

All-in Foundation

EXERISES FOR YOUTH PLAYERS

Series 12 - 16 years

From the All-in Sports programme

For more information visit
www.all-in.foundation



PREFACE

WHAT WILL THIS GUIDE OFFER YOU?

This practical guide is filled with over 30 different exercises that contribute to the development of inclusive practices and prosocial behaviour for youth players between the ages of 8 to 12.

All exercises within this guide have been developed and/or tested by us and other professionals with extensive experience within the fields of youth coaching, pedagogy, behavioural science, social psychology, or education. All-in has taken the utmost care to collect, test or further develop all of them.

This guide is meant to be a practical source and a means of inspiration for youth coaches and youth trainers who would like to contribute to the emotional development of their players and are looking for ways to contribute to a socially safe environment at their sports club.

If you come across an exercise missing the appropriate source or if you have created an exercise yourself which you would like to share with the community, please drop us a note via:

exercises@all-in.foundation



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Team cohesion

This is our team



This exercise helps the team with establishing shared social norms about how the team and coach communicate together.

- Goal:** Build shared social norms
Duration: 20-30 minutes
Materials: Pen and paper or a Flipboard and marker

Exercise: This is our team

Explanation:

Start the exercise by asking the following question: "How would you like to establish agreements and share information with your team?"

Then create a list about how the team will come to an agreement, how the team would like to interact with each other, what information needs to be shared, and in what form. Topics of interest are:

- How do we create a shared understanding
- What information do we share with the team at what moment
- What to do when issues arise
- What is the consequence of missing practice
- How do we deal with conflict?

As soon as the team has completed the list, ask them who would like to translate all the agreements to the team's guidelines (make sure they keep it brief and to the point).

Check if players understand the definition of the word guideline.

Ask the volunteer to send the guidelines to you as soon as they finish the document.

Check and edit the document if needed. Print the guidelines out (one per player/duo) so you can review them together with the team. It is important that all players support the guidelines and understand what each agreement means.

Part of this process is creating a shared understanding of some of the words you use, as some words can have different meanings. Think about words like honesty, respect, good sportsmanship, or trustworthiness.

Ask someone in the team to adjust the guidelines (if needed) and to add the shared definitions, if any ambiguous words were found.

Hand out the final version to every player and share a copy with all of the parents, caregivers, trainers, and other support staff and follow up on the guidelines by honouring and mentioning them when relevant.

Evaluate the guidelines with the team after three months, were they effective? Are all agreements useable in practice or do some agreements need to be clarified or adjusted?



Wanted posters



This simple and fun exercise helps teams to reconnect with their fellow teammates and thus positively influences morale.

- Goal:** Reactivate team cohesion for existing teams
Duration: 30 minutes
Materials: Coloured markers and a-4 sheets (1 per player)

Exercise: Wanted posters

Explanation:

Ask the players to seek out a teammate with whom they have been in contact frequently during the past season. Tell them they will create a "wanted" ad for their partner.

As soon as everyone has finished their poster, ask players to introduce their partner using their poster.

Ask the team what they have learned or realised about their teammates based on this exercise.

In any case, the following should be provided on the poster:

Wanted:

Reward:

AKA (alias):

Usually identified by:

Famous statement: "....."

Often found: (where?)

Wanted by:

Wanted for: (name their sport qualities)

Finds it important that others know that:



Our values



This checklist offers coaches and trainers insights into team dynamics. This will help drive both team collaboration and communication more effectively.

Goal:	Gain insight into the present team culture
Duration:	2 minutes during practice, 30 minutes at home
Materials:	Checklist “Me and our team”

Checklist: Me and our team

Why this checklist?

The way in which we think and react is influenced by many different things, like our experiences, personalities, and the values of the culture(s) in which we grew up.

As soon as we start to work with others who- just like us- come from a unique background, the way they do things can be quite different than what we expected. This sometimes causes us to interpret things differently or wrongfully assume an intent because we always tend to look at the world from our own point of view while forgetting that not everyone around us moves through the world in the same way we do. Because of our assumptions, we can get confused, distracted, be misunderstood, misinterpret, be hurt and hurt others, or even fight.

The checklist below is meant to help us recognise how our experiences and backgrounds affect our behaviour in the team. It comes with a couple of statements of how you like to interact with others, how you learn best and how you use what you learn in practice.

Please read the duo statements one by one and select the statement that you feel, reflects you the most. If both statements suit you well, choose the one you feel is most descriptive of you. Follow up by circling how strongly you show this behaviour in daily life.

As soon as you've picked the statements that reflect you the best and scored yourself on each statement, think of how your team (as a whole) would score on each of the statements.

- Are there any differences between you and your team?
- Are these differences important?
- How do you see these differences coming through?
- How do you think your teammates experience your behaviour/approach?
- What challenges arise from these differences?
- In what way could you help bridge these differences?



Checklist: Me and our team

Me

Our
team

What I value

1a. Direct

I like it when others in my team are direct and tell me how it is so I don't have to guess what they feel or think.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

1b. Indirect

I think it is important to avoid getting into arguments and to stay friendly and calm. This means that I'd rather give or receive a hint about things others find hard or unpleasant.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

2a. Being honest

It is most important to always be open and honest, even it is means someone will look like a fool or feel embarrassed.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

2b. Save face

It is most important to prevent ourselves from doing anything that will make ourselves or the other look bad, even if it means that I can't always share things.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

3a. Theory

I like to learn by listening and collecting information from an expert.

Score 1 2 3 4 5



What I value

Me

Our
team

3b. Practice

I prefer to learn by experimenting and practicing myself. I learn best by doing.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

4a. Getting things done

When I have a job to do, I focus on the desired result, deal with it and move on.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

4b. Friendship and relationships

When I have a job to do, I am always focused on how I relate to others. Therefore, I like to invest in a relationship before I start to collaborate.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

5a. A deal is a deal

I prefer people who always keep their promises, I can come to agreements with them who are on time. A deal is a deal.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

5b. Flexible

I prefer to be around people who are flexible with agreements, like the time that we are supposed to meet or what we are going to do, things are constantly changing.

Score 1 2 3 4 5



What I value

Me

Our
team

6a. Teacher

I like to be very clear as to what I expect of someone else and feel good teaching others, I find it important that others do what they are told.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

6b. Facilitator

I help others by letting them make their own decisions and by offering them support. I think it is important that people take action themselves.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

7a. Informal

I like to talk to others as if they are my friends and like to be talked to in a similar way, no matter what age they are or the position they are in.

