

Empowering the Iowa Girl



Leadership - Culture - Character - Performance



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Leadership. Culture. Character. Performance.

Resilience

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

Drake
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The Robert D. and
Billie Ray Center





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Contents

Introduction	5
CHAMP Approach	11
Relationship-Building Activity – Recipe for Resilience Card	14
Controlling the Controllables Workout	17
Failure Recovery Workout	22
Preference and Requirement Workout	28
Bounce Back Workout	33
Optimal Performance Self-Study – Resilience	37



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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 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

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.



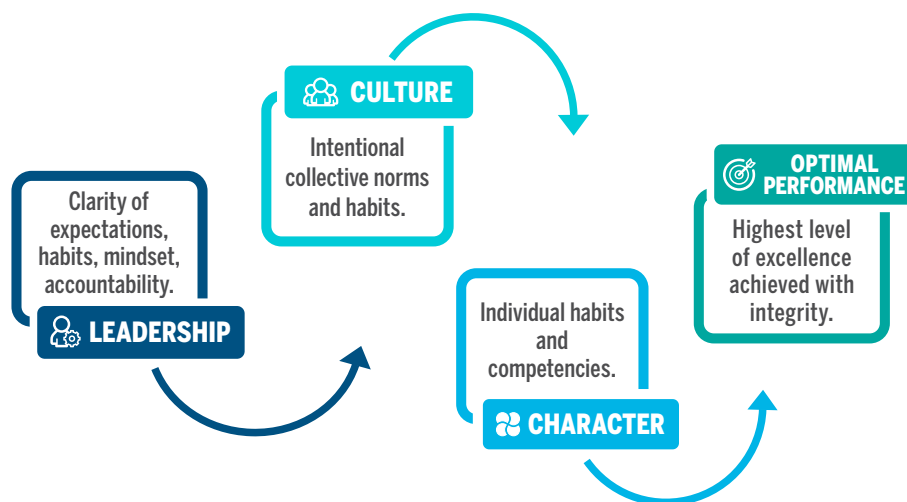
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Coaches have always known the importance of teamwork, leadership, accountability, work ethic, and resilience. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths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

