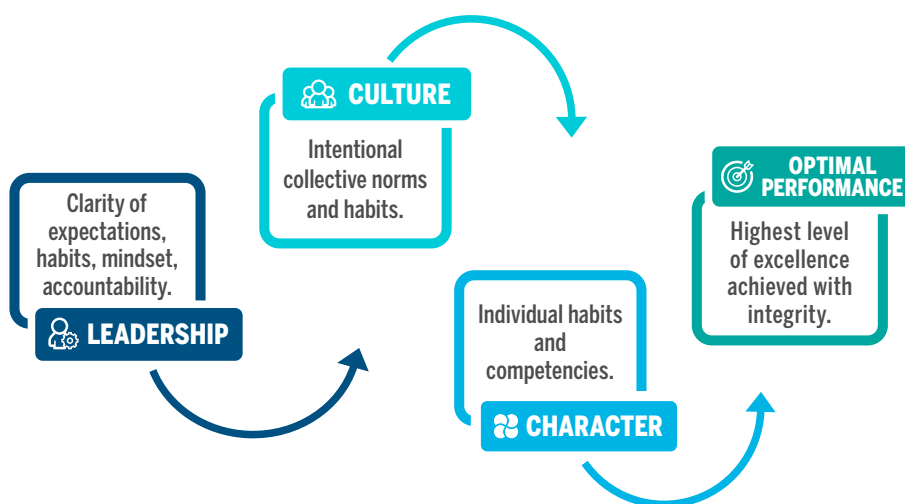
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Coaches have always known the importance of teamwork, leadership, accountability, work ethic, and resilience. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths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

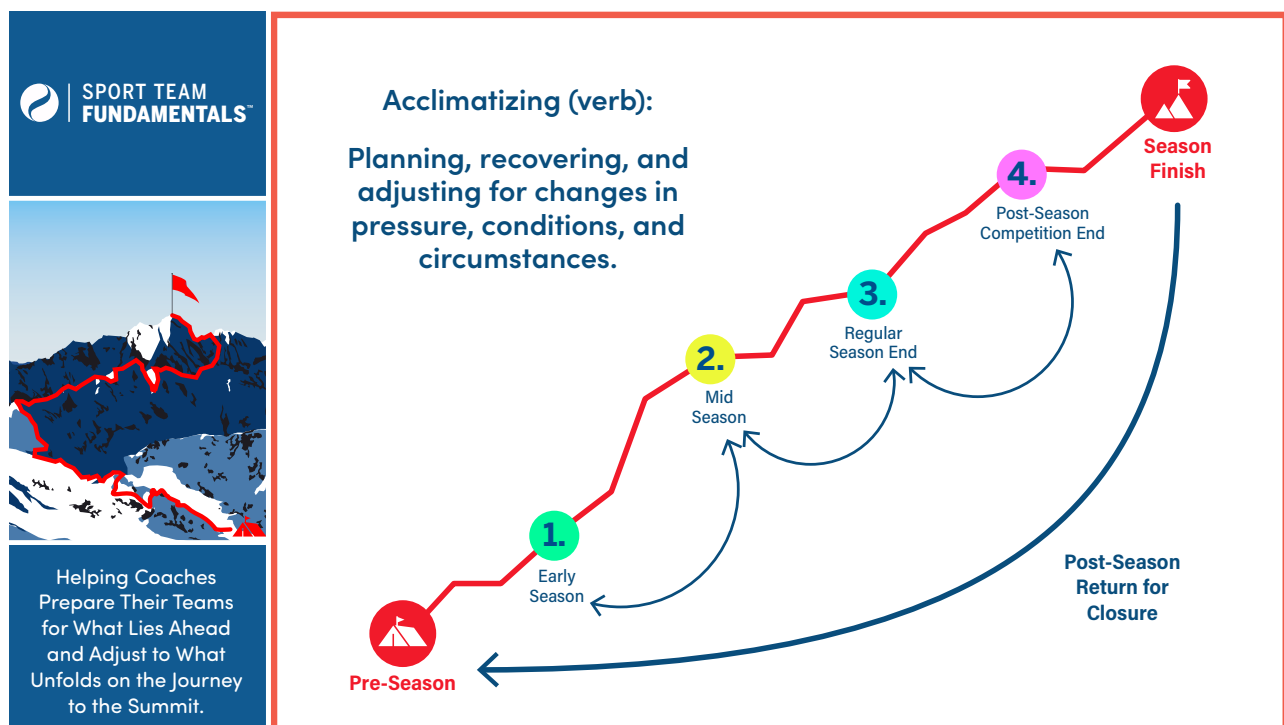




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This model helps to frame the *what* and *how* of shaping culture and character. But what is also essential is an understanding of *why* and *when*. Why are coaches shaping culture and character in competitive teams? So that teams and their team members 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



PARENT WORKOUTS

Parents and families are important stakeholders in your program culture. The more you get parents and families to actively promote and support your culture, the more likely it is that your culture will flourish. Unfortunately, opportunities to impact and influence parents are limited. The workouts below are short, simple activities you can do with parents in pre-season meetings, post-season awards banquets, or other contexts in order to help them understand and invest in your culture. In addition, both workouts in the Team Culture Audits are great to use with parents as well.

