

Empowering the **Iowa Girl**



Leadership - Culture - Character - Performance



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Leadership. Culture. Character. Performance.

Work Ethic

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

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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.



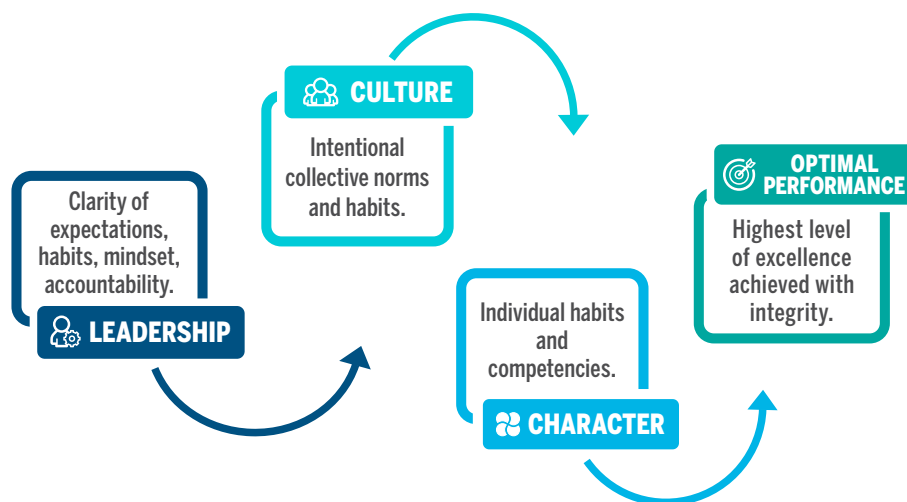
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Coaches have always known the importance of teamwork, leadership, accountability, work ethic, and resilience. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths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

