

Coaching Connection: User's Guide

The Coaching Connection training, funded by the NBPA and Nike's Ever Higher Fund, offers to coaches some of the best practices in building positive relationships from the mentoring field. It is built around the Search Institute's developmental relationships framework, with a focus on offering the content in a coach-centric way.

This training was designed to be flexible enough to fit the needs of the audience, which means that pieces of the training can be taken out in the interest of time, relevance of content, or based on the context of the relationship you have with the organization offering the training. Below are notes on how to make the training work for you and your audience.

Timing:

Ideally, this training will be offered over 3 hours. In full, it clocks in at approximately 175 minutes (2 hours and 55 minutes). This assumes that the trainer would cover all of the optional modules- including debriefing on developmental milestones for all ages and a full version of trauma/ context. The timing changes depending on which modules are included:

- 1) All ages module- 10 slides, approximately 30 minutes
- 2) Adolescents module only- 5 slides, approximately 15 minutes
- 3) Older Children module only – 3 slides, approximately 9 minutes
- 4) Younger Children module only- 3 slides, approximately 9 minutes

A trainer may also choose to do a brief version of the context conversation that does not focus as much on the impact of trauma on young people. All slides have approximate times mapped to them to enable a trainer to estimate time saved or needed.

As we all know, timing is also largely impacted by the trainer's comfort and familiarity with the content. Therefore, you may want to plan for slightly more time when first using the training. Conversely, once a trainer is comfortable, they might be able to get through the training in less time.

Arc of Training:

As a trainer, it's always important for me to know the "story" of the training I'm doing. I like to know where I'm going with the coaches I'm working with. If a narrative is also helpful for you, please find a detailed training arc below:

Coaches are often under appreciated when it comes to the impact that they can have on young people. But in reality, coaches can be one of the most influential adults in a young person's life. They spend a lot of time with young people and have a different kind of relationship with them than many of the other adults in their lives. For one thing, coaches and players are starting from a place of shared interest. And, because young people are often really invested in their sport experience, they show up for learning in a different way. To take the best possible advantage that we can of this opportunity, we need to keep in mind a couple of things:

- 1) That there may be things that we do or systems we're operating in that keep kids from showing up as their whole selves; we need to actively dismantle barriers and think about what we can do encourage young people to show up as themselves.
- 2) We sometimes assume that young people will just "magically" learn from their experience in sports, when in reality, these lessons have to be taught. Adults who have

developed positive relationships and earned the trust of their players will be the most effective instructors

- 3) In fact, relationships are at the heart of all the learning that happens in sport- the life skills they develop and the sport skills and performance they achieve. This is why it's so important for coaches to be intentional and think critically about building relationships.

Part of being intentional about building relationships means that we work to understand how young people are coming to play- what's going on with them developmentally and contextually that might impact the way they behave in our sport. This has a lot to do with brain development:

- 1) Brains develop later than we thought, well into young adulthood. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. Because the part of the brain that controls rational decision-making is still being developed, sometimes we see emotion-driven behavior that we don't like. But, if we can avoid judging this behavior because it's a normal part of development, then we can act as the external frontal lobe for a young person and really help them develop the critical thinking skills that will help them in their lives. And while the critical thinking part of the brain is underdeveloped, it's also a time of great creativity and opportunity to develop young brains in a positive way.
- 2) The same parts of the brain that are under-developed (pre-frontal cortex) and over-engaged (limbic/ emotional system) in adolescents are the parts of the brain impacted by trauma. Exposure to trauma activates the bodies stress response, which causes a biological reaction to threat. This stress response becomes generalized in young people who have experienced trauma-which means that they experience even "small" stresses as big or overwhelming stress. This biological reaction, which is outside of their control, often causes behavior that isn't adaptive in the context (but is adaptive evolutionarily).
- 3) The good news on both fronts is that we can train the brain to do what we want it to- we can help young people develop their frontal lobes and help them rewire their overactive stress responses. And relationships and physical activity are two key ingredients to that.

If we know how kids show up to us, we take a different approach to working with them. It also sets us up to be more successful at activating the developmental relationships framework to help kids thrive. Because in order to thrive, you first have to heal. Now we can dig into how to make sure that we're expressing care, providing support, challenging growth, sharing power, and expanding possibilities for young people. Many coaches are doing pieces of this work, but can be more intentional and thoughtful about doing more (and with kids that it's harder to do it with). Thinking about what this really looks like in a coach's context- what they can actually say, do and how they can involve the whole team- will help them form habits that encourage the development of these transformational relationships.

Evidence:

The more you know about the research that underscores this training, the better prepared you'll be to talk about the power of relationships, brain development, and the impact of trauma. You might consider the following readings, videos and/or podcasts:

Books:

Perry, B. D., & Szalavitz, M. (2006). *The boy who was raised as a dog and other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook: What traumatized children can teach us about loss, love, and healing*. New York, NY, US: Basic Books.

Burke Harris, N. (2018) *The deepest well: healing and long-term effects of childhood adversity*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Vaillant, G.E. (2015). *Triumphs of experience: the men of the Harvard Grant Study*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

McGonigal, K. (2016). *The upside of stress: why stress is good for you, and how to get good at it*. NY, NY: Avery

Tough, P. (2014). *How children succeed*. London: Arrow Books.

Reports:

Center for Promise (2016). *Barriers to Wellness: Voices and views from young people in five cities*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance [Full Report](#)

Center for Promise (2015). *Don't quit on me: What young people who left school say about the power of relationships*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance. [Full Report](#)

Center for Promise (2014) *Don't Call Them Dropouts: Understanding the Experiences of Young People Who Leave High School Before Graduation*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance. [Full Report](#)

Videos:

Ted Talks by:

- Nadine Burke Harris- How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime. [Link](#)
- Jeffrey Duncan Andrade- Growing Roses in Concrete. [Link](#)
- Robert Waldinger- What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness. [Link](#)
- Kelly McGonigal- How to Make Stress Your Friend. [Link](#)

Full Lecture by Jeffrey Duncan Andrade. *Trauma: Social and Cultural Perspectives*; CTWG UC Berkeley 3/4/17 [Link](#)

Charlie Rose Brain Series. Catalogue of Topics- [Link](#)

- Childhood Adversity. [Link](#)
- Brain Development. [Link](#)
- PTSD. [Link](#)

Podcasts:

Code Switch, NPR: Three Part Series: Raising Kings- [Episode 1](#): A Year of Love and Struggle in a New High School; [Episode 2](#)- They Can't Just be Average; [Episode 3](#)-The Fierce Debate over High Standards

Code Switch, NPR: This Racism Is Killing Me Inside. [Link](#)

This American Life: Doppelgangers (Part 2). [Link](#)