In general, we want to help parents focus on the process of developing their child, rather than point totals and other outcomes. You do not need to implement every workout. Choose the workout(s) that you think fit best in your culture.



WHAT'S OUR *WHY* WORKOUT

Scope: One-time 15-minute workout, best done at the beginning of the season.

Instances of conflict with parents often occur because goals and priorities are misaligned between the family member and the team, or the family member and the student-athlete. This activity is a simple way to get families to remember why they want their child to participate in athletics, understand why their child wants to be on the team, and reflect on how their actions either help or hurt that *why*.

1. Before your pre-season parent meeting, ask your players to write down why they want to be on your team. Or, put another way, what do they hope to gain by participating on your team?

Challenge your student-athletes to analyze the root of why they want to be on the team. For example, if a student-athlete writes “to win state,” ask them why it’s important to win state. What does winning state do for them? Is the season a waste if the team doesn’t win a state title?

It’s okay if players have multiple reasons. The key is getting past surface-level *whys* to their innermost reasons (such as have fun, challenge myself, be with my friends, improve physical fitness, love the sport).

2. Collect student responses and save them for your parent meeting.
3. Likewise, write down your *why* as a coach. What do you want your players to learn and experience as members of your team?
4. At your parent meeting, ask parents to write down, discuss, or reflect on why they want their child to participate on your team. What do they hope their child learns and experiences on your team?
5. Then, share what your players wrote down with their parents. Ask parents to compare their *why* to their child’s *why*. Are they aligned? Are they in conflict?
6. Remind parents that ultimately their child gets to decide why they play, and what they hope to get from their playing experience.



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7. Tell parents that as the season progresses, they should reflect on their child's **why** and make choices that support that **why**. Simply ask, "Is what I'm about to do or say going to make it easier or harder for my child to be a good teammate, have fun, etc.?"
8. Finally, share your **why** with parents. Remind them that while you are going to do your best to help your team be successful competitively, you're just as, if not more, concerned with what your players learn and experience on the team.



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PROGRAM VALUES WORKOUT

Scope: One-time 10-minute activity that can be referenced and utilized throughout the season.

Families can't support your program values if they don't know what those values are. Whether in a pre-season meeting, or other setting, it's important that you share what values you teach, enforce, advocate, and model in your program.

1. Share your program values with parents during your pre-season meeting, or whenever you deem it appropriate. Explain how and why those values were chosen and what they look like in your program.

Note: You may want your student-athletes to share this information with parents. It's powerful for parents to hear their child explain what values they've committed to demonstrating.

2. Explain that these values serve multiple purposes.
 - a. First, values guide decision-making on your team. If integrity, teamwork, or effort are values on your team, your decisions should demonstrate integrity, teamwork, or effort.
 - b. Second, demonstrating your values makes it more likely that your team will be successful in competitions. For example, it is more likely that your team will be successful if they demonstrate teamwork, discipline, etc.
 - c. Third, while dribbling, running, shooting, or defensive skills will eventually become irrelevant in student-athletes' lives, respect, work ethic, and toughness are values that will serve them for the rest of their life.
3. After sharing your values, ask parents to support the development of these values by:
 - a. Rather than asking their child, "How did practice go, how many minutes did you play, or what was your stat line," parents can ask:



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- i. On a scale from 1-10, how well did you demonstrate [insert value] today?
 - ii. Which value did you demonstrate really well today? How did you demonstrate it?
 - iii. What could you do better or differently tomorrow to demonstrate [insert value]?
 - iv. Which team value are you best at?
 - v. Which team value did you need to improve most?
 - vi. Which team value does your team demonstrate best? Worst? What could the team do to improve?
- b. Parents can also share how those values manifest in their lives, whether at work, at home, in relationships, or other aspects of their life so that your student-athletes can see how your values are relevant beyond the court or playing field.

Extension

Take advantage of every opportunity to get parents to focus on developing character skills and values over results like wins and points. Winning games is far more likely if your team demonstrates your values. And players are more likely to develop individually if they put skills like teamwork, discipline, work ethic, and so on into action.

Consider focusing end-of-season meetings on values, reflecting each week on how well the team or individuals demonstrated values, and perhaps even awarding student-athletes for their demonstration of values at the end-of-season banquets. Your most prestigious award could be MVP or it could be for best teammate. Both send a message. Which message do you prefer to send? What message do you want parents to receive?



GOAL MAP COMPARISON WORKOUT

It's important for families to understand what goals their child has for your sport. Otherwise, you risk unrealistic expectations, or misaligned desires, which can lead to conflict between parents and the coach, or parents and child.