Score 1 2 3 4 5

7b. Formal

I think it is important to show respect to someone in a higher position than I am or if someone is older than I am. Therefore I like to talk to them formally and politely and expect the same from others.

Score 1 2 3 4 5



The team challenge



Non-verbal communication is important in every aspect of our lives, sports is no exception. Recognising body language helps assess our opponent and teaches us how we can respond to the needs of our teammates during the game.

- Goal:** Stimulate teamwork and team communications
Duration: Variable
Materials: Noise cancelling headphones or earplugs

Exercise: The team challenge

Explanation:

Ask all players to bring proper earplugs or headphones with them to the upcoming practice. If they don't have any, ask them to see if they can borrow some or buy several sets of wax earplugs yourself. They can use an iPod, mobile, or another type of portable device with earplugs that play music or sounds. The point is that they will cease to hear any sounds from outside whenever they use it.

Let the team play a game while wearing the device during their next practice.

Explain to them that they will be unable (and not aloud) to use their voice to communicate with each other during the game. They will be depending on their non-verbal language, body, and face to communicate with their teammates.

Discuss how the team experienced the exercise. How was it not being able to use your voice? How was it to collaborate together without being able to hear each other speak?

How was it having to assess what your teammates were expecting of you without being able to ask or hear anything? How well attuned were you with your team? What did you have to change from what you normally do to work together?

Repeat the exercise regularly until they have found a way to communicate effectively as a team without using verbal language.



I can't say!



This exercise teaches players that how others respond to you and how you respond to others, isn't only dependent on what you say but also on what your body language says. The exercise raises awareness on the influence of non-verbal communication.

- Goal:** Learn to recognise the body language of team members
Duration: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: Cones, balls, goals and vests in 2 different colours

Exercise: I can't say!

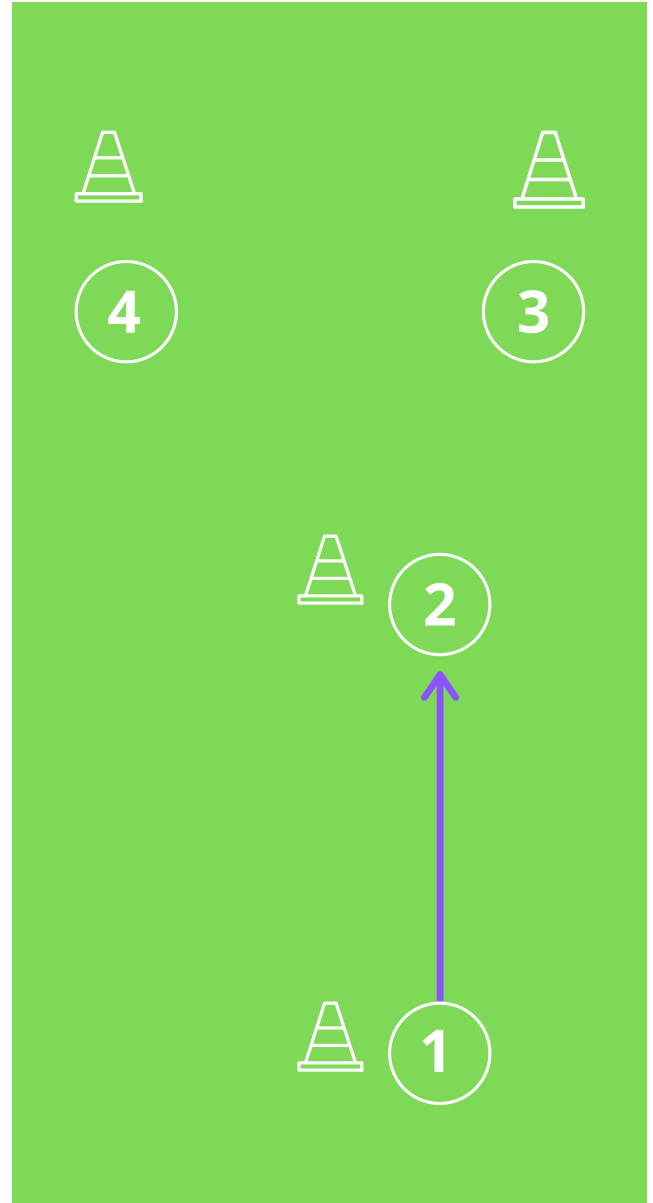
Explanation:

Place four cones on the field (or court) in the form of a Y. The perfect distance between each cone is about 10 to 15 meters (32 to 49 feet). Player 1 passes or throws the ball to player 2. Player 2 decides whether they will pass the ball to player 3 or to player 4.

Important: the players are not allowed to talk with each other during the exercise. This will force the players to react on runs or posture.

Players 2,3 and 4 can only indicate on what side they would prefer to receive the ball by using hand gestures, facial expressions, or by using movements. Player 3 or 4, passes the ball back to the starting point and moves into the next numerical position. A player will move from position 1 to 2, 3, and then 4. As soon as the group has played each position a few times, bring the team together for a group discussion.

it is important that the players acknowledge and understand that we communicate with our bodies a lot, how we can read the signs, and what happens if we send mixed signals.



Version 1

Divide your players into two teams. Each team gets differently coloured vests, for instance, blue and red. In this version of the exercise, the teams work on a positional play within a rectangle of 10 by 20 meters (32 by 64 feet). The goal is to pass the ball within your team 10 - consecutive- times.

The other team is allowed to try and take away the ball and when they succeed, they try to reach the goal of passing the ball 10 consecutive times.

For example, red passes the ball 6 times but the ball gets taken by blue. Blue tries to pass the ball 10 times, succeeds, and receives a point.

Important: The players are not allowed to talk to each other during the exercise. They can communicate by using movements, facial expressions, and hand signals.

Reflect on the experience together with the team afterward.

Version 2

Divide your players into two teams. Each team receives the same coloured vest. The teams will play against each other, the goal is to score as many goals as possible.

Important: The players are not allowed to talk to each other during the exercise. They can only communicate by using movements or facial expressions (hand signals are not allowed either).

Reflect on the experience together with the team afterward. How can they use their ability to read body language to their advantage during games?



This is where I come from



This exercise helps players talk about their background, thus getting to know each other better.

- Goal:** Stimulate team cohesion
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Baby pictures of all players (and coaches/trainers)

Exercise: This is where I come from

Explanation:

Ask all players to bring a baby picture to practice (or to a game). Ask everyone to give you their picture, without showing them to anyone else!

When you have received everyone's photos, show them one by one. Can they guess who's picture it is? As soon as they have figured out who is on each picture, let the person share something about their youth. Start with where their photo was taken, who took it? Why did they choose to bring that picture? How were they when they were smaller?



