

# CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS A COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND WHY IT IS BENEFICIAL TO BE CLEAR ABOUT YOURS





## MOOC 1: Developing Effective Environments for Youth Sport

# Study Guide

**An Intellectual Output of iCoachKids:**

***Innovative Education & Training for a Specialist Children & Youth Coaching Workforce***

### Acknowledgements

The Study Guide has been written by Sheelagh Quinn, Declan O’Leary and Sergio Lara-Bercial with editorial support by Ann McMahon. Contribution have been made by Marieke Fix, Nicolette Schipper-van Veldhoven, Kris Van Der Haegen, David Gibas and Karen Livingstone.



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## Introduction

“A coach’s primary mission is to help sport participants develop not only as athletes, but also as people. To fulfil that aim, a coach needs functional and task-related competences that are underpinned by knowledge and reflection.”

*From the European Sports Coach Framework (p. 39)*

Congratulations Coach, by engaging in the iCoachKids MOOC 1, you have demonstrated that you have an open mind to learning more about coaching children and to further developing your own coaching skills.

Improving your coaching takes time and effort. Coach development should proceed in a progressive and sustainable way. Such an approach takes into consideration your stage of development as a coach, how you learn and which participants the coach is working with.

# How Coaches Learn

In this MOOC, we recognise that learning is a lifelong process and that multiple experiences can facilitate the development of your coaching ability. During your progress through MOOC 1 we have included a variety of learning experiences to meet the needs of coaches and how they learn.

A coach is not a blank slate. Whether through personal experiences as participant or spectator, you arrive to coaching with your own conception of what it is and how it should happen. The following task will allow you to consider what you are bringing to your coaching.



## STUDY GUIDE TASK: What Are You Bringing to Your Coaching?

(There are no right or wrong replies. This exercise is about you taking stock of your previous experiences.)

<b>Coaches Learn Best When...</b>	<b>Your Learning and How you Like to Learn</b>
<b>List Your Sports Experience</b>	<b>What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?</b>
<b>Your Education</b>	<b>What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?</b>
<b>Life Experience/Learning</b>	<b>What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?</b>
<b>Other Things You Think/Feel Reflect You</b>	<b>What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?</b>

## Your Learning

In the early stages of coach development, you may benefit strongly from learning opportunities provided through formal education – in MOOC 1 this is reflected in what you read and the personal tasks that you undertake in applying this knowledge into your coaching. This can be seen as laying a knowledge foundation. These activities challenge or confirm initial personal theories and support the creation of a child-centred framework that helps coaches organise and make sense of their coaching practice.

As you continue to develop as a coach, non-formal learning opportunities become more relevant. Your interaction with the children, other coaches, parents, mentors and open source material provides a chance to check and challenge your emerging philosophy and way of doing things as well as gaining new knowledge. In MOOC 1 this is reflected in activities and tasks you do with others and in your environment.

It is important to note that much of coaches' learning takes place on the job. As a coach, your self-awareness and your ability to reflect on your experiences are essential to this.



## STUDY GUIDE TASK: How Coaches Learn Best and How You Like to Learn

The column on the left is what research says about how coaches learn best. The column on the right is for you to: reflect on these statements; identify whether they may apply to YOU; and if they mean anything for YOUR LEARNING. This will develop you SELF-AWARENESS of how you like to learn:

Coaches Learn Best When...	Your Learning and How you Like to Learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their prior experiences and abilities are recognised and they are encouraged to reflect and build on them</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They are motivated to take responsibility for learning and are given opportunities to drive it and direct it to their own needs</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The application of what is being learned to the practical context in which they coach is clear and facilitated</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The topics and learning materials are clearly relevant</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The climate is positive and supportive to minimise anxiety, encourage experimentation and challenge them appropriately</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interaction and sharing with other coaches is promoted</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A variety of learning activities is offered</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They experience some success and gain feedback that builds their self-confidence</li></ul>	

If you have completed these two STUDY GUIDE TASKS you will have started to engage in the learning process promoted in the iCoachKids MOOCs. You will have identified what you are bringing to coaching children; and how you learn.

Well done and read on to learn more about how the MOOC 1 Study Guide is laid out to assist you in your learning, how the content can be applied into you coaching and to your growth as a CHILD-CENTRED COACH of children.



# MOOC 1 Study Guide Structure

In MOOC 1, your development as a coach is promoted using a blended learning package composed of various activities to foster learning (for example, reality-based activities, problem-based learning, practical-coaching opportunities and reflection in/on action). This will promote knowledge gains and behavioural change and encourage you to seek additional self-directed learning opportunities.

The following HEADINGS and icons will signify different activities you will undertake in the MOOC 1 Study Guide:



**VIEW** – This is the video track linked to the Chapter and Section of the Study Guide you are considering



**READ** – This is the content knowledge that is outlined in the video track. It gives you the opportunity to examine the content at your own pace and/or to review in writing what is verbally outlined in the video



**STUDY GUIDE TASK** – This is an activity that will get you to consider how the content you have viewed/read may apply during your coaching with the children that you coach, and reflect on how you may change your coaching behaviours



**PERSONAL COACHING TASK:** This is an activity that will get you to apply the content into your coaching, with the children you coach, and to reflect on how it went for the children and for you. You may need to do these tasks a number of times and reflect on them to be able to fully apply the content into your coaching, in line with your coaching philosophy and to the benefit of the children



**COACHING WITH OTHERS** – This is an activity that will get you to engage other coaches you work with to discuss, apply, try, observe, get feedback from and reflect on how they see/feel your coaching is developing, and how the content can be applied by you and the other coaches. It may also encourage you to engage other relevant people, like parents, referees, club officials and even the children you coach!



**COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT** – This is an activity that will get you to consider how child-centred is the approach of your club/school/community

group. You will then consider/discuss what changes may be made to become a more child-centred coach.



**QUIZ** – At the end of each chapter there will be a quiz for you to complete. This will give you a chance to re-enforce your learning by getting you to re-visit some of the main ideas covered in the chapter and how they can apply to your coaching. Approach the questions in an ‘open-book’ format; which allows you to re-read the sections of the study guide before you write your answer.



**CHAPTER CLOSING TASKS** – Each chapter will end with some tasks that will get you to consider/apply the ideas and coaching tools covered in the chapter into your coaching. The tasks may include:



**PERSONAL COACHING TASKS**



**COACHING WITH OTHERS**



**COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT**



**FURTHER VIEWING/READING** – By its nature, only a certain amount of content is included in the MOOC. If you want to learn more about a topic, this will direct you to additional materials to view or read


## **YOUR DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY AS A CHILDREN’S COACH**









Working with children can be a very worthwhile and positive experience for people. With the growing knowledge and the approach put forward in the iCoachKids MOOCs, this experience can be positive for each and every child, as well as for each and every coach.

It’s over to you now to take the responsibility to grow your coaching knowledge and ability. Enjoy the journey coach!

# iCoachKids: MOOC 1 Study Guide - Learner Activity Tracker: Chapter No 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As you complete each of the activities in each of the sections, please put a tick  in the circle. This will allow you to track what you have completed and where you can restart when you return to the Study Guide after a break.

Study Guide / Activity Chapter Section	VIEW / READ 	PRE- CHAPTER / STUDY GUIDE TASK 	PERSONAL COACHING TASK 	COACHING WITH OTHERS 	COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT 	QUIZ 	CHAPTER CLOSING TASKS 	FURTHER VIEW / READ 
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Section 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Section 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Section 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					
Section 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Summary / Conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have completed each of the activities in each section and the Learner Activity Grid is complete. **WELL DONE!** You can move to the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

# Introduction



### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

## Welcome

Welcome to Chapter 2 'What is a coaching philosophy and why is it beneficial to be clear about yours?'

Ok, cast your mind back to your school years. Can you remember the names of any philosophers? Probably Plato, Socrates or Descartes come to mind. Do you know what they all had in common? Well, they all spent their whole life asking some fundamental questions like: Who am I? What is good? Or, what is the purpose of life?

Why were they asking those questions? Well, in short, because the answer to those questions guides the way we organise our societies, how we live our lives and more importantly condition our day to day behaviours. We all ask these questions all the time. The only difference between Plato and us is that we don't write massive books about it.

We all philosophise even if we don't realise it, write it down or talk about it. The answers we give to those types of questions become our 'personal philosophy' or the way we understand the world to be and how we want to live our life.

You may be wondering, what's all this got to do with coaching? Well, it is generally accepted that personal philosophies drive our everyday behaviours. As a coach, even if you have not stopped to think about it, you will also have a philosophy of what coaching is about and how it should be done. And this philosophy will certainly be having an impact on how you coach.

For this reason, it is important that we take time to reflect on what our philosophy may be. What values and beliefs inform it? Are they appropriate for the context in which we coach?

If we don't ask these questions, there is a big risk that things may not go as well as they could or should. **Remember, we coach children**, so we have to make sure everything is as good as it can be, for each child we coach.

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

1. Explain what a coaching philosophy is
2. Understand the role of ethics in sport
3. Articulate and further develop your coaching philosophy
4. Reflect on the application of your philosophy to your day to day coaching

## Chapter 2 - Section 1

# What is a coaching philosophy?



### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

As we said in the Introduction, whether we know it or not, we are all philosophers in our life outside sport, but importantly for us, also in our life as a coach.

We all have certain values that are important to us. Things like respect, solidarity, honesty or equality may be on your list.

We also have our own ideas about how things should work. These ideas are sometimes referred to as our beliefs. Beliefs can relate to the way we think personal and professional relationships should be, the notions of hierarchy and respect, to how children should behave, or to what should be the consequences of doing something wrong, to name but a few.

We may have never stopped to think about it, but we are also likely to have different motives for being a coach. Some coaches may want to be very successful or just become rich and famous; some others just love working with children and seeing them grow; and some are just parents that didn't run fast enough when the club asked for volunteers to coach a team!

**Your values, beliefs and motives make up your coaching philosophy;** in other words, your approach to coaching; what you think coaching is about and how you go about it.