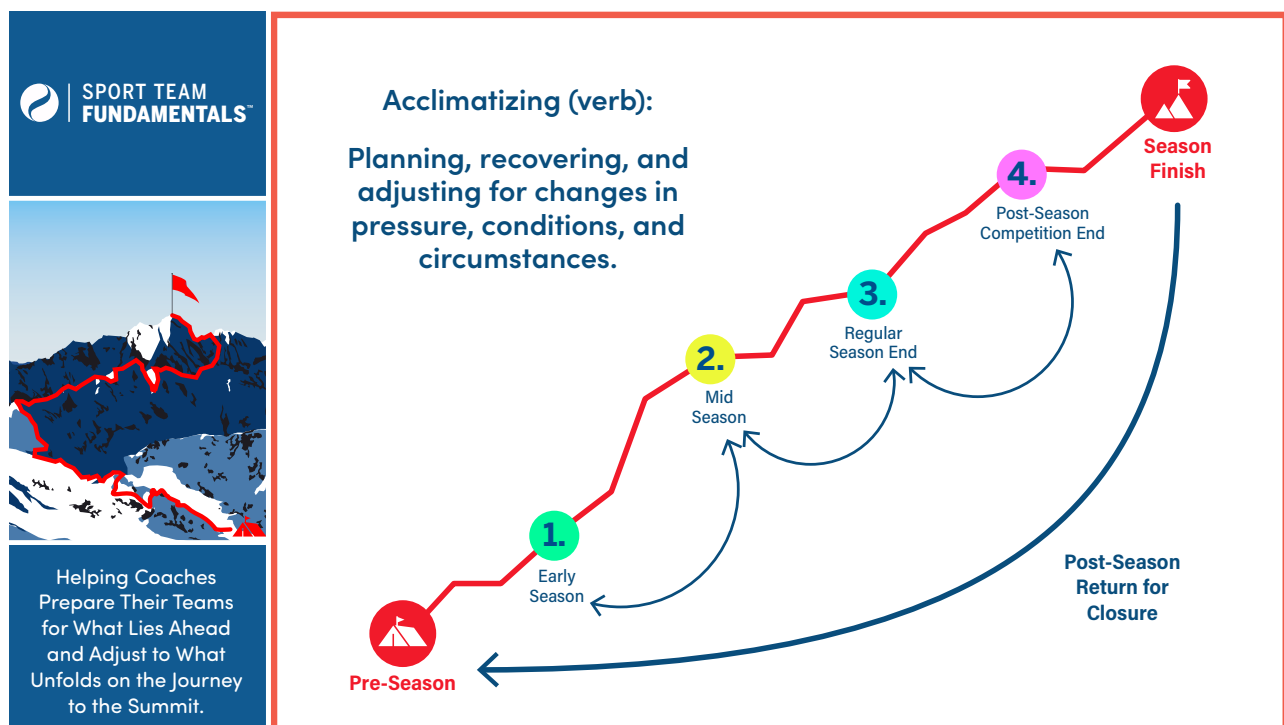




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This model helps to frame the *what* and *how* of shaping culture and character. But what is also essential is an understanding of *why* and *when*. Why are coaches shaping culture and character in competitive teams? So that teams and their team members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



CHAMP APPROACH

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

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

Second, everyone on the team must have real opportunities to practice putting resilience 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 resiliency 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): resilience 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 resilience is below, but you should use the blank CHAMP tool provided in each category to think about how you want to coach resilience on your team. To coach resilience 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. Expect failure, mistakes and adversity.
2. Resilience is about our response, becoming *response-able*.
3. Resilience isn't just our first response, but the second and third response.



HABIT

1. We practice difficult situations and uncomfortable conditions.
2. We create stress and pressure so that we get comfortable responding.
3. We create chaos and practice the unexpected.

Resilience



ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Reflect on "lesser responses".
2. Learn and plan "better responses."
3. Seek feedback, coaching, and support to strengthen skills.



MINDSET

1. Resilience is needed for our goals.
2. Resilience is developed from the pursuit of our goals.
3. Growth happens when we are tested.
4. We focus on persistence and improvement in our response.



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→ **Performance**



CLARITY



HABIT



ACCOUNTABILITY



MINDSET





RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITY – RECIPE FOR RESILIENCE CARD

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

A recipe is a list of **ingredients** along with **mixing instructions** on how to combine the ingredients to make the desired result. *A Recipe for Resilience* describes different **ingredients** (circumstances, situations, challenges) and the **mixing instructions** (how one should respond to them to produce resilience and achieve their desired results).

A **Recipe for Resilience Card** is created by each student-athlete as a reminder of what situations and circumstances make for the development of resilience, and how to properly react to develop resilience and consistently get the performance outcome they desire. The **Resilience Recipes** serve to remind ourselves and our teammates how we have overcome adversity in the past and can do it again.

The questions on the card can be adapted as you see fit. The goal is to develop a recipe for resilience drawn from our individual and collective experiences.

Activity

1. Ask each of your student-athletes to find a partner (or assign partners to maximize impact). Student-athletes can use the Handout *Recipe for Resilience* in a digital form or printed out (or just a blank card/sheet of paper).
2. Direct student-athletes to ask each other the questions on page 1 of the Handout (or give them the following questions if using a blank card):
 - What is your greatest accomplishment?
 - What significant adversity, failure, or difficult situation have you overcome?
 - What have you learned about resilience from the accomplishment shared above?
 - What have you learned about resilience from the adversities you overcame that you shared above?



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Student-athletes should write brief responses to each question on the card.

3. After student-athletes complete page 1 of the Handout (the front of the card), ask them to go to page 2 (or flip the card over). Ask student-athletes to distill the circumstances faced and required responses down into a ***Recipe for Resilience***.

