



TEAM SPIRIT

HOW TO BUILD
POSITIVE
TEAM SPIRIT

Team Spirit

How To Build Positive Team Spirit

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Fostering Positive Team Spirit in Youth Through Team Building Exercises

Why Team Building is a Winning Idea

Most people want to win. When it comes to coaches, we can safely state that virtually all of us want to win. A coach's ability to guide his or her athletes towards successful outcomes, both for individual players and the team as a whole, is a matter of pride. It also reflects the countless hours that a coach puts in towards the success of the team.

Considering how important it is that coaches are successful, it is no shock that many turn to team building. Team building exercises have been proven over and over again to be successful and worthwhile.

It is no accident that team building is a major player even in the business world. Businesses turn to team building exercises (and even hire outside team building experts) to help their employees learn to work together better and more efficiently. This type of work leads to significantly improved results.

Examining Team Building Exercises in the Workplace

Multinational companies spend billions of dollars each year¹ on team building exercises. They do this to enhance leadership, creativity, problem solving, conflict resolution and cooperation among employees.² If they are willing to spend that kind of cash, it's certainly something you should be considering for your team. After all the same positive outcomes will also greatly help children who are playing on sports teams.

Why do team building exercises work so well? Through team building exercises, it is possible to improve both employee efficiency and productivity. Part of this boost in efficiency and productivity comes from the fact that team building leads to better communication and less workplace resentment, hostility and communication.

Six Ways That Team Building Exercises Change Workplace Dynamics

1. More efficient employees
2. Happier employees
3. More productive employees

¹ <http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2011/05/27/company-training-programs-what-are-they-really-worth/>

² <http://www.iaapa.org/resources/by-topic/human-resources/human-resources-team-building-activities-help-boost-employees-confidence-production>

4. Better communication between coworkers
5. Less confrontations, hostility and problems between coworkers
6. More creative employees

Team Building Exercises Offer Coaches a Winning Strategy

Team building exercises are most definitely not just for the workplace. Youth sports programs can benefit greatly from implementing the team building exercises. With a little creativity and the right strategies, any coach in virtually any sport can help his or her players achieve more as individuals and as a team; a key part of having that winning strategy is to implement great team building exercises.

The bottom line is that every coach and every team can benefit from team building. The sooner you begin using these exercises, the sooner you can witness first hand how they can change your team dynamic for the better!

Team Building Exercises are Not Just a Good Idea... They are Highly Recommended!

Let's look at some of the reasons that team building exercises make sense for coaches who are truly looking to help their players achieve more.

Kids Gain Confidence

There is no way around it, using the right kind of team building exercises will help young athletes gain confidence. The reason is that through team building exercises, kids see that they can accomplish things that they previously believed to be impossible.

Kids Learn to Trust Others

Part of having a winning team is having teammates that can trust each other. Teammates don't have to necessarily like each other to win, but having a degree of trust in one's teammates is essential part of winning. For example, a running back will be much more confident if he knows that his teammate will do his best to deliver a key block; every sport has its parallels. Trust leads to achievement, and distrust spells disaster!

Kids Learn to Respect One Another

Many of the team building exercises that we cover in this report involve teammates learning from one another, discovering common interest and interacting with one another off the field or court. These are three of the key ways that team building exercises can help teammates learn to respect one another. Respect is another vital part of winning. For if there is a lack of respect among the team, all sorts of disruptive problems can arise.

Learn More About Playing Styles

Through team building exercises, it is possible for players to learn more about the various playing styles of teammates. Understanding, especially when it involves understanding at many different levels, leads to greater and greater levels of trust. If you want your team to interact in an organic and smooth fashion, then having players understand each other's playing style is a prudent step.

Team Building Exercises Boost Interaction

Cliques develop in almost any group activity, and sports are no exception. However, cliques can be a major obstacle towards teammates developing a trust and respect for one another. Additionally, cliques can lead to outright aggression and isolation of players, and this issue can quickly serve to minimize overall team potential. If one player is prevented from reaching his or her potential, then the entire team has failed to live up to its potential.