With all of this in mind, have a look at this clip of a coaching philosophy outlined by an athletics coach (and/or read the description below):

Helen Thompson-Coleman Video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8o9FNVCtTs>

Video reproduced from School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University YouTube channel

*“My own coaching philosophy has probably changed a little bit over my 10 years of teaching and coaching experience and I think every PE teacher would be lying if they said they didn’t want to someday have an Olympic gold medallist appear on the TV and remember them and name them and say they were their greatest motivation.*

*I think for me, that’s not the priority though. The priority for me is to gain as much enthusiasm from as many children as I can about being active. If I can have a hundred thousand children taking part and never receiving a gold medal that for me is something that if they are established in life long participation is equivalent to a gold medal for me.*

*This is about children finding self-esteem and high levels of confidence so that they can take these skills out into their adulthood and establish an active lifestyle for years to come.”*

Is this a very clear philosophy?

Values, beliefs and motives, like the ones expressed, may come from different places; maybe from your family and upbringing, or from your personal experiences as an athlete and how you were coached; or from your perceptions of elite sport from watching it on TV or in the movies; or perhaps from your job or a critical life incident.

Now, remember the Coach Decision Making Model we saw in Chapter 1? Regardless of where they come from, your philosophy, values, beliefs and motives, even without you realising it, will have an influence on how you coach. And that’s why we have to spend time thinking about them. We have to decide if our philosophy is right for us, for the children we coach and for the context in which we coach.

Another reason to work on your coaching philosophy is that research shows that coaches who have well established and clearly stated philosophies are more effective and successful. There are a few explanations for this:

- First, these coaches know who they are and what drives them. This makes them more motivated and happier in their coaching. It also makes them more proactive and less reactive because they know exactly where they are going.
- Second, coaches with strong philosophies make faster and better decisions that are aligned with their philosophy. A strong philosophy helps you answer the question: ‘What should I do now ...?’
- Third, players and parents of coaches with strong philosophies know where they stand at all times and have better relationships leading to better

outcomes for all. Coaches with strong philosophies become powerful role models for both participants and their parents.

- Fourth, coaches who have clearly expressed philosophies can use them to critically reflect on their own practice and performance, so they can improve all the time.

In short, a clear philosophy is a pre-requisite of good coaching practice. It's time for you to start thinking about yours.

## **Your Coaching Philosophy**

Let's start by asking some of the key questions you need to answer when thinking about your coaching philosophy. Let's have a look at some, for instance:

1. Why do I coach?
2. What is the purpose of sport for children?
3. What is the core of my job as a children's coach?
4. How do I define success in my coaching context?
5. What are my core values?

After answering the above basic questions, also consider:

6. What are my ethical standards?
7. Who holds the power in a coach-participant relationship?

When answering these questions, don't try to think in terms of right or wrong. Just be completely honest and use it as a chance to get to know yourself a bit better. The children you coach, and their parents, will be forever grateful to you for achieving clarity around your coaching philosophy.

Now complete the Coaching Philosophy Study Guide Task.





## ACTIVITY 1.1 - STUDY GUIDE TASK – Value -Based Task

Now complete the Coaching Philosophy Study Guide Task.

Value-based task

This activity should help you to identify the values that are important to you and help you ensure that your coaching practice fits well with your values.

This exercise is adapted from Miller *et al.*'s (2001) personal values card sorting exercise. The original exercise contains 80 values (+ definitions), whereas this adapted format only contains 38.

**Step 1-** Select 5 to 7 values that best represent you as a coach of Children

1.
2.
3
4.
5.
6.
7.

**Step 2-** Applied Meaning

Now it is important that you bring these values to life with “applied meaning”. In other words:

- In what way might “**Generosity**” impact the coaching environment?
- How can “**Openness**” be promoted through coaching practice?
- What attitudes might be expected from a coach who has “**Altruism**” as a core value?

*Now that you have identified your core values as a coach, bring them to life by answering the following questions for each value:*

<i>Values</i>	<i>How can I embody this value between the moment kids arrive and the start of practice?</i>	<i>What attitudes can I adopt in order to embody these values during practice?</i>	<i>What effect do I hope this value might have on the kids I coach?</i>