For example, if their greatest accomplishment was making varsity as a sophomore and what they learned from this process was the power of self-confidence, their recipe might be: **Bold goals + unwavering self-confidence = success.**

If the adversity they endured was getting injured and they learned to be patient and keep putting in the recovery work, along with the importance of the support they got along the way, then their recipe might be: **Bad luck + patience and effort, with lots of support from parents and friends = healed body and strengthened mind.**

If opposing fans gave them fear and anxiety and got into their head, but they learned to drown it out with positive self-talk, their recipe might be: **Loud, crazy, intimidating fans + lots of positive self-talk, supportive teammates, and not worrying about anything other than next play = resilience in action.**

You will likely need to guide student-athletes through this exercise, as lessons may not be immediately obvious. You may choose to split the activity; ask student-athletes to complete the partner share and fill out the front side of the card and then save the back of the card for a later date. You can also modify the activity to ask students what overall lesson about resilience they can identify based on their responses.

*The point is to help your student-athletes recognize the circumstances where resilience is **tested** and **developed** into a replicable recipe. They are trying to distill these difficult moments into **the ingredients** and then the proper response needed to build resilience, **the mixing instructions**. Throughout this process your student-athletes will begin*



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to recognize that they have done hard things before, that doing hard things has led to some of their proudest or most important moments, and that they should be confident in their ability to overcome obstacles again.

Extension

Create opportunities to “**Create a Resilience Recipe Box or Board**” by having your student-athletes share their card with other members of the team. They can revise their recipe or add additional recipes after they have shared theirs with others and heard the recipes of others. Hearing about the ingredients (circumstances for resilience) and the mixing instructions (how to respond and use the ingredients effectively) will help embed the belief that individually and collectively they know how to face hard circumstances, respond to unforeseen difficulties, and accomplish challenging, difficult goals.



CONTROLLING THE CONTROLLABLES WORKOUT

Scope: 10-20-minute activity on identifying and responding to the controllables as an essential part of resilience.

There have been many models and examples of resilience throughout history, but Viktor Frankl literally used the worst situation one could imagine to study and later teach the science of resilience, or “logotherapy,” as he called it. Frankl showed how we could use reason to overcome the worst circumstances, and to become masters of *response-ability*.

Frankl famously said, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Put simply: things happen to us, and we can decide how to respond. Resilience is the realization that we are RESPONSE-ABLE. In the space before responding, the masters of resilience separate out strong feelings and emotions (sadness, anger, resentment about what has occurred) from how they respond in their thoughts and actions.

Coaches talk about “controlling the controllables”—but too often this fails to gain clarity and consensus within the team about what is in our control and what is outside our control. This activity forms the team habit of **responding** to the obstacles and challenges by identifying what can be controlled and learning how to respond. When a team can quickly separate what is in and out of their control, they can choose the next right response, then the next right response—for as long as is needed until they overcome the obstacles in their way. In so doing, they have developed a super-power: resilience.

Activity

1. Have student-athletes work in pairs or small groups to reflect on a common phrase used by coaches and athletes: “controlling the controllables.” What does it mean to them to “control the controllables?”
2. Then, introduce student-athletes to the quote from Viktor Frankl: “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Have stu-



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dent-athletes reflect in their pairs or small groups on how this quote applies to controlling the controllables in athletics.

3. Introduce the In Control of OUR Goals Tool, which focuses on controllables at the team level (the individual level version of the tools follows).



IN CONTROL OF OUR GOAL(S) SELF-STUDY

Our Goal(s): _____

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



4. Have the team identify some upcoming goals; this could be for the entire season or an upcoming competition. Select one goal and write it in the blank at the top of the page.



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5. Next, ask the groups to write down everything that's within our control to achieve the goal in the green circle. Challenge student-athletes to really consider what we can directly affect (i.e., what's really in our control).
6. Then, ask student-athletes to write down everything that could impact their ability to achieve their goal, but isn't in our control. This could include officiating, field conditions, weather, play calling, etc.
7. Ask student-athletes to reflect on why worrying about or trying to change things that aren't within their control poses a serious threat to achieving their goals. This could include loss of energy, loss of hope, undermining team morale, distraction from responding to what is in their control, etc.
8. Reflect as a group to identify the things that are always in our control, our response-ability for things like effort, attitude, persistence, flexibility and encouragement of one another. We can respond positively, consistently, and repeatedly to achieve our goals if we can first take a pause between stimulus and response, then go after what's in our control instead of focusing on things that are outside of our control.