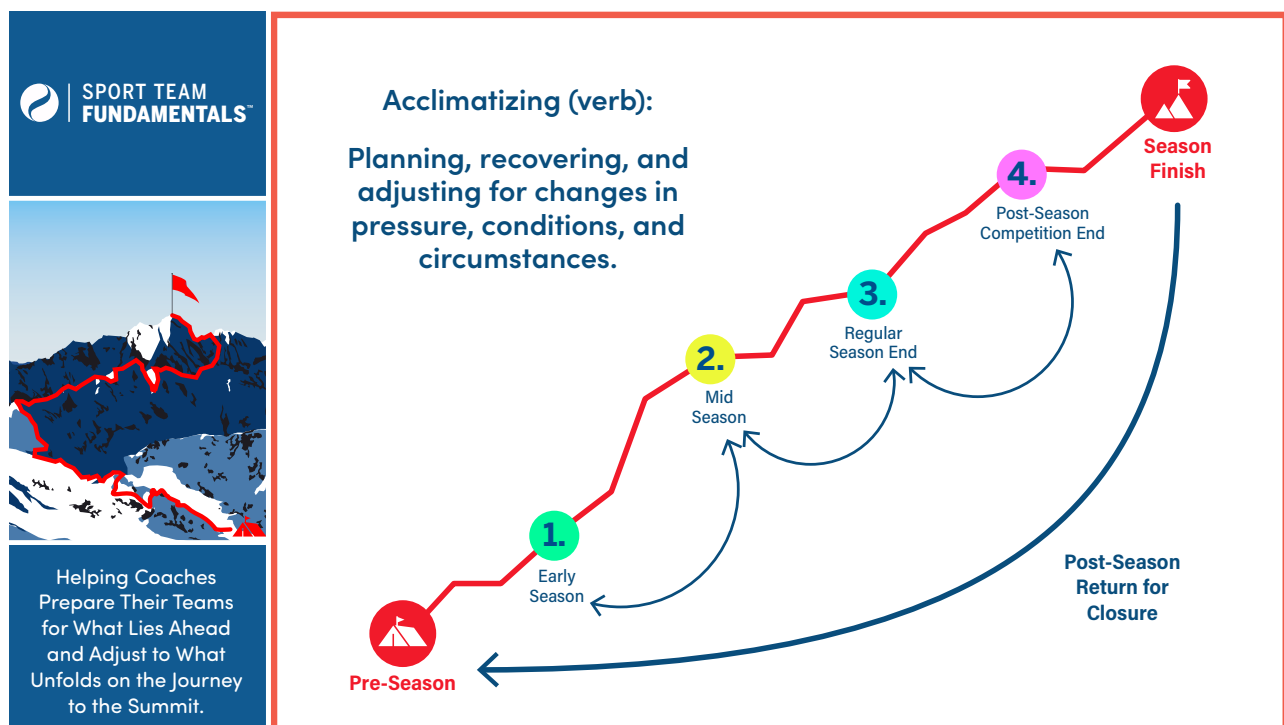




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This model helps to frame the *what* and *how* of shaping culture and character. But what is also essential is an understanding of *why* and *when*. Why are coaches shaping culture and character in competitive teams? So that teams and their team members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

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

Second, everyone on the team must have real opportunities to practice putting work ethic 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 work ethic 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): work ethic is important to **us, our team**, and for achieving **our goals**—but it won't happen easily or without some effort and persistence!

A sample CHAMP tool for communication is below, but you should use the blank CHAMP tool provided in each category to think about how you want to coach resilience on your team. To coach work ethic 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. Demonstrating an attitude of determination and dedication.
2. Doing the things we don't want to do when we don't want to do it.
3. NOT taking shortcuts or the easy way out.



HABIT

1. Practice doing the worst first (start with most difficult, end with easy).
2. Keep track of counts and clocks.

Work Ethic



ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Measure and share Rate of Perceived Effort (RPE).
2. Use partners to push and pull each other.



MINDSET

1. Our work ethic (how we work) isn't a sometimes thing.
2. The way we do anything is the way we do everything.
3. How we do our work shows who we are.



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



CLARITY



HABIT



ACCOUNTABILITY



MINDSET





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RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING ACTIVITY – ONE-ON-ONE

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

One-on-One is a simple relationship-building game that can be done in a variety of environments and can incorporate any questions you like. The questions below are focused on work ethic.

Sample Questions

- Do agree or disagree with the statement, “Talent is overrated”? Why?
- Describe someone who may not have demonstrated much talent (e.g., struggled in school, wasn’t a great athlete, etc.) but ultimately became successful. How did that individual become successful?
- Do agree or disagree with the quote, “Hard work beats talent when talent won’t work hard”? Why?
- Is it possible to work too hard? Explain your answer.
- How do you balance hard work and physical, emotional, and mental recovery?
- What could you do better or differently to demonstrate better work ethic?

Activity

1. Ask everyone on your team to find a partner.
2. Choose one of the following activity formats and give your student-athletes the directions for the format you chose.
 - a. Students will stay with their partner for the duration of the activity and answer the question(s) posed by the coach. This structure works well if you want to engage in some relationship building while on the bus. After each game, partner your students on the bus and give them questions to discuss regarding their individual and team performance during the game. Or, ask them to answer other questions you have prepared.



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- b. Put a list of questions on the whiteboard or projector screen. Tell students they can choose any question to ask their partner. Once their partner responds, their partner will select and ask a question, which is then answered. Then students find a new partner and repeat the process (they can choose the same question or a different one each time) until you determine the activity is complete.
 - c. Once students are partnered up, ask them a question to discuss. Once they've answered the question, tell them to find a new partner and ask a different question. Repeat until you want to end the activity.
3. One-on-One is a very simple relationship-building activity that can be repeated regularly to continue building and enhancing relationships. Coaches should also participate in the activity with their student-athletes. Make sure student-athletes are partnering with different individuals in order to build relationships across the team.

Extension

Share questions with parents to ask their student-athletes, or provide questions to student-athletes to ask their parents. Engaging parents with questions about teamwork, work ethic, leadership, and other values and character traits you're trying to develop can help parents and families understand what your team is teaching beyond the mechanics of the game.



