

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE WITH MY COACH?

Think of your post-competition interview after a major performance? Who is in yours? In these moments, an athlete often recognizes their coach's support along their journey to success. Over our careers as athletes we make many significant relationships, with our coaches being a key factor in our development and personal success. Research revolving around talent development has highlighted that open and honest communication is a vital feature as it allows coaches and athletes to share information (e.g., goals, challenges, wins, etc.) and build trust.

As the coach plays a large role in our development; often times athletes find it difficult to express how they are feeling, both physically and emotionally. They fear that the message isn't going to translate, or that they will be viewed differently.

HONESTY

When communicating with your coach it's important to be honest with how you're feeling. Even good coaches can't read your mind. Therefore, if you don't express what you may be struggling with, your coach can't help you or change things in order to make you feel better. It's also important to be honest about what you're seeing or feeling on the field and communicate that message to coaches, not what you think they want to hear.

ASKING FOR FEEDBACK:

After telling your coach your thoughts on the given subject, ask how they see it. By asking for their perspective it opens a good line of communication for the coach to give you their feedback. This also allows them to realize you're serious about wanting to get better or to fix the problem you're trying to solve.

COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS:

With online or distance coaching becoming a new normal, many of our interactions with our coaches will be over text, phone call, or video. For most coaches, this is new territory and a way of coaching that may be unfamiliar. Be clear with your coach regarding what you need to succeed from a distance. Your coach might not be able to see your training sessions or practices, so if nothing is brought up from your end, they may think everything is going well and there are no questions/concerns.

GETTING STARTED

If you have never spoken honestly with a coach, it may be tough to get started. Decide what you want to say before meeting with your coach. Let your coach know in advance that you want to talk about something, so they come ready to hear what you have to say. Practice how you want to say it or even write a few thoughts down and let them read the paper while you are sitting there. As you practice, notice how it is going to feel talking to your coach. If it feels stressful, practice doing this in your head, acknowledge the emotion and think of how you want to manage those emotions if you experience them when talking with your coach. After the conversation, if you don't feel you expressed yourself well; send the coach a text or email clarifying what you wanted to say. This is a new skill. It won't be perfect at first. But you and your coach both want the same thing, for you to improve and reach your potential. Learning to communicate with your coach allows them to be the best coach possible for you. It is worth the effort.