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Extension 1:

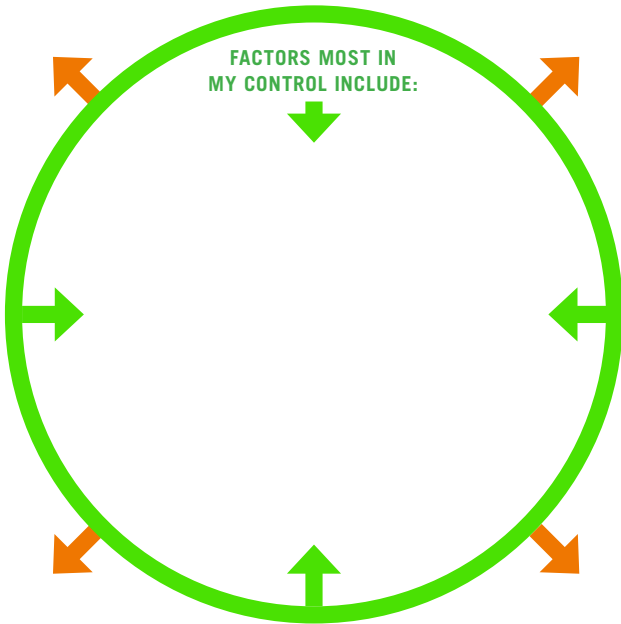
Introduce the In Control of MY Goal Tool, which focuses on controllables at the individual level. Have student-athletes think about the team goals and then focus on their role/circumstances and have them identify a personal goal and what is in and out of their control as individuals.

**TOOLS**[®]

IN CONTROL OF MY GOAL SELF-STUDY

My Goal(s): _____

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



FACTORS MOST IN MY CONTROL INCLUDE:



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Extension 2:

Show your student-athletes the E60 video, Will Power, which can be found at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/ESPN/videos/e60-willpower/266156237986572/>.

In this video, high school wrestler Willie Burton, who has cerebral palsy, loses every match until he finally wins at the end of his senior year.

At the conclusion of the video, ask your team how Willie generally demonstrated resilience, and specifically showed the ability to focus on what's in his control and to let go of what's not in his control. Then, ask your team to identify and reflect on the challenges they are struggling to overcome, individually or collectively. Ask what they can do to be resilient in the face of those challenges, and how they can show up to encourage and support one another.



FAILURE RECOVERY WORKOUT

Scope: 20-30 minutes for the complete activity, but then can be practiced throughout the season.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Nothing worth having comes easy.” Achieving our most ambitious goals will require resilience. Resilience can be defined as: our **response-ability**, our ability to choose our mental, emotional, and physical response to repeated challenges and failures until we adapt, persevere, and eventually overcome whatever stands between us and the realization of our goals.

A famous quote says, “Nobody plans to fail, they just fail to plan.” In this workout, your team will plan to fail. Why? Because any team or person striving for anything that is the least bit challenging, rare, or valuable **will** encounter adversity and experience failure. As the engineering maxim states: “failure is a feature” of growth and eventually success. Facing and embracing and planning for failure will give your team an aligned ambition so that they expect to face failure and adversity, and are prepared and ready to respond.

Help student-athletes to see and understand the difference between failure and regret. Regrets creep in when we’re so afraid of failing that we’re not bold enough and we play it safe or hide from the most audacious challenges. You can fail and have no regrets. You can succeed and have lots of regrets.

And, as part of this workout, your team will have a plan for when they encounter adversity or failure. In this workout, your team will create a failure recovery system—a plan for how we will respond **when** we face adversity. Developing and implementing a failure recovery system can help the team move quickly from panicked distress back to motivating, productive, “good stress.” The ability to recover from failure quickly so that we can continue moving towards our goals is sometimes the biggest difference between success and failure.