## Values Definitions

<p><b>ACCEPTANCE</b> To be accepted as I am, and accept others as they are</p>	<p><b>CREATIVITY</b> To have new and original ideas</p>	<p><b>GENUINENESS</b> To act in a manner that is true to who I am</p>	<p><b>NURTURANCE</b> To take care of and nurture others</p>
<p><b>ACHIEVEMENT</b> To have important achievements</p>	<p><b>DEPENDABILITY</b> To be reliable and trustworthy</p>	<p><b>GROWTH</b> To keep changing and growing</p>	<p><b>OPENNESS</b> To be open to new experiences, ideas, and options</p>
<p><b>ADVENTURE</b> To have new and exciting experiences</p>	<p><b>EXCITEMENT</b> To have a life full of thrills and stimulation</p>	<p><b>HELPFULNESS</b> To be helpful to others</p>	<p><b>PASSION</b> To have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people</p>
<p><b>AUTONOMY</b> To be self-determined and independent</p>	<p><b>FAITHFULNESS</b> To be loyal and true in relationships</p>	<p><b>HONESTY</b> To be honest and truthful</p>	<p><b>PLEASURE</b> To feel good</p>
<p><b>CARING</b> To take care of others</p>	<p><b>FAMILY</b> To have a happy, loving family</p>	<p><b>HUMILITY</b> To be modest and unassuming</p>	<p><b>SELF-ESTEEM</b> To feel good about myself</p>
<p><b>CHALLENGE</b> To take on tasks and problems</p>	<p><b>FLEXIBILITY</b> To adjust to new circumstances</p>	<p><b>JUSTICE</b> To promote fair and equal treatment for all</p>	<p><b>SELF-KNOWLEDGE</b> To have a deep and honest understanding of myself</p>
<p><b>CHANGE</b> To have a life full of change and variety</p>	<p><b>FORGIVENESS</b> To be forgiving of others</p>	<p><b>LEISURE</b> To take time to relax and enjoy</p>	<p><b>SERVICE</b> To be of service to others</p>
<p><b>COMPASSION</b> To feel and act on concern for others</p>	<p><b>FRIENDSHIP</b> To have close, supportive friends</p>	<p><b>LOVE</b> To feel loved and to give love to others</p>	<p><b>TOLERANCE</b> To accept and respect those who differ from me</p>
<p><b>COOPERATION</b> To work collaboratively with others</p>	<p><b>FUN</b> To play and have fun</p>	<p><b>MASTERY</b> To be competent in my everyday activities</p>	
<p><b>COURTESY</b> To be considerate and polite toward others</p>	<p><b>GENEROSITY</b> To give what I have to others</p>	<p><b>MINDFULNESS</b> To live conscious and mindful of the present moment</p>	



## ACTIVITY 1.2 - STUDY GUIDE TASK – Building My Coaching Philosophy

### My Values, Beliefs and Motives in Relation to Coaching Children

Please answer the following questions (use additional paper if you require it):

Questions	My Response
1. Why do I coach?	
2. What Is the purpose of sport for children?	
3. What Is the core of my job as a children's coach?	
4. How do I define success In my coaching context?	
5. What are my core values?	
6. What are my ethical standards?	
7. Who holds the power in a coach-participant relationship?	

## **My Values, Beliefs and Motives in Relation to Coaching Children**

Now have a go at writing your coaching philosophy in one paragraph of a maximum of two sentences.

## Chapter 2 - Section 2

# Ethics in Sport: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly



### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

How are you feeling about your coaching philosophy after that? I hope you have a better understanding of what a philosophy is and why it matters.

One key element that should always go hand in hand with your coaching philosophy, as a solid foundation, is the idea of ethics. Put simply ethics is the science and practice of moral principles. It is about what's right and wrong, good or bad and why.

Clearly, there must be a space for ethics in coaching and sport. Coaching is interpersonal and relational; it is about people doing things with people and to people! Morality has to be top of the agenda. Unfortunately, it is not always the case.

Think about some of the most recent ethical scandals in sport: the Russia state-sanctioned doping programme, the countless cases of match-fixing in soccer, tennis or cricket, the sexual abuse suffered by US Gymnasts or Premier League academy footballers. It is a long list of horrible events that should never be part of sport. You may think that ethical issues are only a problem in elite sport, but there are lots of cases in children and youth sport too.

At iCoachKids, we feel strongly that children's coaches must uphold the highest ethical principles. Every coaching interaction is fundamentally a moral practice and contains a very significant ethical dimension.

If you don't believe me, please watch this clip of a model youth coach (and/or read the description below):

Tawanna Flowers video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2Uxran68ws>  
(video reproduced from Positive Coaching Alliance USA YouTube channel)

*"I want them to know that this is their family outside of their own family because a lot of times coaches play the role of the Mom, especially if we're away from*

*campus and their parents aren't there or they play the role of a counsellor, or we play the role of the best friend and hold him accountable."*

*"She cares about more than just basketball, she cares about us as student-athletes, as women."*

*"She genuinely cares and is continually active in our lives. Even after the season ends and before the season she's always checking up on us and even today she brought us breakfast."*

*"Everyone loves coach Flowers. She's like our second Mom basically, that's what we all call her."*

*"No matter what my skill level was or how I was doing she would always push me to be better."*

*"She often would set goals for us, even if we think they were too hard to achieve she would never drop her expectations."*

*"She's not your typical coach, I think in a sense she invest a lot more in us, also caring about the student and also care about the person that's behind the student."*

*You let the kids know that you care about them as a person, they'll run through brick walls for you and they'll buy into what you're trying to do.*

*"She's always building up your character, building up to who you are as a person and you see that on the court."*

*"Coach Flowers really has been somebody that I trust my kid with emotionally and spiritually. She's been a godsend for us and it just it means the world."*

*"I think the way she manages the time on the court and the teaching strategies, the character integrity, everything in general, it's not just basketball. And I think that has made a major impact on my daughter."*

*"I think when you have that combination of dedication, someone's going to hold you accountable but at the same time do it in a way that's caring, it builds you to achieve things that you didn't think you were capable of achieving."*

*I tell them all the time that my ultimate goal is to be that person that the kids are seeking out when they come back to visit campus – to get the invites to the weddings and the baby showers.*

*"She just sees what we don't see in ourselves."*

*"I think that really brings out the best not only in her players but in our colleagues as well."*

*"She's something I really look up to and hope I could be like her one day and be able to impact so many lives."*