WORK ETHIC ACTIVITY WORKOUT – GALLERY WALK

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

Activity

1. Ask student-athletes to create a list of traits that are related to hard work. Examples could include: persistence, diligence, discipline, determination, perseverance, grit, and so on. You may also choose to provide your own list of words instead.
2. Choose five or six words from the list. Write one of the words on the top of a sheet of chart paper. Do this for each word you've selected.
3. Split student-athletes into groups, one group for each sheet of chart paper.
4. Ask student-athletes to draw a vertical line down the center of the chart paper.
5. Direct students to write on the left side of the line examples of what the word at the top of the chart paper looks like when it is put into action on your team. Clarify that you want specific actions, not broad statements.
6. Then, ask students to write why each behavior matters on the right side of the line.
7. Once students have had a few minutes to discuss and write down their ideas, instruct groups to rotate to the next sheet of chart paper. Direct them to read what the previous group wrote and add anything they think is important to the list.
8. Rotate groups and continue on until each group has visited each sheet of chart paper, or groups are no longer able to think of anything new to add to the list.

At the conclusion of the activity, review the behaviors students wrote down for each word and why they matter. Often, students believe they are working hard and it isn't until tangible, concrete standards for work ethic are set that students truly understand what is expected of them.



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Extension

Use the standards you have created as part of your daily reflection, just as you do on the optimal performance reflections included in these workouts. Ask students to evaluate and score themselves on each behavior on a scale from one to ten. Then, ask them what they can do better or differently to demonstrate better work ethic the next day.



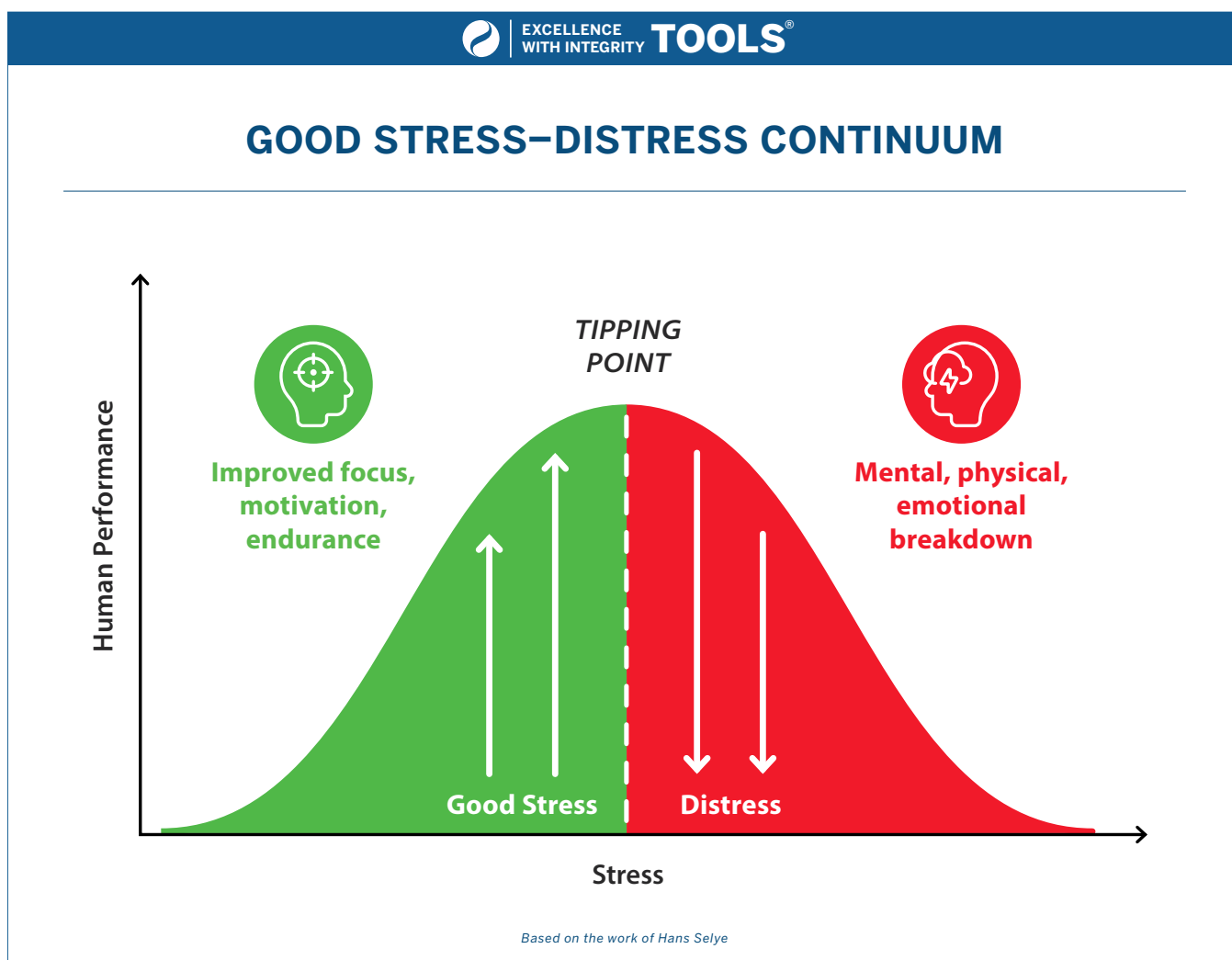
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STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKOUT

Scope: 15-20 minutes for the complete activity, but then it can be done daily in less than five minutes throughout the season.

Character traits like grit, drive, and work ethic are critical for competitors trying to maximize their potential. However, left unchecked, the good stress and challenges we need to improve our performance can lead to distress, which diminishes our performance and can threaten our mental health.





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In this workout, your team will identify good stress, distress, and the tipping point between the two. An awareness of how we are experiencing stress individually and collectively, and an acknowledgement of that stress, can help student-athletes move from struggling in solitude to finding solidarity and support among their teammates, allowing them to overcome challenges and struggles more quickly and healthily, and to continue the pursuit of our goals.

The key to pursuing long-term goals is to exert a level of passion that keeps us focused and energized, without pushing us over the tipping point into mental or physical distress. While we often think of stress as something bad, in fact stress is normal, natural, and even helpful. Good stress is needed to strengthen our muscles, and improve our focus, endurance, and persistence. In many ways, the goal of practice is to put student-athletes into good stress by challenging them to develop a new shot, run a faster time, learn a new defense, and so on. While not all good stress is welcome—few people enjoy running gassers, for example—it's important to recognize that hard work should produce good stress and some discomfort.

There is, however, a tipping point where one can work too hard, attempt too much, where good stress turns to distress that leads to physical and/or emotional breakdown.