Group jump



This exercise stimulates the sense of unity and strengthens their ability to work together at a common goal.

Goal: Stimulate cooperative skills
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: A camera

Exercise: Group jump

Explanation:

Inform your players that you would like to take a group picture with the team today while the group jumps into the air at the same time. The goal is to create a fun team picture that will help them remember this season. To create a cool picture, everyone has to jump and land at the same time.

Encourage the players to think of a signal that helps them jump up at the same time, cheer them on when they start trying.

If you've succeeded in taking a great action shot of the team, compliment them on their successful teamwork! Connect this successful moment to the team goal and ask them to work just as hard on the goal they've set for themselves.

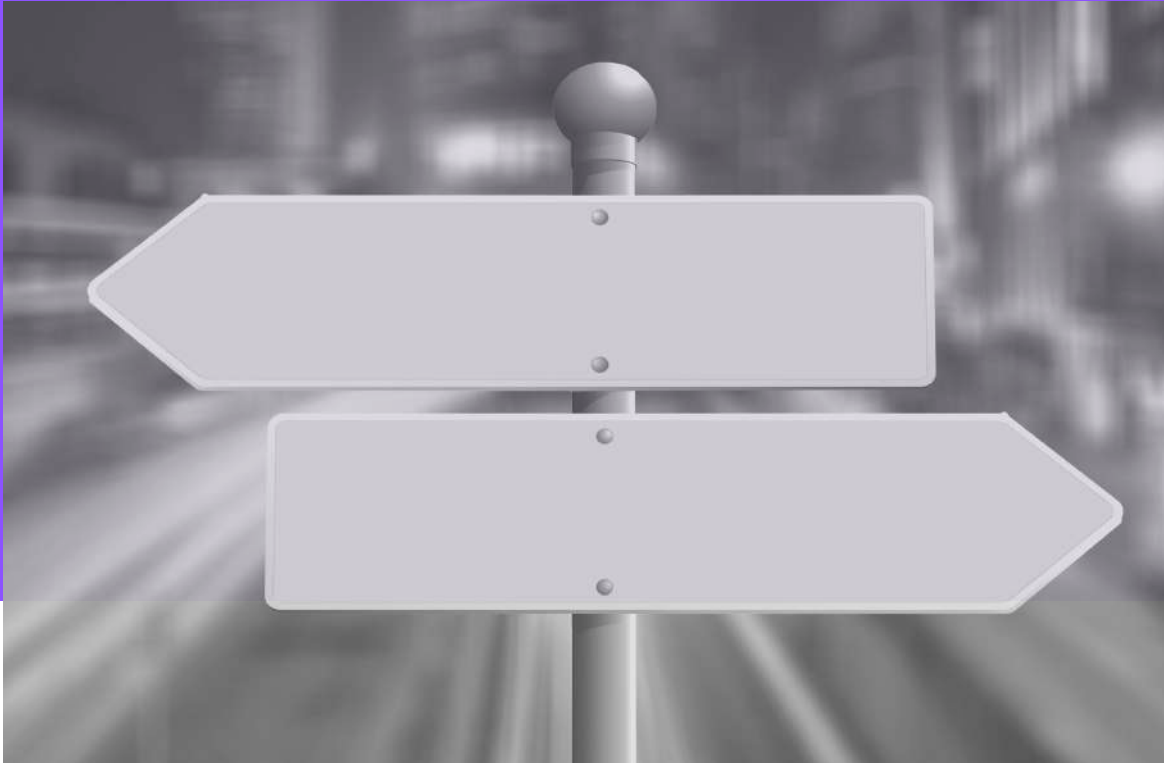
Optional:

Another way of doing this challenge is by asking the team to make a TikTok together. Let them pick out a team song (that's about working together) and brainstorm about a great video clip.

Just make clear that everyone in the team gets a clear role in the clip and that at least one fragment is made in unison with the entire team!



This is how we



This exercise helps players learn how to make joined decisions.

Goal: Stimulate their ability to work together
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Pen and paper

Exercise: This is how we

Explanation:

Divide the team into groups of 3 or 4.
Ask each group to solve a challenge for which multiple possible solutions exist.
For example:

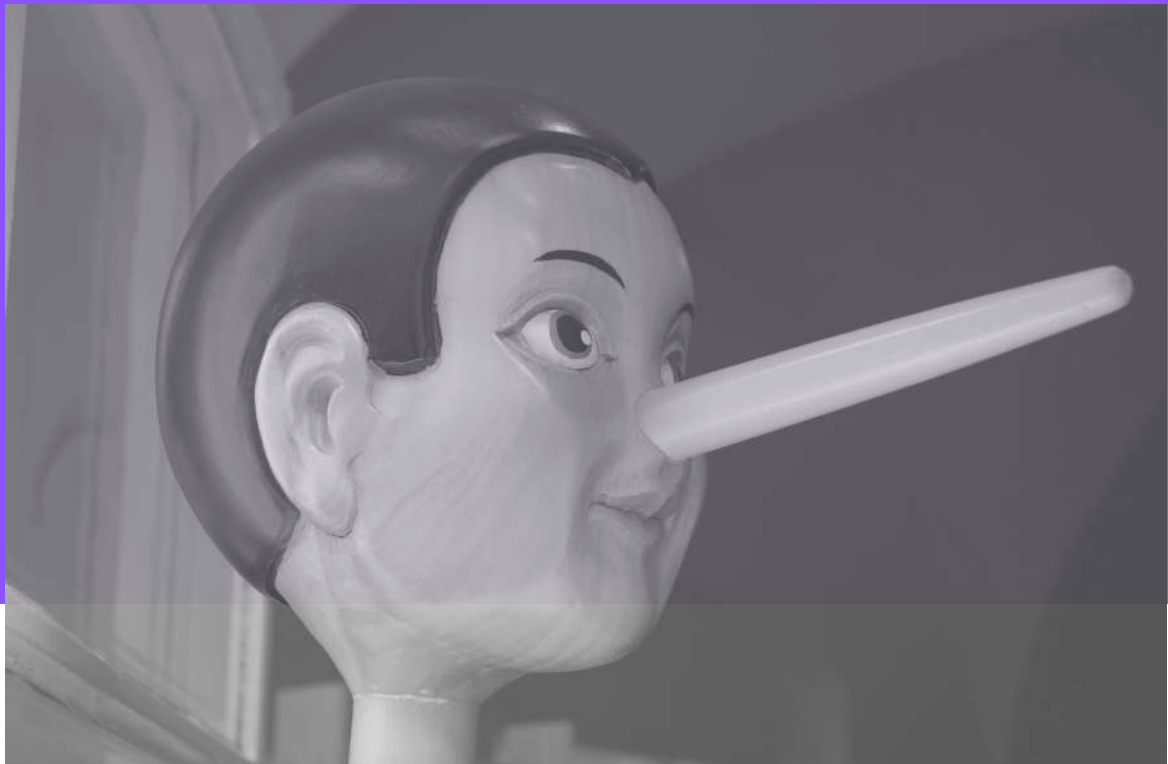
- How are we going to play our next game in terms of tactics and setup?
- How are we going to reach our team goal?
- Which steps do we have to take now in order for us to reach.....?
- What will be the most important focus of practice this month/quarter?