*"She's really worked hard to make our team the family and I think that's why we've been so successful so I really value that she genuinely cares for each one of us."*

There is no question about it, ethics and morality should inform the goals you pursue, and how you go about it. We have already hinted at some of these in the iCoachKids Pledge (see Chapter 1). Some of the 10 Golden Rules on the pledge have a clear and robust ethical foundation. For example:

- Be Child-Centred
- Be Holistic
- Be Inclusive
- Make it FUN and SAFE
- Engage parents positively
- Use competition in a developmental way

So, what can you do as a coach to ensure your coaching is ethical? A great starting point is to consider examples of ethical behaviour you have seen and then reflect on any situations you have personally been involved in (see PERSONAL COACHING TASK: ETHICS IN COACHING). You will be challenged to be open with yourself when doing this. Remember, you are doing this not to be judgemental BUT to become more aware of yourself in relation to how you behave, what you do and the impact it may have on the children you coach and other involved – other coaches, parents, club officials, people from other clubs.

Then, look at a Moral Code of Conduct. Many clubs and federations will have developed their own, and these make a good start for any coach. You can go through your club/school/community groups or national governing body's code and see if you agree with it or not (see STUDY GUIDE TASK: COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT).

Finally, at the end of Chapter 2, you are invited to discuss Codes of Conduct with the children, other coaches, parents and officials. The challenge for ALL OF YOU is to live by your adopted Codes of Conduct (see CHAPTER CLOSING TASKS).





## ACTIVITY 2.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK – Ethics in Coaching

Reflect on the following and outline what you would do/how you would do it.

Situation	Describe in Your Own Words	Identify What You Would Do in A Similar Situation
1. Provide an example of unethical behaviour you have seen in your coaching		
2. Provide another example of unethical behaviour you have seen in your coaching		
3. Think about a situation when you may have behaved in an unethical way		
4. Think of another situation when you may have behaved in an unethical way		

### Reflection

What have you learned from the review of these situations?



## ACTIVITY 2.2 - STUDY GUIDE TASK – Coach's Code of Conduct

Find your club/school/community groups or national governing body's Code of Conduct for coaches.

Go through this/these Codes of Conduct and see if you agree with it or not (use the questions below to assist your consideration).

Note what you agree with and add/adapt; and note what you would change.

**OR**

An alternative way is to start from scratch and create your own Coach's Code of Conduct rather than adopt a ready-made one. Start by asking yourself some key questions. For instance:

1. What are the core values that inform my coaching?
2. How do I think children should be treated in sport?
3. What moral behaviours do I think are a MUST DO in children sport?
4. What moral behaviours do I think are NO GO AREAS in children sport?
5. How do I want to be perceived by children and their parents, by other coaches and teams, and by referees and officials?
6. What ethical behaviours would I like to see in my own child's coach?

## Conclusion

The main thing to remember is that:

**ETHICAL COACHING IS NOT AN APPROACH TO COACHING, BUT A MORAL OBLIGATION.**

When coaching kids, we don't choose to behave morally, we have to! It's a MUST!

This is probably one of the most important sections on the whole course as it provides the foundation to everything you do in your coaching. Please give it your full attention!

Thanks for being an ethical coach.

## Chapter 2 - Section 3

# A Reality Check: Applying Your Coaching Philosophy on the Ground



### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

## Introduction

So far in Chapter 2 we have talked about what a coaching philosophy is and why it is important. We have also explained that our coaching philosophy has to be grounded on a solid ethical foundation because coaching and sport are an interpersonal and relational activity. All in all, we have made a strong case for having a clear philosophy as a pre-condition for good coaching practice.

In this section we are going to explore the reality of applying your philosophy and code of conduct in the real world of children's sport.

The first thing we need to do is to turn our values and beliefs into what respected coach education author Wade Gilbert calls Action Statements. What does this mean? Wade says that having lists of core values like fairness, honesty, trust, hard work, etc. or beliefs like 'sport should be fun' or 'winning is not the main goal' is just one half of the equation - a kind of a starting point.

## Action Statements

He argues that these words become really powerful when we turn them into Action Statements; phrases or even paragraphs that describe what these words mean in the reality of your day to day coaching practice.

For instance, fairness may translate into a number of different statements like:

- "I give sufficient attention to all children in my sessions regardless of ability"
- "I make sure all children get good playing time in matches"
- "I listen to and respect the individual needs of all children"

In a way, the values and beliefs set the parameters for your coaching, but the Actions Statements describe how you are going to bring them to live; they are the bridge between theory and practice. We will work on this later in the study guide.

Complete the following Personal Coaching Task by writing your Action Statements.



## **ACTIVITY 3.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK – My Action Statements**

Take your Coaching Philosophy from the Personal Coaching Task, Chapter 2, Section 1 and write it in here:

Now turn that Philosophy into Action Statements, ensuring they cover all aspects of your Coaching Philosophy:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

## Communicating Your Philosophy and Action Statements

Now, once we have our philosophy, values, beliefs and motives and the relevant Action Statements, it is very important that we communicate these clearly to children and parents. Why do you think this is?