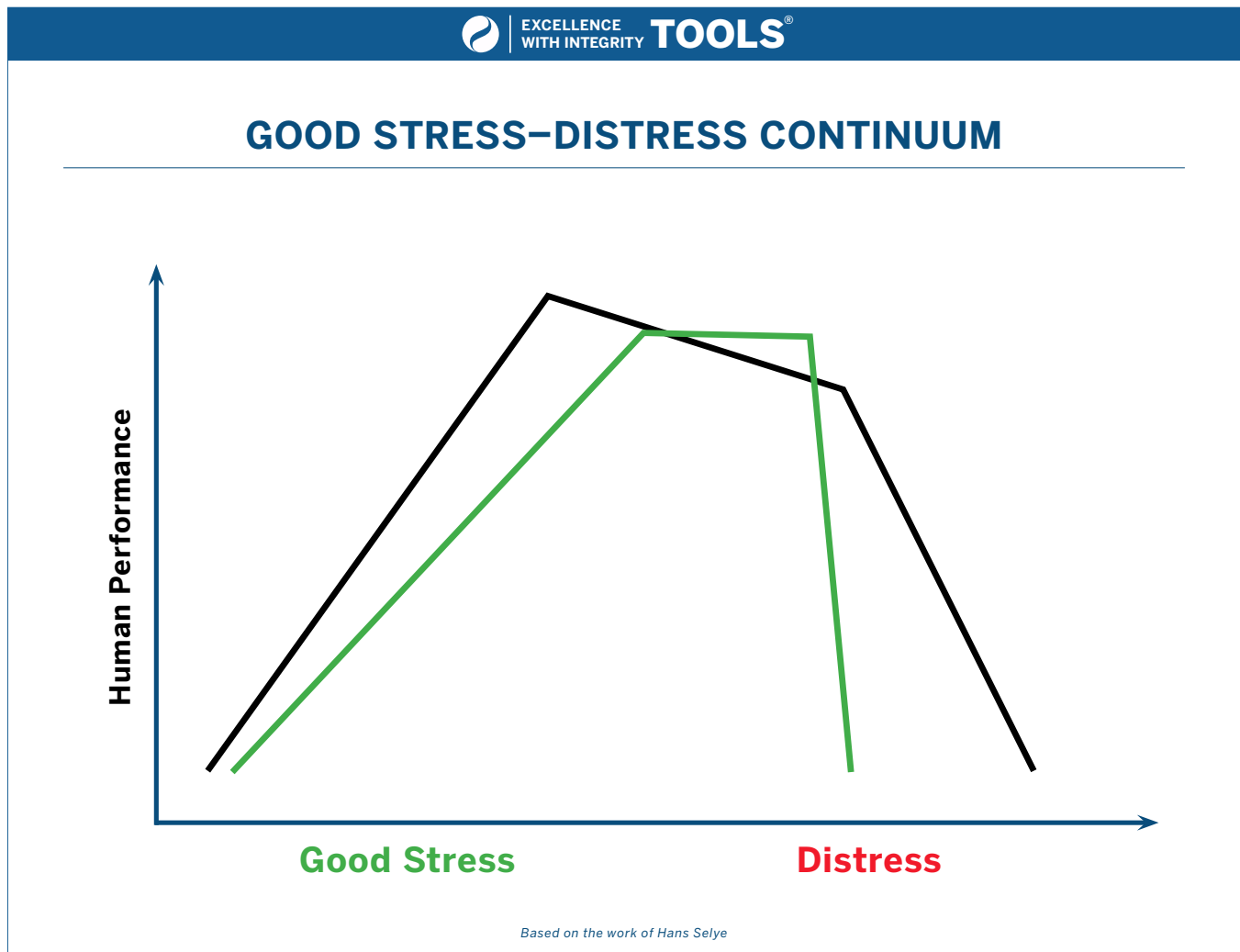
1. In pairs or small groups ask your team to share:
 - a. What is good stress in their lives? (Reminder: good stress isn't always welcomed stress, but that doesn't mean it's not good).
 - b. What causes distress in their lives?
 - c. How do they know when they have crossed from good stress into distress?
 - d. How do they respond to distress? (Isolate? Burn the midnight oil? Eat a pint of ice cream?)
2. Everyone experiences stress a little differently. In fact, very few of us experience stress as a bell curve, with a gradual, rounded ascent up good stress, and a gradual descent down into distress. Ask student-athletes to draw their own stress continuum to illustrate how they experience stress.



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- a. The example below shows two different stress curves. The green line shows the stress curve for an individual whose performance improves as they experience more stress until they reach a point where their performance levels off. Here, increased stress doesn't yet cause distress, but it doesn't improve performance either. Once they cross the tipping point into distress, they fall off a cliff. The black line represents someone who doesn't level off at any point, but whose performance doesn't diminish as quickly when in distress. There are no right or wrong answers. The point is to recognize how each individual experiences stress.