Players work in their own group to formulate a solution. They each share their ideas within the group (one by one), then they choose a solution to further develop together as a team.

Let every group share their solution with the entire team and discuss the strengths, advantages, and usability.



2 truths and 1 lie



This exercise helps break down social barriers (if there are any), its use is most suited for the beginning of the season.

Goal: Stimulate group cohesion
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: None needed

Exercise: 2 truths and 1 lie

Explanation:

Ask all of the players to come up with three facts about themselves, two of which are true and one which is not. Encourage them to choose facts that are funny, uncommon or others might find unbelievable.

Every player reads their facts during their turn. The other players get to choose: which of these facts is not true? And which of the facts is absolutely 100% true in their opinion?

Let the player confess which of the facts are true and which one is, in fact, a lie.



*Social
skills*

I spy with my little eye



This exercise helps players realise the effect of different forms of feedback.

- Goal:** Learn how to give and receive effective feedback
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: 5 small balls, a blindfold and a basket

Exercise: I spy with my little eye

Explanation:

Ask for a volunteer. Explain to the volunteer that you will be doing an exercise with a blindfold on. Let them know that they are free to stop the exercise if they feel unsafe.

Ask the volunteer to leave the room for about 2 minutes and let someone accompany them (the second coach). As soon as the volunteer is far enough so that they can't hear you anymore, instruct the other players:

When the volunteer returns, they will be blindfolded and asked to throw 5 balls into the basket. As soon as the volunteer has the blindfold on, one of the other players will place the basket (as quietly as they can) somewhere on the court/field, about 3 meters away from the volunteer. This will ensure that the volunteer has no way of knowing where the basket is. As soon as the basket is in place, the volunteer will be asked to start their attempt to throw all of the balls into the basket.

The process will be repeated 4 times (the volunteers has 5 tries per round and thus throws 4x5 balls).

1. During the first try, everyone is to remain silent
2. During the second try, all of the players will only provide negative feedback (what a bad throw, you missed, not even close, etc.)
3. During the third attempt, players will only give general positive feedback (well done, nice try, good throw, etc.)
4. During the last attempt, two players will provide focussed and specific feedback (a little to the left, throw a little harder, etc.)

After the fourth attempt, the volunteer takes off their blindfold. How did they feel after each try? Why did they feel that way?

You can choose to repeat the process with another volunteer after the reflection.

End the exercise by discussing the effects of the different types of feedback, what was most effective and useful? What does that mean in practice?



Negotiate in a team



Conflicts arise in every team, that is why it is so important for players to learn how they can solve them in a healthy and effective manner. You can choose to connect this exercise to the set team goals or use it whenever tensions start to arise.

- Goal:** Learn about different conflict strategies
Duration: 30 minutes
Materials: Post-its, cards, pens, whiteboard and a marker

Exercise: Negotiate in a team

Explanation:

Divide the team into groups of 3 or 4 players. Let each group brainstorm about possible conflicts that could arise within their team and let them write it down on a post-it (being too late, yelling at someone else, slacking off, not sticking to the team guidelines, being rude, etc.)

Ask each of the groups to divide the conflicts into several categories and to think of ways to solve each of these types of conflict. Let them write down their strategies on the cards.

Bring the groups together and create a large board with categories, examples of conflicts, and effective solutions to solve each conflict.

Ask each player, what strategy or solution stood out the most (in a positive way) and is something they are going to try.



I'm listening



One of the most important conditions of having successful and healthy relationships is having the ability to listen (actively and carefully). The following exercise helps players to focus on the other and practice their listening skills.

- Goal:** Strengthen listening skills
Duration: 15 minutes
Materials: Whiteboard or Flipboard, post-its and coloured markers

Exercise: I'm listening

Explanation:

Describe the following strategy to the players:

H – Hold on, stop with whatever you are doing!

E – Eye contact, focus on the other person. Tilt your head slightly so you can remain eye contact and listen well

A – Ask questions and show interest. Look forward to what the other will say, chances are good that you will learn something new and interesting.

R – Rewind. Repeat what the other has told you (in your head) and think about what the most important part of the message is to them. Summarize what you have understood so far to make sure you are on the same page.

Ask the players to create duos. One of them starts by sharing a story, while the other listens actively for three minutes without saying anything. So listen, pay attention and focus on the other.

Let them switch roles and repeat the exercise.

Ask each duo to discuss the first round. Did they really feel the other was listening? What made them feel listened to? How hard was it not to say or comment on their story?

Round 2:

Create new duos and repeat the exercise. This time, they should use the entire HEAR strategy.

Change roles and repeat the exercise once more.

To make sure their feedback aligns with the experience best, ask each duo to reflect before and after switching roles.

Did they feel the other was listening? What did they do well, what did you miss?

Afterward, discuss the exercise with the group. Which letters mattered most to them? What made them feel understood? When did they doubt if the other had really understood them?



Zig zag



This exercise stimulates the development of strategic and critical thinking.

Goal: Improve critical thinking
Duration: 20-30 minutes
Materials: Ribbons, coloured tape and coloured vests

Exercise: Zig zag

Explanation:

Choose a large area (about half a field or court) and highlight the middle of the area with a coloured line, thus creating two halves. Then place several horizontal and vertical lines with coloured tape or ribbons on both sides (create your own Mondriaan).

Split the team up into two groups and provide one of the teams with coloured vests. Both teams take place behind the dead ball line, each on the opposite sides of the field.

Give both teams the task to cross the dead ball line of the other team with all team members.

These are the rules:

1. Teams are safe on their own side
2. Players can only advance by following the lines
3. Players are not allowed to change direction unless they are at a crossing point (of two or more lines)
4. As soon as a player reaches the side of their opponent, they can be blocked by them
5. If a player gets blocked before reaching the dead ball line of their opponent, they have to start all over again
6. Teams should strategise together



Skillbully kind



This exercise stimulates the moral development of players by setting up positive interactions between players. The exercise is most effective when coaches and trainers participate. Parents and caregivers can also be invited to join in.