Three main reasons really:

- First, it gives them a chance to have some input and ask whatever questions they need to ask to make sure they understand it. If participants and parents feel appreciated and consulted, there is a much stronger chance they will buy into your philosophy encapsulated in your action statements.
- Second, clearly communicating your philosophy, through your action statements, to everyone is the only way for them to fully understand where you stand as a coach and make sense of your coaching practice. Then they can decide if they agree with your philosophy or whether they have to find a new coach or a new club for their children. Or it may be that you have to find a club that fits your values and beliefs better than your current one.
- Third, clearly communicating your philosophy, through your action statements, to children and participants formalises your commitment to it and gives them permission to pull you up if you start saying or doing things that go against it. It also makes you much more self-aware and allows you to self-check regularly.

Ok, so, how do you communicate your philosophy and actions statements? There is nothing like face to face meetings with the children and the parents. These meetings don't have to be massively formal and you could even run them as mini-workshops where everyone has a chance to contribute. It is also very helpful to have a couple of brief and clearly written documents (one or two pages max!) outlining your philosophy/actions statements and give them to the children and parents at the beginning of the season. Please make sure that you share them with the children in a language and format they understand.

## Your Evolving Coaching Philosophy

Now, there is more news – complete philosophies are not built overnight or written in stone. They evolve over a lifetime of experiences and reflection. And that's why coaches should regularly explore and re-visit their philosophies to see if they still agree with them or if they have to change or adapt anything.

For example, for many coaches at the beginning of their journey, 'fairness' was a core value, and this probably translated into a belief that they should 'treat everyone the same', but overtime most coaches realise that really what they

wanted to do was ‘to treat everyone fairly, but not equally’ because children are not all the same and treating them as if they were would be very unfair.

Also, bear in mind that circumstances may change forcing you to adapt or at least reconsider your philosophy. You may move to another club, go from Participation to a Performance context, start working with a different age group or you may experience a critical life event that completely changes your perspective on coaching. A coaching philosophy, while having some pretty solid foundations based on ethics and morality, should always be a work in progress!

Last thing, you should look at your coaching philosophy as a pretty accurate guide for your actions, but never as a straight-jacket. Again, coaching is about people and relations, and no code of conduct or philosophy is going to be able to predict or work in every possible situation you may find when coaching. A little flexibility is required to make sure we can be responsive to the realities of life in the frontline of coaching where every person and situation is different.

## Conclusion

We like to think that your coaching philosophy is more like a compass than a GPS satellite navigation system. The compass tells you where true North is, but it also gives you the choice of how to get there. The sat nav, tells you step by step and turn by turn what you need to do... but there’s a chance you won’t be the first driver to end up in a cul-de-sac or a massive traffic jam. Don’t be a slave of your own philosophy. Like the Dalai Lama says in his Instruction Number 5 for a Happy Life “Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly”.

In the next section we are going to talk about the importance of continuously self-evaluating how well your coaching practice matches your written and spoken coaching philosophy. If there are any major disagreements between the two, then “Houston We Have a Problem!”

## Chapter 2 - Section 4

# Mirror, Mirror on the Wall - What Does My Philosophy Look Like After All?



### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Chapter 2 has made a strong case for having a clear philosophy grounded on a solid ethical foundation as a pre-condition for good coaching practice.

This section is going to give you a chance to reflect on how well the philosophy you have written about in the previous exercises, especially your Action Statements, match the reality of what you do as a coach.

It is very common that in our head we may have an idea of what our philosophy is and how we think we do things. But the reality of what we actually do, and the impact it has on the children we coach may be quite different. If you don't believe me, please watch this clip (and/or read the description below):

Bad Coaching Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTEKzocCt0o>  
*Video reproduced from Spike TV YouTube Channel*

In this video a coach over the closing period of a close basketball game, is very aggressive with the players and uses explicit and hurtful language towards the young athletes. She emphasises winning, shouts at them, won't let them talk and generally puts them down. The observers identify that this is what turns children off sport.

Right, can you 'see' yourself in any of this coach's behaviours? If you don't, that's great. If you do, you are not alone! Many times, what we say we are about and what we actually do are very different things. Our 'spoken' and 'lived' philosophy can be poles apart.

It takes courage to look in the mirror and realise that we are not the finished product and that we have room for improvement. And that's exactly what we are going to do now to finish off this chapter. Be brave and honest, it is the only way to grow into the coach you want to be. Legendary Australian Hockey Player and now Olympic Coach Alyson Annan put it beautifully when she said:



“The coach you are and the coach you want to be are two different people; make time to become the coach you want to be.”

On the basis of that advice, please complete the activities related to this section.

Your participants will be for ever grateful that you took the time.



## **ACTIVITY 4.1 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK – Living by Your Actions Statements**

Write your Action Statements into the table below

Reflect on your recent coaching and rate yourself on how well you think you ‘live’ by your Action Statements.

Action Statement	Rate 1-10 (1-low/10 high)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Then identify one or two you really want to get better at and why and make a plan for doing so.

1.

2.



## **ACTIVITY 4.2 - COACHING WITH OTHERS – Living by Your Actions Statements**

Share your Action Statement with other coaches and ask them to comment on whether you 'live' by them. Ask them to be very open, honest and straight talking with their feedback. You need to be open in receiving their feedback and not become defensive.