1. Ask your student-athletes to complete a Goal Map (see *Work Ethic* workout) for the upcoming season. Goals should be specific and realistic, and students should be honest about their starting point relative to their goal. Student-athletes should write down all the action steps required to reach their goal, and identify how they will measure and monitor their progress.
2. Student-athletes then share their Goal Map with their coach. Coaches should evaluate whether the goal is realistic, the starting point is honest, and the identified action steps are appropriate to get from the starting point to the desired goal. Work with student-athletes to make any revisions necessary.
3. Once you've agreed on their Goal Map, ask students to sign it to demonstrate their commitment to taking the steps necessary to reach their goal. You should also sign it as a commitment to support and challenge your player as they strive to reach their goal.
4. Ask student-athletes to share their Goal Map with their parents, explaining why they selected their goal, and the action steps required to reach their goal. Student-athletes should ask their parents to sign the goal map to acknowledge that they understand and support their child's goal.
5. If at any point in the season parents have questions about why their child isn't playing, or hasn't achieved some other milestone, refer back to their Goal Map. What was their goal? Did they take all the steps necessary to achieve their goal? Often, what parents are asking about isn't in fact related to their child's goal. Or, just as likely, a student hasn't achieved their goal because they didn't take the steps necessary to reach that goal.



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At times, a student-athlete will do everything right and still not reach their goal. After all, there are only so many positions on the team, and one ball to shoot. This is an important discussion to have with student-athletes and parents. Doing everything right is no guarantee of success—true in high school and true in adulthood. While taking all the steps necessary to reach your goal doesn't guarantee goal achievement, it does guarantee improvement, and leaves the student-athlete in a better place than where they started.




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IN AND OUT OF YOUR CONTROL WORKOUT

As children grow older, one challenge all parents face is recognizing that fewer facets of their child's experience is within their control. Many parents want to control every part of their child's experience to ensure that the experience is as positive as possible. Of course, very little about athletics is within anyone's direct control, especially parents. When parents want to control something that is beyond their grasp, like officiating, tensions can mount.

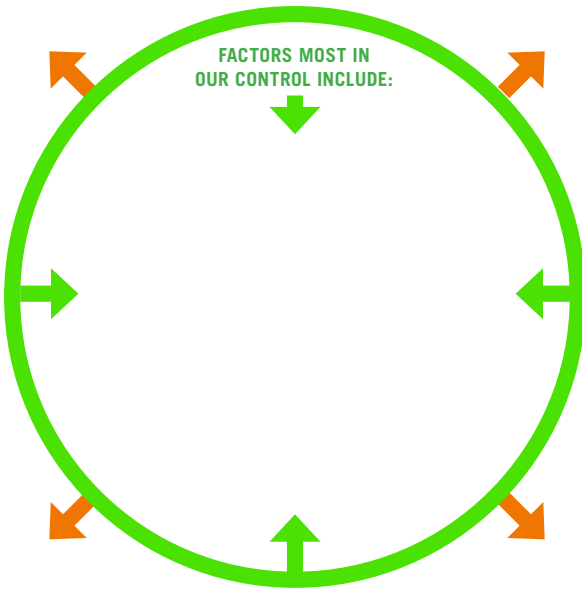
There are two ways to facilitate this activity. The first is to ask your students to complete the activity and then share the outcome with parents. The second is to ask parents to complete the activity themselves. Choose whatever is most realistic and beneficial for your team. Likewise, you can do the activity by focusing on a team goal or individual goal.



IN CONTROL OF OUR GOAL(S) SELF-STUDY

Our Goal(s): _____

THESE FACTORS MAY HAVE AN IMPACT, BUT ARE MOSTLY OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL:





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1. Present student-athletes/parents the In/Out of My Control Tool. Ask student-athletes/parents to write either a team goal or an individual goal in the blank at the top of the page.
2. Next, ask them to write down everything that's within their control to achieve the goal in the green circle. Challenge participants to really consider what they can directly affect.
3. Then, ask participants to write down everything that could impact their ability to achieve their goal, but isn't in their ability to control (officiating, field conditions, weather, play calling, etc.).
4. Ask participants to reflect on how much time they spend worrying or addressing things that aren't within their control. Energy spent on things we can't control is wasted. We should instead focus on things within our control.
 - a. For students: effort, positive attitude, teamwork, discipline, attendance, etc.
 - b. For parents: encouragement, positive attitude, etc.

A key part of this exercise for parents is the realization of how little is directly within their control, especially compared to what is within their student's control.



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IN CONTROL OF OUR GOAL(S) SELF-STUDY

Our Goal(s):

THESE FACTORS MAY HAVE AN IMPACT, BUT ARE MOSTLY OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL:

FACTORS MOST IN
OUR CONTROL INCLUDE:



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Excellence with Integrity™
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216 Fayette Street, Suite 1, Manlius, NY 13104

Phone: 315-692-8054 | email: info@ewii.org

www.ewii.org

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The Robert D. and
Billie Ray Center

2702 Forest Ave., Des Moines, IA 50311

Phone: 515-271-1910 | email: raycenter@drake.edu

TheRayCenter.org

For more information contact The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center
at 515-271-1910 or 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.