Goal:	Stimulate moral development
Duration:	Variable
Materials:	Hand-out

Exercise: Skillfully kind

Explanation:

Give your players the hand-out “Skillfully Kind” at the end of your practice.

Tell them you have prepared a challenge for them. Everyone who succeeds to fulfill this challenge can give you a training exercise of one minute (you can also offer them a different reward).

The only rule of the challenge is that they have to provide evidence of completing at least 3 of the tasks within this challenge. This can be done by taking a picture when you complete the task or by having someone signing their name under the task if they witnessed you doing so.



Hand-out: Skillfully kind

Compliment 3 people sincerely about something.

Ask someone, who you normally wouldn't ask, about their day

Write a thank you note to your coach, trainer or teacher and hand it to them

Make small talk with a shop assistant when grocery shopping

Learn to say: have a great game in another language

Write a kind card or note to someone and secretly put it in their bag or backpack

Smile at 10 people you don't know at your club



Hold the door open for someone else

Do a chore around the house without being asked to do so to help out.

Surprise an elder with a bouquet of flowers (feel free to pick some from your garden)

Write down two traits you have that make you feel proud about who you are

Choose your own good deed



Respect



This exercise teaches youth players how to be respectful towards their teammates and people at the club.

Goal: Stimulate moral development
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: Respect cards

Exercise: R E S P E C T

Explanation:

Respect can be a difficult concept to grasp, what does it mean to be respectful?

It is easier for youth players to learn respectful behaviour by seeing and experiencing it. Use the respect cards in support of this lesson.

Let players play out various scenes in smaller groups with the help of the respect cards.

Players can switch roles and play out scenarios with one or more of their teammates. When they finish a scenario, they are to discuss it together. How did the solutions play out? Were they respectful? What could they have done differently?

As a coach, you can support their learning by helping them come up with different solutions. Talk with your team about what respect looks like in daily life and on the field/courtlike and let them use the most popular examples during their role-play.

You can also flip the exercise and give out respect cards to players who show the actual behaviour you are looking for.

Use the following cards in support of this exercise:



RESPECT cards

RESPECT

Helping another player, who has fallen down, get back up

RESPECT

Saying "thank you" when someone offers you something

RESPECT

Throwing your trash in the bin

RESPECT

Listening to your trainer when they explain an exercise

RESPECT

Congratulate your opponent with a match played well

RESPECT

Take someone else's wishes or needs into account

RESPECT

Showing up on time for practice or a game

RESPECT

Offering the opponent something to drink during and after the game/match

RESPECT

Motivate and cheer for your teammates

RESPECT kaartjes

RESPECT

Help the trainer set up exercises and clean up after practice

RESPECT

Wait patiently for your turn

RESPECT

Take a stand for someone who is treated wrongly

RESPECT

Actively involving someone when they are being (or feel) excluded

RESPECT

Ask if you can help someone if they look like they might need it

RESPECT

Help a team mate if they have difficulty with a move or tactic

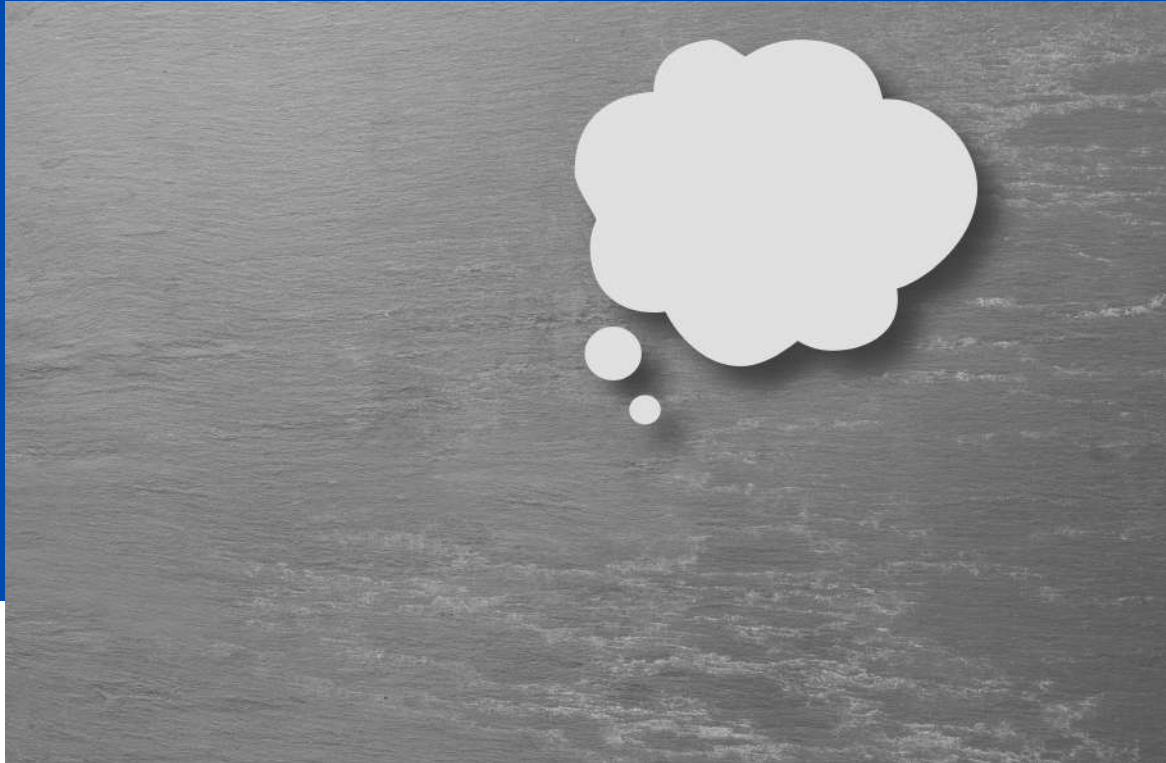
RESPECT

RESPECT

RESPECT

Flexibility

What a wonderful terrible idea



This exercise stimulates the development of creative thinking skills and solution-oriented thinking.

Goal: Stimulate mental flexibility
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Pen and paper

Exercise: What a wonderful terrible idea

Explanation:

Divide the players into groups with as much diversity as possible. Mix the more extroverted players with the more introverted players and the creative players with the more structured players.

Then choose a subject and ask each group to create a list with the worst possible ideas they could think of:

- Worst idea for designing a canteen or dressing room
- Worst tactic for a match
- Worst idea for practice
- Worst idea for a team outing

You can ask the players for input around the subject to use.