### **AND / OR**

Share your Action Statements with another coach and/or parents. Then ask them to observe you during a coaching session (all or part); and to feedback to you, based on what they saw, on whether you lived by them. Ask them to be very open, honest and straight talking with their feedback.

### **AND/OR**

Ask someone to video you coaching. Review the video afterwards. Then based on what you see, ask yourself whether you 'lived' by your Action Statements. Challenge yourself to be very open, honest and straight talking to yourself with the feedback.

Based on feedback, identify one or two Actions Statements you really want to get better at and why and make a plan for doing so.

**1**

**2**

## Chapter 2 - Summary & Conclusions

### What is a coaching philosophy and why it is beneficial to be clear about yours?



#### VIEW AND/OR READ

You can view this section on the online MOOC or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Congratulations coach, you have completed Chapter 2! In this chapter, we have discussed what a coaching philosophy is and why it is an important pre-condition for great coaching.

We also explained that coaches who have a clear and well-established philosophy:

- have clear goals and are more driven and proactive
- make quicker and better decisions
- build great relationships and become role models
- are better at reflecting and therefore keep improving all the time.

We then made it clear that coaching is about people; it is an interpersonal and relational activity. For this reason, any coaching philosophy, and especially if you are coaching children, has to be built on a very solid ethical foundation. As a coach you have to uphold the highest standards of morality and integrity. Remember,

**ETHICAL COACHING IS NOT AN APPROACH TO COACHING, BUT A MORAL OBLIGATION.**

After we agreed that the value of having a philosophy and the need for a strong ethical footing, you developed your own philosophy and your personal code of conduct. But we took it a step further and helped you go from a simple list of words to what we called Action Statements. These are the actual behaviours that become the external manifestation of your philosophy. We said that your values and beliefs set the parameters for your coaching, but that Actions Statements bridge the gap between theory and practice.

We also mentioned that a coaching philosophy is best viewed as a compass rather than as a prescriptive GPS satellite navigation system. The compass tells

you were true North is, but it also gives you the choice of how to get there, the flexibility to act in the best possible way for every person and situation.

Finally, we had a hard look in the mirror to see if our 'spoken' and 'acted' philosophies matched each other. Some of us may need to re-calibrate and change some of our behaviours to really live up to our own high standards of ethical behaviour. But that's what coaching is about; learning and getting better every day.

Congrats again on completing Chapter 2! Please do the Quiz to see how much you took away and complete any other tasks and activities related to this chapter.

In Chapter 3 we will take your Personal Philosophy a step further and will start thinking about how to develop your vision and strategy for your club/school/community group or your team.

Thanks again for being a children's coach and making such a big difference!

**Keep Calm and Coach On!**



## STUDY GUIDE TASK: QUIZ

Please answer the following questions

### 1. Coaches who develop Philosophy's are (True/False)

- Know who they are and what drives them
- Are better at coaching technical skills
- Happier and more motivated in their coaching
- Make more proactive and less reactive decisions
- Win more tournaments
- Have the potential to become powerful role models

### 2. In Chapter 2 we identify 3 elements of a Coaching Philosophy, can you name them

1.
2.
3.

### 3. Agree or disagree with the following statement; Communicating your philosophy clearly to parents and children is important because:

Strongly agree							Strongly disagree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
It gives them a chance to have some input and ask whatever questions they need to ask to make sure they understand it								

Strongly agree							Strongly disagree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
There is a much stronger chance they will buy into your philosophy encapsulated in your action statements								

Strongly agree							Strongly disagree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Then they can decide if they agree with your philosophy or whether they have to find a new coach or a new club for their children								

Strongly agree							Strongly disagree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
It formalises your commitment, to act accordingly								

**4. Your Coaching Philosophy can change over time, list 3 reasons why this might happen:**

1.	
2.	
3.	



### Q1

Coaches who develop Philosophy's are (True/False)  
Know who they are and what drives them-TRUE  
Are better at coaching technical skills-FALSE  
Happier and more motivated in their coaching-TRUE  
Make more proactive and less reactive decisions-TRUE  
Win more tournaments-FALSE  
Have the potential to become powerful role models-TRUE

### Q2

1. Values
2. Beliefs
3. Motives



## Chapter 2 - Closing Tasks

# What is a coaching philosophy and why it is beneficial to be clear about yours?



### **ACTIVITY CT1 - PERSONAL COACHING**

Review your philosophy, code of conduct and action statements and develop final versions in a one or two-page document that you can share with your participants and parents if appropriate.

### **ACTIVITY CT 2 - COACHING WITH OTHERS: COACH'S CODE OF CONDUCT**

Once you have sketched out your Coach's Code of Conduct, you should test it out. Share it with the children and parents and with other coaches and your club/school/community group directors/officers. See what they think and if they agree/disagree. Consider the feedback and incorporate it into your Code.

### **ACTIVITY CT 3 - COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT**

#### **PARTICIPANTS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND OTHERS' CODES OF CONDUCT**

Why not lead the children you coach and their parents through a similar exercise to develop a children's and parent code of conduct (see rationale for including 'the Voice of the Child', a template and process below). A similar process can apply to other stakeholders too. In an ideal world, participant, parent, coach and club codes of conduct should be aligned and people should be involved in the development of these codes rather than have them imposed on them.