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3. Managing stress is much easier when we can rely on the support of teammates during stressful times. In order for teammates to provide that support, your team must determine a way for individuals to safely and consistently communicate their stress level. A few suggestions that will help integrate this into your daily culture:
 - a. Draw the stress curve on the whiteboard and ask student-athletes as they enter the locker room to put their initials on the curve to indicate their stress on that day. Even if you don't know what is causing their stress, having an awareness of who is experiencing good stress or distress can help everyone on the team provide the support needed.
 - b. When student-athletes arrive at practice, ask them to give a percentage that indicates their stress level. Knowing who is at 80% or 20% can help you provide the right support. Some teams state that they must commit to giving 100% of our percentage each day (100% of your 20%) as a way to acknowledge that no one is at their best every day, but we must bring the best we can.
 - c. Use a stoplight system as a way for student-athletes to indicate where they are on the stress curve.

Extension

Research shows that our brains are primed to recognize negative things, like our faults and failures. However, research also shows that if we can train our brains to focus on the positive, we can become more productive and better capable of overcoming new challenges.

One simple way to train our brains to be more positive is to share three things you are grateful for each day. Two important notes: First, participants must share something they are grateful for that is **specific** to that day. For example, saying, "I'm grateful for my mom" is not specific to that day. Saying, "I'm grateful for my mom because I forgot my homework assignment at home and she brought it to me at school so I could get credit for the assignment," is a good, specific answer. Second, to train your brain to look for the positive, you can practice three gratitudes **every day**. Find time every day to have your student-athletes think about and share three things for which they are grateful.



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GROW-AND-LET-GO WORKOUT

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

The single most important thing in our control as it relates to work ethic is how we respond to challenges and obstacles in our path. Carol Dweck's work on mindset further demonstrates the critical role our mindset plays in overcoming obstacles so we can continue working towards long-term success. In short, whether we approach and respond to feedback, mistakes, challenges, and effort with a fixed or growth mindset determines in large part how or whether we will keep working through challenges.

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/1001945604/a11669d257>



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GROWTH CONTINUUM

Our response to **EFFORT**, **CHALLENGES**, **MISTAKES**, and **FEEDBACK** determines how we perform!



When we respond ...

... by focusing on not losing, looking bad, or making mistakes, believing abilities are something we are born with, and that we **CANNOT** change, develop, or grow:



By not putting in the EFFORT



By fearing and avoiding CHALLENGES



By being ashamed/afraid of MISTAKES



By resenting and resisting FEEDBACK

We experience anxiety and doubt, mental and physical breakdowns, more fatigue, less enjoyment, and more performance ruts and failures!

... by focusing on the process of getting better, believing that abilities are built through practice and new challenges, and that we **CAN** change, develop, and grow:



By giving diligent EFFORT



By embracing CHALLENGES



By building on MISTAKES



By valuing FEEDBACK

We experience more joy, presence, and focus, higher productivity and pride in our accomplishments, higher performance outputs and more performance breakthroughs. **We achieve Excellence with Integrity!**



Based on the work of Carol S. Dweck (2006)

Ask your team to reflect on your collective approach to effort, challenges, mistakes, and feedback during a specific time or event. Examples may include: during the previous game or practice, throughout pre-season practices, the previous week, during conference play, or any other time or event you choose. A sample of the Growth Continuum Reflection is below.



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GROWTH CONTINUUM REFLECTION

Reflect on your/our approach to **Effort**, **Challenges**, **Mistakes**, and **Feedback** during a specific situation, time, or event:

Situation, Time, or Event:

This week's practices

Fixed Mindset:

... focusing on not losing, looking bad, or making mistakes, believing abilities are something we are born with, and that we CANNOT change, develop, or grow.

Growth Mindset:

... focusing on the process of getting better, believing that abilities are built through practice and new challenges, and that we CAN change, develop, and grow.

Which of your/our responses reflected a fixed mindset?

To the additional **EFFORT** required:

Got frustrated and chippy when it didn't come quickly and I wasn't getting playing time.