Let every group choose one of the subjects on the list and have them create a list with 15 to 20 of their worst ideas.

Proceed by letting each group choose their best worst idea and prepare a pitch as to why this idea is so amazing.

Let all of the groups pitch their idea and end the exercise with a reflection.

How have they experienced the pitches? How can you change a bad idea into a gem?



Numbers



This exercise teaches players to deal with changes and to shift their mindsets quickly.

Goal: Stimulate mental flexibility
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: None needed

Exercise: Numbers

Explanation:

This exercise can be used on a regular basis during practice and has three different versions.

Version 1:

Let players execute an individual exercise on the field and call out a number with varying intervals. If the players hear the number, they have to form groups as quickly as possible consisting out of the exact same size as that number. If players fail to do so (or choose the players who took the longest) they are taken out of the challenge.

Version 2:

Connect an exercise/ move to certain numbers. For example:

1. Run across the field/around the court turning clockwise
2. Run across the field/around the court counterclockwise
3. Do 3 push-ups
4. Do 4 burpees

Let them start at a slower pace and call out different numbers, you can speed up the intervals or extend the number of exercises you use as you go along.

Version 3:

This version helps players learn to collaborate by watching each other's body language.

The players call out a number taking turns. The goal is to see how far they can get. Each number has to be called out by a different player, spontaneously. The player calling out a number appoints the next player by using their body language.

The rules of this game are as followed:

- Only one player can call out a number.
- They are not allowed to plan the sequences in advance.
- If two or more players call out a number at the same time, they have to start all over again.
- They can't point to each other.
- They can't call out or whistle.

Discuss how the team experienced the exercise, how can they use what they learned during a game/match? What signals did they catch? How can they use body language to their advantage?



Chaos training



This exercise helps players to accept changes and think on their feet.

Goal: Stimulate (mental) flexibility
Duration: 15 minutes
Materials: Cones, balls, and goals

Exercise: Chaos training

Explanation:

This exercise can be used on a regular basis during practice and has three different versions.

Version 1:

During this exercise, the team is divided into two groups. These two groups will play a game against each other. After three minutes the conditions of the game will change by adding another ball to the game. Because of this, the players will all have to adjust quickly. Besides the adaptability this requires from each player, it also requires them to communicate together about using a new tactic.

Make sure to add the ball during the game (the game will not be paused).

Version 2:

During this exercise, the team is divided into two groups. Each group gets a side of the field/court to defend. After three minutes, the coach or trainer calls out and tells the groups to change sides. Again, three minutes later, have them switch sides again.

Switching sides happens while continuing the game.

Version 3:

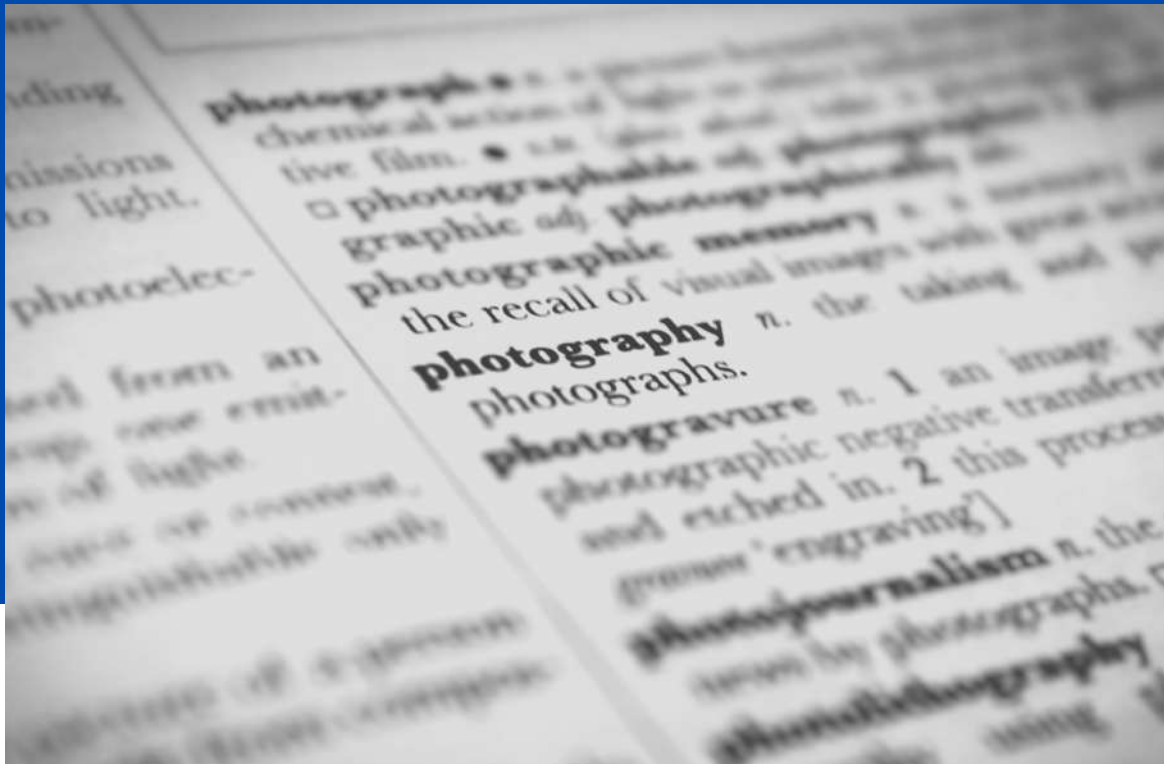
During this exercise, the team is divided into two groups. These groups will play against each other. Every player gets a number (between 1 and 5). Start by putting numbers 1, 2, and 3 together in one group and 3, 4, and 5 in the opposing group. During the game, you call out two numbers (between 1 and 5). Everyone with those numbers switches teams. Because of the changes, everyone has to adapt quickly.

Ask your players how they experienced the exercise afterward. Do they know what the goal of the exercise was?

Make sure to explain that changing the circumstances of the game, helps them develop flexibility and adaptability. Also, not only requiring the individual to adapt but asking the entire team to adapt together, strengthens their ability to collaborate as a team.



Our own language



This exercise stimulates the development of their creative thinking, flexible thinking, and adapt to certain circumstances.

Goal: Stimulate creative thinking
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: None needed

Exercise: Our own language

Explanation:

Ask all players to form a circle. Appoint a player to start with stating a word or the beginning of a proverb (it doesn't have to be an existing one).