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LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR SHAPING CULTURE



The Coaching Optimal Performance, or CHAMP, Tool is an exceptional framework for creating a failure recovery plan for your team so that they can be resilient in the face of adversity.



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Activity

1. In pairs or small groups ask your team to discuss:

- What is resilience and why is it important?
- When have they demonstrated resilience in their lives?
- Where and when will our team specifically need resilience?
- Where will they likely experience failure, mistakes, boredom, frustration and adversity that will require resilience? (mistakes, missteps, misfortune—in competition, practice, etc.).

The reflection can be used for the whole season, an upcoming game, stretch of games, or for the remainder of a season.

2. Remind your team that they **will** face challenges, make mistakes, and likely experience failure during the course of any competition or season. Many people quit in the face of repeated failures, but those who are successful plan for and learn from their mistakes and recover from failure so that they can continue working toward their goal.

Thus, as a team, you are going to create a failure recovery system so that when an individual makes a mistake, they know precisely what to do and think to recover from that error. The system consists of four parts, represented on the CHAMP tool:

- **Clarity** – expectations of what we intend to think, say, and do when we fail.
- **Habits** – what we do better or differently when we experience failure.
- **Mindset** – why we embrace failure, and how we use it to make us stronger and more resilient.
- **Accountability** – how we hold ourselves and our teammates accountable to our expectations, habits, and beliefs about the role of resilience in achieving our goals.



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3. Play the following video clip of National Championship winning softball coach Sue Enquist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZPv3en9iYU>.

Mindset: Watch 6:05-10:05

- At the conclusion of the video, ask your student-athletes to share with a partner what their *weak* voice sounds like. Then, ask them what their *strong* voice sounds like.
- Once your team has had an opportunity to share, discuss what strong voice mindset the team should have when a mistake is made or failure occurs.
- Write their reflections in the Mindset box of the CHAMP tool.

Clarity: Watch 10:05-13:10

- In this section, Sue suggests a model to help coaches be an engineer of belief. The model is designed to help her student-athletes feel confident in their ability to be successful. In other words, she is clearly communicating her expectations and confidence in the student-athlete.
- Ask your team to clarify when and how they will productively respond when failure occurs so that they can move forward and remain confident.
- Write those expectations in the Clarity box.

Habit: Watch 15:45-17:28

- In this portion of the video, Sue describes the failure recovery system for her softball team. When a mistake was made, her team did three things:
 - » Own the mistake (the throw was bad, I swung at a bad pitch).
 - » Take responsibility (my bad).
 - » Call for the next play (two outs, plays at first).



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- Ask your team what actions they should take when they make a mistake. Examples for different sports are below.
 - » Soccer: pick a blade of grass and throw it over your shoulder (put the mistake behind me)
 - » Basketball: step off the free throw line, high five a teammate, step back on the line
 - » Golf: take additional practice swings until it feels right again
- Write those actions in the Habit box.

Accountability

- Ask student-athletes how they will hold each other accountable to the failure recovery play. Examples would include:
 - » Pre-game visualization when we will likely get tested and how we commit to use our mistake rituals.
 - » Post-game/match *praise* when we did recover well, and *polish* when we slipped or didn't put our expectations or habits into action.
 - » Write their directions in the Accountability box.



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Extension

Design opportunities to practice your failure recovery plan during the week. Sue described making a drill harder, increasing the likelihood that her student-athletes would make a mistake and thus have to implement the failure recovery play. Find places in your practice plan where your team can do the same.

You may also decide to track how well student-athletes use the failure recovery system by noting when they do and do not use it. Or, ask your team to reflect on how well they are following the failure recovery system by rating themselves on a scale of 1-10. Research shows that our brains are primed to recognize negative things, like our faults and failures. What we're trying to rewire for our teams is their ability to respond—the positive ***response-ability***. Our mantra and mindset might be something like, “To err is human, to recover divine!” We forget perfect and just learn to become “fast at failing” and “rapid at recovery.” The greatest performers are the most resilient and relentless, learning from the past and focusing on the future.