Team building exercises can be remarkably effective in boosting overall interaction between teammates, thus increasing trust and respect levels as well as cooperation and team solidarity. It's important to remember that with greater team solidarity comes winning!

Team Building Teaches Collaboration-Wining is Multidimensional

Collaboration isn't always instinctive. Even though they are just kids, all of your players already have deeply engrained ideas and notions about life and their particular sport. For this reason, it is necessary to use team building exercises to instruct students not only how to collaborate, but the benefits of collaboration as well.

It is important to remember that many players may have parents who have worked very hard to convince them that the most important stats at the end of the season are personal stats; you have to work against this inaccurate programming. The best way to do that is through team building exercises that showcase that collaboration leads to greater accomplishments for everyone involved.

When discussing the importance of team building with your players, don't forget to mention how many great players in every sport regret never winning a championship, despite having stellar personal stats. Always remind students that winning is multidimensional and, as a result, it has many faces and many forms.

Helps Incorporate Those Who Feel Left Out

When it comes to kids, cliques almost always exist, and dealing with cliques can be tricky on a team. On one hand, you as a coach don't want to disrupt team cohesiveness, but on the other hand, you don't want players felt as though they are "the other," as this will definitely keep your team from living up to its full potential. Through team building exercises, you can boost interaction, communication and understanding. In turn, this can lead to the formation of new bonds and

even new friendships.

Team building exercises can achieve the following: unlock team potential, help players that have been pushed to the sidelines reach more of the potential and develop more confidence and increase overall commitment level to team achievement.

Team Building Exercises Boost Team Cohesion

Team building exercises can help boost social cohesion within the group, which, in turn, leads to greater interaction and happier players. Happier, more comfortable players are players who are likely to tap into a greater level of their potential and thus help the entire team achieve more.

Team Building Can Help Young Athletes Develop Personality Traits that Will Serve Them Throughout Life

Your goal as a coach isn't just to produce a winner team, but also to produce winners at life. Team building exercises help young athletes develop personality traits that will serve them no matter what they do in life. Skills such as patience, sharing and learning to contemplate other points of view can be developed through team building exercises. Learning to not just play well with others but to see other people's perspectives is a key part of the transition to adulthood.

Learning to Work Towards Shared Goals

A team full of young athletes dedicated only towards individualized goals is no team at all. Team building exercises can be invaluable in showing the benefits and value of working together to achieve a greater goal. Some goals simply can't be achieved alone. Thanks to team building exercises, it is possible to demonstrate this fact to young athletes in a variety of different ways.

Comfort Levels and Different Learning Styles

Some people are simply more comfortable working alone than in working in groups. The problem is that you need your team to work together to win. One of the great things about team building exercises is that they effectively work to include even the “loners.”

Boost Creativity

Team building exercises lead to more creative players. The role of creativity in sports is something that is not given enough attention, yet most great players in every sport are in some fashion or another innovators. For example, take Michael Jordan's adoption of the fade away jumper later in his career.

The ability of players to apply creativity to their sport will help the team as a whole. Psychological barriers block creativity. However, through team building exercises, it is possible to help reduce the number of psychological barriers within a team and boost creative thinking.

Enhances Problem Solving Abilities

All sports have obstacles and challenges that must be met. When players participate in team building exercises that involve problem solving, they are not only developing their own problem solving skills and strategies, but also they are learning problem solving skills and strategies from other players.

Not only are problem solving skills enhanced, but also the speed at which solutions are calculated increases. Moreover, players will instinctively begin to pool their problem solving abilities together in a fluid and dynamic fashion leading to even more effective problem solving and at a more rapid pace.

Serves to Alter Perception

Another key way that team building exercises can benefit your team is that team building exercises can alter children's perceptions. This occurs when players learn that something they thought was impossible or extremely difficult is, in fact, possible or can be achieved with the right approach, strategy or tactic. When kids believe that more is indeed possible, they will be more inspired to dream big and reach their goals.