Go around the circle and ask each player to add another word until the team feels that the saying or proverb is complete, by clapping their hands.

You can help them along by sharing some sayings or proverbs in the beginning. For instance, use some of the sayings of Johan Cruyff, who was famous for inventing his own sayings.

Like: The bread will bake better when the oven is hot.



The stroop task



This exercise supports the development of flexible thinking.

Goal: Stimulate cognitive thinking
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: PowerPoint presentation “de Stroop task”, laptop and screen.

Exercise: The stroop task

Explanation:

This exercise is quite simple, start the presentation and ask the children to call out the colour of the word.

Important: It is not about the word itself but about the colour of the word!

By repeating the exercise twice with a reflective moment between the first and second round and again after their second round, you can help the players realise that flexibility is a skill they can train their brains in.

If one of your players has a visual impairment, for instance, because they are colourblind, this task might be too challenging or even impossible to do. If so, give them a guiding task or split the team up into two groups and have one of the groups do the exercise while the other group proceeds with regular training. Both strategies enable players to sit the exercise out without it being highlighted.



Goal setting

My team (has) class



This exercise is meant to improve the reflective abilities of the team, help them with goal setting and learn to connect strategies with the set goals. Repeat the exercise regularly and track progress.

Goal: Set team goals and learn how to self-assess
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Quality card

Exercise: My team (has) class

Explanation:

Take out the quality card and discuss the ability of the team to score well on all elements on the card.

Walkthrough all of the concepts that are stated in the quality card together first, so everyone has a shared understanding of their meaning.

The first time you fill in the quality card, it will help you establish a baseline and a means to track your team's progress.

Ask the team to choose one item on the quality card that they wish to get better at and have them formulate a positive and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic, and Time-bound) goal for it.

As soon as the team has formulated their team goal, have them brainstorm ideas about how to reach their goal. What will they need to do, starting right then and there?



Hand-out: Quality card



Team:

Date:

<i>Team element</i>	<i>Our score</i> 1/10	<i>Feedback</i>
Collaboration/ Teamwork		
Responsability		
Adaptability		
Entrepreneurial behaviour		
Trustworthiness		
Perseverance and commitment		

Hand-out: Quality card



Team:

Date:

<i>Team element</i>	<i>Our score</i>	<i>Feedback</i>
Communication
Technical skills
Tactics
Postional play
Fitness and endurance		

Signed by the team:

Hand-out: Team goals



Team:

Date:

Team goal

Steps

We will reach this when:

.....

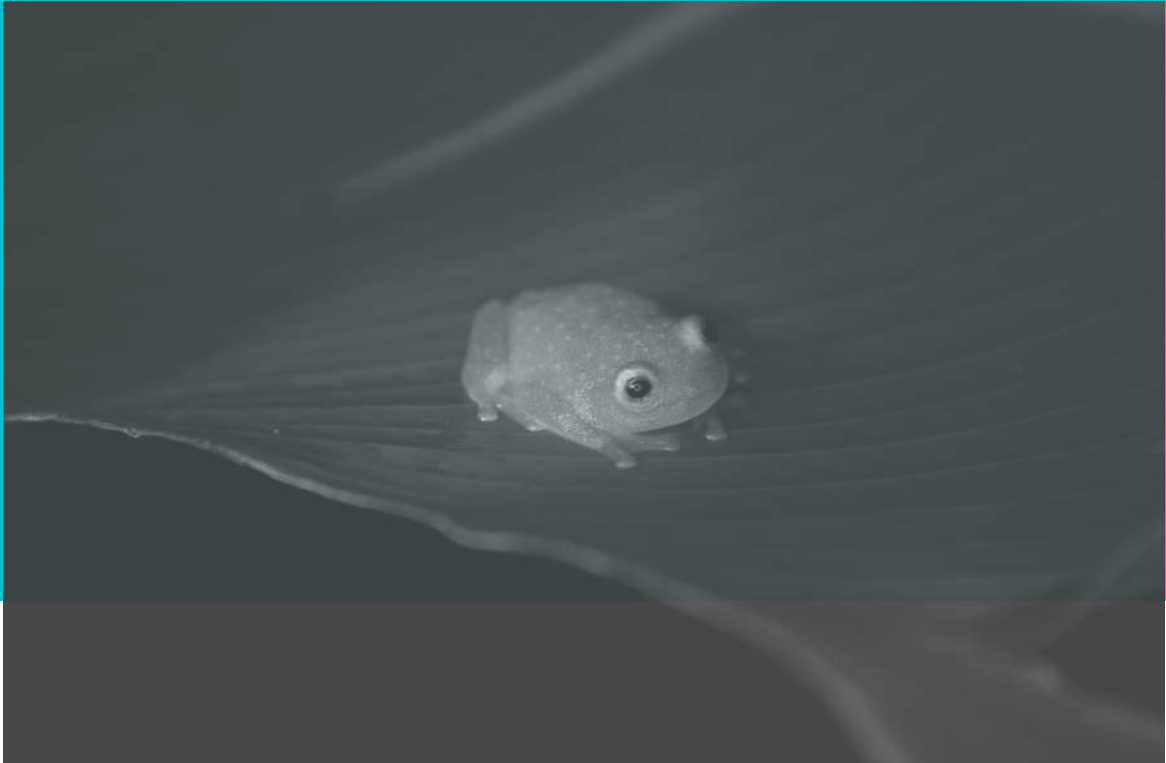
.....

.....

.....

Signed by the team:

Setting Mini-goals



This exercise is a perfect way to introduce the principle of goal setting.

Goal: Introduce goal setting
Duration: 5 minutes
Materials: None needed

Exercise: Setting mini-goals

Explanation:

Ask each player to come up with a small goal for the upcoming practice. They can come up with something themselves or ask their parents/caregivers for support.

Before you let them answer the question, let them know what exercises you have planned for the upcoming practice. This will help them adjust their goal to the exercises that have been chosen already, making their goals achievable.

When practice starts, every player shares their mini-goal with the rest of the team while all others listen carefully.

Some mini-goal examples:

- I want to offer three good assists during the end game.
- I want to give positive feedback to 4 or more players during practice
- I want to be the fastest at the sprinting exercise at the end of practice

Reflect on the goals after practice. Did everyone reach their goal? What made them successful (or not)?

What can they do next time to make sure to reach their goal?

Try to emphasise the value of goal setting. Even in daily life, setting goals can be very beneficial.

A good example is: "Today I will make my last two assignments of my math homework half an hour before having dinner".

Discuss the possible advantages of setting goals.