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PREFERENCE AND REQUIREMENT WORKOUT

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

One reason student-athletes struggle with resilience is they confuse their preferences for requirements on the journey to achieving their goals. In this workout you are working on finding ways to help your team understand that our preferences seem rational because they usually reflect the ideal way that we'd like things to go. There is no problem in preferring the ideal, having an idea in your mind of how you hope or prefer things to unfold—except that it rarely happens that way in sport or life! In sport and life, **the ideal is rarely real!** And our preferences become a weakness when we mistakenly and irrationally allow ourselves to conclude that if things don't unfold according to our idealized, preferred (and often perfectionist) plan, then all is lost and we falsely conclude that we *cannot* achieve our goals.

When our preferences—the ideal that we created in our minds—become what *absolutely must* happen, then we undermine resilience (our *response-ability* to whatever unfolds). We link our preferences to an absolute: this **must** happen this way, **or else!** We create these preferences and then we convince ourselves that things must absolutely happen in this idealized, perfectionist way we envisioned. But most of our preferences for ourselves and for our team are **not** required for success in reaching our goals. When our preferred plan doesn't unfold, it may require more time, energy, grit, and sacrifice, but we usually still have lots of response-ability available to us.

In this workout, your team will learn to identify our often-unspoken preferences and learn how these preferences go from what we might prefer to what we start to believe must absolutely happen, **or else!** Rationality and resilience help us separate preferences from requirements so that we can develop *response-ability* to whatever might unfold on the journey to achieve our goals.

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/1040485077/660315bdb7>



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Activity

1. Start by simply introducing the idea of preferences versus requirements. You can adapt/adopt some version of the following and/or use the video provided to introduce the idea.

Imagine if a warrior preferred to battle in really delicate, expensive garments. Then the warrior grows *really* attached to wearing these garments, and values them so much that the warrior really prefers not to damage or destroy them. Then this warrior (whose goal or requirement is to win in battle) starts to believe that these delicate, expensive, valuable garments *absolutely must not* be damaged while battling. This obviously creates a weakness: the warrior now *must* survive and just *cannot* allow the precious, delicate garments to get damaged. For a warrior, winning in battle is the goal, but a preference about what to wear becomes another goal, another warrior requirement, which ends up making the warrior weak and unfocused. Silly example, except many competitors bring or wear their preferences into competition, which undermines resilience and response-ability!

Having preferences isn't bad. In fact, humans are basically preference-making machines! Think about your preferences about how a class will go, what teachers do in class, what friends think, say, or do... We most definitely have a lot of preferences.

Players prefer to start, and teams prefer to have the lead, not lose a game, not have a penalty or call go against them, not have hostile fans, etc. We value and protect these preferences as if our lives and success depend on them happening as we have envisioned. In reality, most of our idealized perfectionist preferences are not required for our success in achieving our goals.

In competition and in life, our preferences are problematic and they make our psyche fragile because we start to *believe*—even ***demand***—that our preferences must happen... or else! When or if our preferred, ideal plans don't unfold as we desired, then we conclude that all is lost, we have



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lost, and our failure is now inevitable. I don't simply prefer that things go a certain way, they *absolutely must, or else!* In the "*absolutely must, or else*" mantra, we find unrealistic, absolutist, perfectionist preferences acting as *demands/threats*. These demands trigger fear, uncertainty, and doubt, and steal our presence, confidence, and joy—and our resilience, or response-ability.

A resilient team must be able to rationally identify what is a preference and how to rationally refute that preference to show ourselves that it may be desired, but it is *not required* for success in achieving our goals. Shattering the illusion of our idealized preferences reveals to us a different path, which may also be a longer path—a harder path, more sacrifice, persistence, hope, and trust.

In our workout as a team, we're going to learn to identify our preferences, and start to identify the hidden "*must, or else*" demands/threats hidden in them. If we learn to dismantle preferences, we can empower our resilience—our response-ability.

2. Start the activity by identifying a team goal. It could be to win the next game, win conference, go to state, win a championship, or any other goal your team is pursuing.
3. Then, split your team into groups of about four people and ask them to brainstorm what they hope and would prefer will ideally unfold as they pursue that goal.

