

## A Practice Guide for Youth Coaches

While most coaches recognize the key role they play in promoting youth development, fewer than one-third of coaches have received training in how to do so. To close that gap, partners of the **Million Coaches Challenge** have trained one million coaches in youth development practices. The **MCC Practice Guide for Youth Coaches** identifies **12 core practices** and provides coaches with practical and actionable strategies that they can use, no matter the sport, age of their athletes, or experience level. This mini-guide is focused on the eleventh core practice of modeling the behaviors coaches want athletes to develop.



## What It Is and Why It Matters

Modeling means showing athletes what you want them to learn through your own actions. Every interaction from how a coach handles mistakes, communicates under pressure, or celebrates effort sends a message about team values. When coaches model the same behaviors and standards they expect from their athletes, they build trust, reinforce shared values, and shape team culture. Because athletes often mirror what they see, consistent modeling helps cultivate sportsmanship, accountability, and a growth mindset both on and off the field.



## What It Looks Like In Practice

### MODELING

- Coaches can model good decision making and talk through their decisions.
- Coaches can model expectations and behaviors they would like to see their athletes display.

#### Quick Tips from MCC Partners



#### From University of Washington Center for Leadership in Athletics (UW CLA):

- Emotional regulation:
  - Speaking respectfully with officials.
  - Showing sportsmanship after a big win.
  - Supporting an athlete after a mistake.
  - Speaking (not yelling!) with athletes after team rules are broken.
- Relationship skills:
  - Engaging respectfully with co-coaches.
  - Creating space to connect with every athlete.
  - Using inclusive language.
  - Connecting with opposing coaches.
  - Using clear and transparent communication.
- Healthy habits:
  - Getting sufficient rest.
  - Taking time to support your own mental health.
  - Fueling your body and ensuring proper nutrition.
  - Incorporating physical activity and training into your daily routine.

- When giving instruction, coaches can model by thinking about showing rather than simply telling.
- Coaches can narrate what they are doing as they do it.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- When coaches reflect their own behavior and use this as an opportunity to celebrate being a role model and also acknowledge missteps, they are modeling accountability.
- Coaches can reinforce accountability by taking responsibility for their actions.
- By apologizing for mistakes and missteps, coaches not only show athletes mistakes are okay but also build trust.
- Coaches should make admitting when they are wrong part of the team culture.

**Explore the full Million Coaches Challenge Practice Guide for more strategies, examples, and coach tips on bringing these practices to life.**