In leading this process of developing moral Codes of Conduct for all and in 'living up' to your code of conduct you will become a great role model for players and parents, and that's a huge contribution you can make straight away, a super quick win!

#### **Rationale for including 'the Voice of the Child'**

*"There is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of participation by children and young people in decision-making across a range of measures, including*

*improved services, policies, research, active citizenship and, most importantly, improvements for children themselves and for society generally. Inclusion of children and young people in decision-making can promote children's protection, improve their confidence, communication skills and ability to negotiate, network and make judgements.*

*There is also strong evidence that participation by children and young people in decision-making can support active citizenship and social inclusion at an early stage and there is general agreement that this is crucial to building and sustaining a healthy society. Young people's engagement with social media in new social movements and global forms of activism is evidence that they take their citizenship very seriously and are engaged actively on issues of importance to them, using a space that is owned and created by them."*

*(Extracted from Ireland's NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING 2015 – 2020, p. 7)*

**Template/Process for Code of Conduct for Children and Young People Participating** (Adapted from <http://www.waterfordlismore.ie/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/Template-for-Code-of-Conduct-for-Children-and-Young-People.pdf>)

## **Context**

It is essential that children and young people are made aware of their boundaries in terms of their own behaviour while participating in club/school/community group activities. Likewise, coaches/leaders working with children and young people should be extended the courtesy and respect which their leadership role deserves.

## **Template/Process**

The following template for a "Code of Conduct" for all children and young people engaged in club/school/community group sporting activities led activities is designed to assist coaches/leaders/parents/others in the development of specific Codes of Conduct. The children's code should be age appropriate.

The best Codes are those which are developed through consultation with participants. Such a process gives ownership to any eventual Code and ensures its success in meeting its objectives. The following may assist in developing such a process.

1. Invite the relevant participants to come up with suggestions for and agree on a name for the group.
2. Invite all to come up with some suggestions about how they will behave in the group. Following discussion and some compromising with the children (participants) a list of rules/a Code of Conduct is drawn up. The following sample outlines the issues which might emerge from leaders and children coming together to develop an age appropriate Code of Conduct for children.

## **Suggested Content**

As a group and in order that young people will enjoy, benefit from and feel safe while participating in club/school/community group activities the group will:

1. Be kind to and treat each other with respect regardless of ability, ethnic origin, and cultural background.
2. Respect all club/school/community group property and the property of others as well as taking care of our own.
3. Not engage in bullying of any kind and report any such behaviour if we become aware of it.
4. Be fair and honest in all our dealings with other children and leaders/coaches/others so as not to hurt any others by what we say or do.
5. Report any behaviour that makes us feel uncomfortable to the person in charge or someone designated for this purpose.
6. Actively engage in the activity and contribute to the best of our ability in an age appropriate manner.
7. Follow the instructions and directions of the activity leader/coach.
8. Arrive on time and depart at the appropriate time from the club/school/community group activity.
9. Remain in a supervised area at all times during the club/school/community group activity.
10. Not have in our possession any substances or materials that may pose harm to any member of the group, the group leaders/coaches or the property in which the activity is held.
11. Not take audio or visual recording of anyone present at the club/school/community group activity without the approval and monitoring of group leaders. (See Photography and Mobile Phone Policy(ies).
12. Keep mobile phones on silent or switched off and left in a box designated for that purpose by the group leader/coach.

## **Sanctions**

The group should also be encouraged to draw up an agreed set of sanctions in the event of the code being breached. Such sanctions might include:

1. Issuing an apology.
2. Loss of privilege.
3. Speak to parents/guardian.
4. Leaving the activity for a time/for good.

### **Commitment to the Code**

When the Code of Conduct has been drafted it is important that all members of the group and their parents/guardians sign the document to show they understand and accept its contents.

Signed:..... Signed:.....

Date:.....

Child/participant

Parent/Guardian

## ACTIVITY S1 - iCoachKids REQUEST

Please record a quick 30" video stating your personal philosophy as a coach and Tweet it to @iCoachKidsEU



### FURTHER VIEWING/READING

ICCE Coaches Code of Conduct:

[https://www.icce.ws/\\_assets/files/projects/Codes\\_of\\_Conduct\\_2012\\_study.pdf](https://www.icce.ws/_assets/files/projects/Codes_of_Conduct_2012_study.pdf)

Sample Codes of Conduct/Weblinks from various NGBs

GYMNASTICS: <https://www.gymnasticsireland.com/about/structure-policy/ethics-welfare>

ROWING: [https://www.rowingireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Code-of-Conduct-for-Coaches-and-Leaders\\_1410-Doc-2c\\_RI.pdf](https://www.rowingireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Code-of-Conduct-for-Coaches-and-Leaders_1410-Doc-2c_RI.pdf)

RUGBY: <http://www.irishrugby.ie/downloads/CodeofConducts.pdf>

SWIMMING: [http://www.swimireland.ie/files/documents/Codes-of-Conduct\\_180326\\_155446.pdf](http://www.swimireland.ie/files/documents/Codes-of-Conduct_180326_155446.pdf)

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Miller *et al.*'s (2001) personal values card sorting exercise.