Examples of Monday's basketball game: prefer if we start fast and are up 10, prefer if their student section doesn't show up, prefer if we didn't get that terrible referee, prefer if we didn't get into foul trouble.

4. Ask each group to share their list and write each suggestion on a whiteboard or chart paper so the group can see all of the team's preferences.
5. Then, have the groups take their preferences and turn them into a ***must...or else!***



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You may need to work through a couple of examples all together, showing how these preferences become a ***must, or else!***

For example:

- “I prefer to start the game” becomes “I MUST ABSOLUTELY START, OR ELSE!”
- “We prefer to get only favorable calls from the referees” means/becomes “WE MUST ABSOLUTELY GET THE RIGHT CALLS, OR ELSE!”

The process is meant to be an exaggeration, because that’s what our preferences are: exaggerated, emotional, irrational beliefs. So, have some fun with making these ***must, or else!*** demands a REALLY BIG DEAL!

6. Now, take the ***must, or else!*** from each preference and bring a rational and resilience mindset to each one by bringing in the ***or else what?***

For example:

- “I prefer to start the game” becomes “I MUST ABSOLUTELY START, OR ELSE!” Or else what, really and truly? You cannot perform? You will quit? You will die? Or, you will come off the bench and be ready to perform? You will cheer and clap and talk, so that when you come off the bench, you’re ready to go. You will look to impact 100% of the minutes you’re in the game. You will become the most valuable reserve on our team. You will put in the extra work to become a starter. You will learn how to be a reserve and a starter, which will make you more valuable on your next team or at the next level of competition.
 - “We prefer to get only favorable calls from the referees” means/becomes “WE MUST ABSOLUTELY GET THE RIGHT CALLS, OR ELSE!” Or else what? The game is over? We will crumble into pieces? Surrender? Or, we will develop a team ritual that moves us to next play. We will teach our parents and fans to think (and chant) “NEXT PLAY. NEXT PLAY. NEXT PLAY”—and NOT “REF, YOU SUCK!”
7. Finally, look to see if there are any preferences from the original list that turned out to truly be requirements—actually required for our success. Then, ask your



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student-athletes to list the strengths of character and culture that are truly required for success in being rational and resilient as they face the imperfect circumstances and situations that unfold in pursuit of our goals. For example: acceptance, honesty, hope, trust, flexibility, effort, attitude, persistence.

8. Conclude by reminding your team that “perfect day players”—no matter how talented they are—never reach their full potential because very rarely are conditions-perfect. *Remember: ideal ain’t real!*

“Perfect day” teams face the same problem. Not every practice or game is going to go exactly the way we want it to go. Resilient teams are rational teams who aren’t defined by their emotions or disappointment when things don’t go their preferred way. Resilient teams understand the difference between preferences and requirements. We prefer to play in nice weather, but it’s not critical to achieve our goal. We prefer to play our toughest opponents at home, but it’s not required. What is required are the strengths of character and culture we just identified, because these are what make us *response-able*.

Extension

After completing this activity as a team, ask student-athletes to complete the same reflection for themselves and an individual goal they have for the season. What do they hope happens in pursuit of their goal? What is truly necessary for them to achieve their goal?



BOUNCE BACK WORKOUT

Scope: 10-15 minutes as a pre-season or post-season activity that can be referred to consistently throughout the season.

Every day every team faces some adversity. There are practices where nothing seems to go right, or where student-athletes stumble through every drill. There are games where the opposing team goes on a run and all the momentum of the game is wearing the other jersey.

If we know these moments will happen, then it's worth preparing for them by developing a "Bounce Back" plan and practicing it regularly so the team knows what to do when adversity strikes.

Activity

1. Split your team into small groups and ask them to brainstorm the different types of adversity they are likely to face during a season.
2. Ask each group to share their list with the entire team. Combine responses into a single list on a whiteboard or chart paper.
3. Introduce the Emotional Toughness Indicators Tool to your team. Then, ask groups to connect their list of likely adversities to an emotional toughness indicator that will be needed or put to test.