Fosters Faster Response Times

Through team building exercises, players are challenged to think quickly and often come up with creative solutions to problems. In turn, this can lead to maximized results in any sport.

Probes for Strengths and Weaknesses

Team building exercises are designed to put your players in different situations than they would normally find themselves, and this is a very good thing. Through these exercises, you are essentially probing the strengths and weaknesses of your players and your team as a whole. You will gain a deeper understanding of what each and every player is capable of achieving.

Increased Productivity

As players learn to cooperate more efficiently and effectively, there will be a boost in productivity, which is, of course, essential for winning results. More effective communication and productivity go hand-in-hand, and this is part of the reason that team-building exercises are so very essential for overall team success.

Discover Untapped Potential, Leadership Potential and Abilities

Team building exercises can uncover untapped potential and abilities within

players; this is particularly true for sports specific team-building exercises. It is often only through team building exercises that it is possible to leadership potential or untapped skill sets in marginalized players and others.

Boosts Overall Morale

Team building exercises are invaluable due to their ability to boost morale on a team. Everyone likes success! Success is quite often quite contagious in that it can breed even more success.

During team building exercises, many players will discover previously abilities that they were not even aware that they possessed. This, in turn, can help boost overall team morale and confidence. Showing your team that they can accomplish something they believed to be impossible will definitely increase morale.

Team Building Exercises Can Be Very Inexpensive or Free

A final major reason to incorporate team building exercises is that a great many team building exercises are free, virtually free or very inexpensive. No matter what your budget might be, you should be able to incorporate a wide variety of exercises. After all, a strategy for boosting your team's results is no strategy at all if you can't afford to implement it. The low cost of team building exercises is part of why no coach should ignore this effective strategy.

When Should You Begin Team Building Exercises?

Team building exercises can be conducted anytime and throughout the year. That stated, there are times of the year where you will get a little extra “bump” from using team building strategies. Often during preseason or at the very beginning of the year, teammates are still getting to know one another. This is a critical time for your team.

Mystery sparks people’s imaginations and that can lead to misunderstandings and mistrust. The time you invest at the beginning of the year on team building strategies will be time very well spent!

20 Major Reasons to Invest in Team Building Exercises

1. Players gain confidence
2. Players learn to trust one another
3. Kids learn to respect one another
4. Your players can learn one another’s playing styles
5. Boosts interaction
6. Boosts collaboration
7. Serves to incorporate those who feel left out
8. Improves team cohesion
9. Develops life skills
10. Factors in comfort levels and learning styles
11. Enhances and boosts creativity
12. Enhances problem solving abilities
13. Alters perceptions of what is possible

14. Faster response times
15. Probes for strengths and weaknesses
16. Increases productivity
17. Discover untapped potential, leadership potential and skills
18. Serves to boost morale
19. Team building exercises are highly cost effective
20. Team building exercises are highly effective anytime but especially during the beginning of the year.

Team building can work very well when you get the team off the field or court and into another environment. The reason is that players that may be great at their given sport may not be as gifted in another environment. This fact can lead to gifted players seeking out information and support from other teammates, including teammates that they tend to ignore.

Suggested Strategies

By incorporating the right strategies, you can make team building exercises work well for you and your team. Regardless of your sport, exercises can help. The key is a winning team building strategy is as follows:

1. Pick smart and proven strategies
2. Be consistent
3. Observe for results
4. Change your strategy if you fail to get the desired results
5. Take team building strategies and exercises and adapt them to your specific needs

Team Building Strategies Geared Towards Tangible Results

Good team building strategies are results oriented. You should be able to measure the results of your team building activities. Just remember that team building does take time and effort. One or two team building activities will not take a team that is disjointed and instantly turn them around; you might get that lucky but you most definitely shouldn't be counting on it! However, by sticking with your team building efforts, constantly evaluating those efforts and adapting when necessary you will see tangible and impressive results.

