

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 third core practice of showing up with consistency and care.

What It Is and Why It Matters

How coaches show up each day deeply influences how athletes experience their team and themselves. Consistency builds trust and routine, while empathy and care create an environment where athletes feel seen, valued, and supported. These qualities help build trusting relationships, foster a sense of belonging, and create a supportive environment where young athletes can grow on and off the field.

What It Looks Like In Practice

BEING PREDICTABLE AND CONSISTENT

- Show up on time and start/end practice on time.
- Co-create and maintain clear team agreements for behavior and conduct.
- Provide structure and routine during all aspects of practices and competitions.
- Be consistent in setting up spaces so players know what to do and where to go.



HAVING EMPATHY AND VALIDATING ATHLETE EMOTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

- Consider athletes' perspectives and feelings.
- Identify and accommodate athlete emotions rather than invalidating them.
- Be aware of stress on athletes.
- Actively listen to understand what athletes may be experiencing.

Quick Tips from MCC Partners**From USA Weightlifting:**

- ➔ Use phrases like "help me understand," and put yourself in athletes' shoes.

SHOWING ATHLETES THEY ARE VALUED AND CARED FOR

- Take a strength-based approach with athletes.
- Use language that shows athletes their lived experiences matter.
- Acknowledge athletes' contributions to discussions.
- Emphasize sportsmanship and respect for all.

GIVING ATHLETES FULL ATTENTION AND BEING PRESENT

- Come prepared: have plans ready and mentally prepare beforehand.
- Give full attention to athletes.
- Participate with athletes.
- Be mindful of body language, space, and tone.
- Project joy, show enthusiasm, and be positive.

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