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EMOTIONAL TOUGHNESS INDICATORS

1. Emotional Flexibility

- » Being aware of one's emotional state and how it changes in response to the situation. Identifying unproductive emotional states, such as defensiveness, loss of confidence, anger, and others.
- » Understanding the need and ways to switch from non-productive states to a productive emotional state.

2. Emotional Responsiveness

- » Choosing a positive response in the face of unpleasant or unproductive emotions. Changing one's emotional state by smiling, joking, yelling, visualizing success, engaging in positive self-talk, cheering on teammates, clapping hands, jumping up and down, and so on.
- » NOT withdrawing, going through the motions, giving up, or giving in.

3. Emotional Resiliency

- » Being able to take a punch emotionally and bounce back quickly. Bending but not breaking in the face of adversity.
- » Recovering quickly from disappointments, failure, mistakes, insults, or embarrassment. Flushing, forgetting, and quickly refocusing on the present and whatever is directly in one's control.

4. Emotional Strength

- » Using past experiences to develop a high tolerance for hard times, tough situations, and difficult odds.
- » Intentionally developing a confident, unflappable, unwavering, been-here-before, never-quit, never-die attitude.

Adapted from Jim Loehr (1995).

4. Introduce the Coach K Quote: "We're not strong alone." Explain that while it is important that every team member shows personal responsibility for identifying and responding to adversity, we are not strong enough when each of us is trying individually to monitor and respond. That is why we want to create **a team bounce ritual**: a way for us to collectively monitor and respond when we are struggling, in a rut, and facing some of the inevitable adversities we expect to face.



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5. Then, ask your team to think about a ritual, a mantra, an action—something the team can do that will help them adopt the necessary mindset and take the right action to overcome the adversity. For example:
 - One high school girls' basketball team adopted the mantra “hakuna matata.” This line from the movie *The Lion King* means “no worries.” Every time the team faced a challenge, they would say “hakuna matata.” It not only made them laugh or smile, but it reminded them to focus on the next play.
 - A golf team adopted the mindset that “every shot is data,” to remind themselves to be less focused on the result and more focused on the process. In other words, the location of that shot tells me I need to adjust my stance, pick a different club, or bend my knee more.
 - A football team “shakes it up” by fist bumping or shaking hands with teammates before and after every practice to remind each other that they're all in it together, and before every series during games to reinforce that they have each other's back.

In sport psychology it is argued that “mood follows action.” So, when we **feel** demoralized and frustrated, like we have no hope, then we must **talk and act** with confidence and camaraderie. We're not strong alone, and mood follows action, so the *team bounce routine* makes our whole team aware of the adversities we expect to face and be at the ready to show by our actions that we are *response-able*!

6. Continuously visualize as a team when you're likely to need to bounce back—in this practice, workout, competition, situation, etc. Work on getting the team to recognize and respond, without coaches needing to always see it and request it first.



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Extension

Integrate your Bounce Back plan with the Failure Recovery system developed in the Failure Recovery workout. The Bounce Back plan can be the Habit you develop in order to be resilient when adversity strikes.



OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE SELF-STUDY – RESILIENCE

Scope: 5 minutes.

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:

- Student-athletes could evaluate their own resilience or overall team resilience.
- Coaches could also fill out the reflection to evaluate the resilience skills 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. The goal is to improve our *response-abilities*, so this is all “just data” that we can study and improve upon.

Activity

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



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RESILIENCE 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) ... identifying what is and is not within my control, and focusing my energy and effort on what I can control.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) ... learning from mistakes and failures and applying that knowledge to help me in my next attempt.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) ... failing fast and **not** dwelling on my mistakes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4) ... putting my best effort into every attempt, even when I've fallen short on previous tries.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5) ... being honest and realistic about my current state and confident in my ability to improve.

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 **resilience**:



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Excellence with Integrity™
INSTITUTE

216 Fayette Street, Suite 1, Manlius, NY 13104

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

www.ewii.org

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a registered trademark of the Excellence with Integrity Institute.



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.