Once more, it is no accident that corporate America also keeps using team build-

ing exercises year after year. These exercises work for improving performance and bringing people together for a good cause, and they'll work for you and your team as well.

Now, let's take a closer look at some team building exercises that are sure to help you and your team achieve more. By adopting and using these strategies, you'll move closer towards maximizing the potential of every single member of your team.

The Basics-What Do We Have in Common?

Some of your players may feel as though they have nothing in common with other players; they are, of course, wrong. Your players do have commonalities between them, and these commonalities can be used to increase communication, understanding and respect.

Break your team down into smaller groups and have them outline what they have in common. It is smart to give some starter ideas such as favorite foods, pets, vacation trip experiences, favorite music, favorite books, favorite classes, etc. The trick is in part to get people talking to one another in order to break down walls.

Quick Tip-Remember that children and teens can have limited attention spans. This means your team building exercises must be fun and engaging.

Shared Experiences Build Shared Identities

Shared experiences such as a field trip, for example, can go a long way towards

creating a sense of shared identity. Share experiences that include building something, accomplishing a task together or even volunteer work can all foster team building and a sense of “oneness.” The more shared experiences a group has, the more bonded it feels.

Shared Experience Activities

- Field trip
- A team building/construction project
- Volunteer work; volunteer work often serves to help people feel better about themselves. Teammates may come to associate these positive emotions with one another.
- A team charity drive
- Writing a poem
- Painting a picture
- Painting the team locker room
- Any activity that gets players thinking and working as a team

The Blindfolded Game

The Blindfolded Game couldn't be much simpler. One player is blindfolded, and the other children verbally guide the blind folded player towards a goal. This sounds simple, but it is also remarkably effective in helping players develop a sense of trust. This game is also effective in getting selfish players accustomed to

the idea of helping others, which can dramatically boost team cohesion and effectiveness.

The Scavenger Hunt

A scavenger hunt works wonders, as it gets smaller teams working together, especially when winning small prizes is involved! This can bring out a competitive streak, so create new teams frequently in order to avoid the establishment or reinforcement of cliques.

Cooking, Yes Cooking, Together

Cooking together may seem like an odd pick, however, it can work quite well. Why? Many players may have very limited experience in the kitchen, and this will force them to truly work with one another. Also cooking offers a shared reward in the form of something (hopefully) delicious to eat at the end of the exercise!

Fundraising Activities

Fundraising activities, much like volunteer work, generates good will and may boost the self-esteem of many players. This team building activities is a definite “two for one” as it encourages group cohesion while at the same time benefits others. Like volunteer work, there is a subtle message of cooperation at the core

of this activity, which in and of itself will help foster good will within the team. When you raise funds, you also have the added benefit that you can use the money towards team uniforms or social gatherings.

Group Meditation

Group meditation might seem too “touchie-feelie” for some, but the benefits of meditation are well known and well established. Meditation has proven mental and physical results. For example, meditation can lower stress levels and this can, in turn, decrease the risk of conflict amongst the team. Meditation can also assist with focus skills come game time.

Activities such as meditation and yoga have a more subtle aspect also. Using meditation as a team building activity sends a message to your team that you as the coach expect and value group tranquility, cooperation and focus, rather than arguing and dissent. This message is very subtle, but you will likely see tangible results from this simple approach.

Group Yoga

Group yoga? Yes, but with a strategy, of course. Try this idea: assign a given yoga pose to one player and have that player teach this pose to others.

Next break down into small groups and have players go around to others in the group teaching them the same pose. When children, teens and young adults learn from one another, more respect is fostered. After all, there is a well-established respect dynamic between teacher and student.

Memory Games

Memory games work well with younger children. Memory games may be simple, but they are also engaging and can encourage a surprising amount of interaction between children. Memory skills can also help kids both on and off the field or court.

Laser Tag

Laser tag can really get the blood pumping. The dynamic of one side versus the other, which is so key to team sports, is alive and well in laser tag. This option is one in which a degree of monitoring is required. There is no doubt that laser tag will get your players excited, but it is also an opportunity for superior athletes and cliques to gang up on other players. You will have to invest some time in the choosing of your teams to ensure that they are indeed well balanced.