To new **CHALLENGES** experienced:

Didn't love playing out of my normal position or that the new players were challenging me.

To **MISTAKES** that happened:

Felt embarrassed by some of my mistakes because I know my teammates are really good.

To **FEEDBACK** being given:

Really not used to so much feedback from teammates and coaches and I started shutting down.

Which of your/our responses reflected a growth mindset?

To the additional **EFFORT** required:

I put in the extra time before and after practice and I started to feel stronger and see growth.

To new **CHALLENGES** experienced:

Instead of complaining, I just went all in on the new offense and my role in it.

To **MISTAKES** that happened:

I'm starting to move on from mistakes much more quickly, I just say, "Next play."

To **FEEDBACK** being given:

Instead of needing to explain or justify myself, I'm just thinking and saying, "Heard!" – taking it less personally.



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Extension

After completing this activity as a team, ask student-athletes to complete the same reflection for themselves and their individual performance. What does a fixed and growth mindset look and sound like for them? Where do they exhibit a growth mindset? Where do they have a more fixed mindset?



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GOAL MAP WORKOUT

Scope: 15-20 minutes as a pre-season or post-season activity that can be referred to consistently thereafter.

No matter what you're trying to achieve or what challenge you're trying to overcome, creating a plan to achieve your goal makes it easier to work hard and smart. Clarity of the action steps needed to achieve a goal allows you to focus all your time and energy on working hard through the process rather than expending that same effort on actions that don't get you closer to your final objective.

GOAL MAP

Starting Point

Action Steps

Action Steps

Action Steps

Action Steps

Desired Goal

Timeline:

Checklist

- ☐ Is the desired goal specific and can it be measured?
- ☐ Is there an honest/accurate assessment of the starting point?
- ☐ Have all of the major action steps been identified and broken down into smaller, doable steps?
- ☐ Have the roles, workflow, and timeline been worked out?

Measure. Monitor. Revise.

How:

When:

Support & Challenge

Expertise, Encouragement, Accountability

Who:

When:

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1. The goal achievement process begins by clarifying the desired end-goal and the starting point relative to your goal. Ask student-athletes to identify a goal they hope to achieve; you may want to give them a time frame, or ask them to identify a goal in a specific context (sports, classroom, family, etc.).
2. Then, ask students to determine what action steps are required to move from their current state to their desired goal. In addition, students must identify substeps for each action step. For example, if my starting point is torn ACL and my desired goal is to play next season, my first action step may be to walk. The substeps I need to complete before I achieve the action step, “walk,” are to bend my knee to 90%, regain balance, be full weight bearing.
3. Finally, ask student-athletes to determine how and when they will measure, monitor, and revise their Goal Map throughout the process, and who can support and challenge them on their path.
4. Have students share their Goal Map with a coach or teammate. Consider posting the Goal Map of each student-athlete so that they can refer back to their plan, track their progress, and be held accountable.

Extension

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 for the upcoming season. Goals should be specific and realistic, and students should be honest about their starting point relative to their goal. Students should write down all the action steps required to reach their goal, and identify how they will measure and monitor their progress.
2. Students 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.



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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 students to share their Goal Map with their parents, explaining why they selected their goal, and the action steps required to reach their goal. Students 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.

At times, a student 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 too is an important discussion to have with students 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 they started.



OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE SELF-STUDY – WORK ETHIC

Scope: 5 minutes.

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

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

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



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WORK ETHIC 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) ... embracing challenges as opportunities to push and stretch myself, not giving up or making excuses.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2) ... finding ways to continue development in my areas of weakness, looking for new opportunities.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3) ... being open to constructive feedback, actively seeking the help of others to improve my performance and confidence in success.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

4) ... always giving my best effort, even when I'm not at 100%.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

5) ... identifying my goals; creating and following a plan of actions steps to reach that goal, making consistent progress by working through the process.

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 *work ethic*:



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About the Consortium

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

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

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