If laser tag isn't working out, another option comes in the form of bowling. The main point is to give players an opportunity to interact outside the normal perimeters of the field or court.

Learn to Sail a “Ship”

Sailing a ship isn't practical in most situations, but it can be a great team building exercise and serves as a great example. Undertaking a large, complex task and

learning to tackle that task as a team can be a very powerful team bonding experience. If you live in a location that is near an ocean or lake, you may want to give this exercise a try.

If you are not in a location near water, consider what could you do with your team that in some form resembles the sailing of a ship? Think big!

Develop a New Strategy for Your Given Sport

This team building exercise can yield very interesting results. Break into smaller teams and then have your team develop a new strategy around their sport. For example, if it is basketball, then have them develop a new passing strategy. This approach can foster a lot of creativity.

Normally, you would worry about players developing bad habits. (As the coach, you have to keep this one from spiraling out of control!) However, this exercise is worth the time. The reason is that it fosters a great deal of communication and bonding within the group. At the same time, you can show why the new strategy might not always work or be appropriate. In this way, you get a “two for one” as this team building exercise is also a learning opportunity for your players. Additionally, this fun exercise really gets players up, running, having fun and thinking about strategy.

Teammates Teach Each Other a New Skill

As we mentioned earlier, the well established dynamic between teacher and student can lead to more respect. Instead of introducing a new sports based skill to the team as a whole, introduce the new skill only to the leaders of smaller teams. Next, these leaders teach the new strategy, skill or technique to their smaller

groups. Once again, this fosters creativity and encourages students to learn from one another thus fostering greater respect. This strategy can be particularly useful for helping marginalized players.

It's Story Telling Time

Story creation and team building is an idea that doesn't immediately occur to most people, but this one really works. Have your students break into smaller groups and create a story, with each player adding a part to the story.

The easiest way to organize this team building exercise is to give students a few different beginnings to stories and then let them fill in all the blanks. Of course, you will need to establish some ground rules about what content is and is not appropriate for the stories.

Brainstorming Activities

Brainstorming in a team building exercise context involves asking your players to come up with group activities that they would enjoy doing. Often players/students are never asked what they would enjoy doing and usually respond very well to being asked. You can be sure that many of the ideas will not be practical, but the simple act of having students form groups to generate ideas is, in and of itself, a good team building exercise.

15 Proven Team Building Exercises You Can Begin Today

1. The Basics-Commonalities
2. Shared Experiences/Activities
3. The Blindfold Game
4. The Scavenger Hunt
5. Team Cooking
6. Fundraising Activities
7. Group Meditation
8. Group Yoga
9. Memory Games
10. Laser Tag
11. Sailing a “Ship”
12. Developing a New Strategy for Your Sport
13. Teammates Teach New Skills
14. Storytelling Time!
15. Let’s Brainstorm

You Can Use Team Building to Achieve Impressive Results

A team that understands and trusts one another is a team that can grow, develop and win. While there are many benefits to team building, it is perhaps the ability to foster trust and understanding between players that offers the greatest benefit.

Ultimately, if you want to motivate your players during team building exercises, it is smart to outline for them the consequences of not having good teamwork. If your players understand the incredible value of having exceptional teamwork, then every single exercise you engage will have perceived importance.

Try listing out the different reasons that your team wants to win and why they should have solid teamwork, and put that list up where everyone can see it. Linking all of your team building endeavors towards everyone's success will help keep players focused and on track.

You Have Everything You Need for Considerable Team Building Success!

At this point, you have everything you need to venture forth with your own team building exercises. Team building exercises are extremely cost effective and easy to implement. If you ever feel stuck, simply refer back to the exercises recommended above.

This report was designed to be your guide to achieving great team building success. Remember always stay focused and dedicated to seeing results from your team building endeavors. You will be pleasantly surprised with the great results you achieve.