Drawing circles



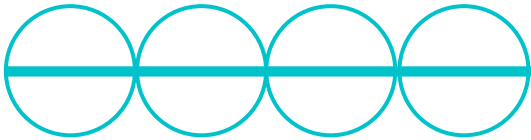
This exercise teaches players to concentrate on a task while under pressure.

- Goal:** Practice task-related attention and how to deal with the pressure to perform
- Duration:** 10 minutes
- Materials:** Pen and paper

Exercise: Drawing circles

Explanation:

Give every player a piece of paper and a pen. The aim is to let the players draw four circles next to each other and set a horizontal stripe through all four circles.



For every series they complete, the player receives 1 point. The exercise consists out of 3 rounds of 30 seconds each. All players start as soon as the coach/trainer gives the signal.

1. Who's the best? During this round, the players try to obtain the highest score possible. Discuss the results as a group.
2. Improve yourself. During the second round, the player tries to improve their score from the first round.
3. Relax and have fun. During the last round, the players perform the exercise without a goal or mission. Tell the team you are doing it for fun and as sort of a cool-down. Make a joke before you give the start sign

Explain to the team that some players perform better when there is a competitive element present. Other players perform at their best when they have a self-oriented goal set. And others perform best when they are relaxed and having fun.

Proceed by asking all of your players to look at their own performances, what was their best round? And why do they think that they did best in that specific round? Which round produced the best (best looking) circles?

End the exercise with the question of what they learned about themselves through this exercise.



*Perspective
development*

Another perspective



This exercise helps players to look at how their position and perspective influence their opinion. Players learn to look at their personal lens. This is a great exercise to use after an incident has occurred.

Goal: Create awareness about subjectivity
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: Hand-out

Exercise: Another perspective

Explanation:

Gather the team and ask them what perspective is. What do they believe it means? If you take a picture, it can be taken in many different ways, you can take a panorama picture, a group picture, a portrait, an action picture, a still, or a detailed picture by using zoom. You can take it with a flash or layer it with a filter. you can take it from a high point, from below, or from eye level. When you take a detailed picture, it is impossible to know what happens outside of your picture frame.

We often experience only certain details of what happens in the world, because we only have our own perspective to go on, media sometimes provides another perspective by showing us the view on a situation from someone else's point of view.

Read the poem on the hand-out together. Discuss each verse so you can be certain that everyone understood it.

End with a reflective discussion, have they ever been convinced of being right while the other was too? Is there only one way to look at an event? How can you deal with someone who has a different view or opinion? If you tell someone they are right, does that automatically mean that you admit to being wrong?

Explain that differences in perspective also occur on the field. How your team experiences the game might be different from the experience of your opponent. And how you experience the game, probably even differs (however so slightly) from your teammate.

For instance, if you are losing a game, it can quickly feel like the referee is against you or as if your opponent plays unfairly. While if you are winning, you might feel really good about the match and decide it happened because of your talent or teamwork.

Your opponent could have the opposite experience, that doesn't mean either of you is wrong. It is all a matter of perspective.



Hand-out: The six men of Indostan

*It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.*

*The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a WALL!"*

*The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho, what have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a SPEAR!"*

*The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spoke:
"I see," quote he, "the Elephant
Is very like a SNAKE!"*



The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quote he:
"IT is clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a TREE!"

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "Even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a FAN!"

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quote he, "the Elephant
Is very like a ROPE!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!



What do you see?



This exercise helps players develop their listening skills, communicational skills and creates awareness around the different ways to one can experience the same location or event.

Goal: Stimulate mental flexibility to gain perspective
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Pen and paper

Exercise: What do you see?

Explanation:

Ask for two volunteers and put them back to back. Give one of them a simple picture and the other one a pen and a piece of paper. Ask the one with the picture, to explain the picture in great detail, enabling the other to copy it exactly as it is.

When they are done, talk about the results and introduce the meaning of the word *perspective*.

Ask the players what the word means and how it is connected to their sports. Why is sharing your perspective with others important? How can you share your perspective effectively? When are you successful in sharing your perspective? And how can we set our own perspective aside so we can truly listen to the perspective of someone else?

After the group discussion, let them practice the ideas they mentioned. A debate is a perfect tool to do just that.

Divide the players into teams of max. 4 players. Half of them are assigned to talk in favour of the topic you are about to give them and the other half of the groups are to object to it.

Choose a topic that is relevant to your sports, for instance, the value of mixed teams. As soon as the groups have prepared their arguments, match each player with another player with the opposite viewpoint. Ask them to have a discussion together.

Afterward, let all of the players change perspective. If they were in support of the topic, they are to make a case against it now. Let them switch partners and repeat the debate in pairs.

End with a reflection, how did it feel to plea for a perspective other than your own? What have you learned or come to realise through the exercise?

In what way could you show your partner you were willing and open to listen? How did you try to understand your partner? How could you tell if your partner understood and respected your perspective? Who had a partner that fiercely stated their case? How did it affect you? Who had a calm and patient partner with a strong argument? How did it feel listening to them?

How can you apply the learnings from today on and around the field?



Self-knowledge

I am thankful



This is an easy exercise, usable for most age groups. It is most beneficial when the exercise is done before practice or before a game. By writing down their positive experiences, the children obtain a more positive mood and learn to focus on positive experiences in their daily lives.

- Goal:** Stimulate a positive mindset and improve learning capacity
Duration: 5 minutes during practice, 10 minutes a week at home
Materials: Notitieblokken of schriften (1 per speler)

Exercise: I am thankful

Explanation:

This exercise works best when it is repeated regularly, preferably during 10 to 12 consecutive weeks. The players can bring a notebook and a pen to practice/each game or they can do the exercise at home (with their parents or caregivers).

Introduce the exercise by providing each player with a notebook and ask them to create a thankfulness list. They can take create a list after practice or after the game (or more often if they'd like), give them 10 minutes to write down 5 things that made them feel happy or thankful that week (or day).

You can provide them these 3 ideas:

- Something fun that happened;
- Something they did and made them feel proud or content about themselves and;
- A positive trait they have or which helped them achieve something that week (or day).

If you experience difficulty with the follow-up, you can bring the team together and do the exercise orally at first. The positive mood that comes from sharing is highly contagious!



Thinking, feeling, saying and doing



Deze oefening leert spelers beter begrijpen hoe hun woorden en daden verbonden zijn aan hun gedachten en gevoelens. Zo worden ze zich bewust van hun eigen patronen en leren ze anders naar de ander te kijken.

- Goal:** Stimulate compassion and self-awareness
Duration: 15 minutes
Materials: Whiteboard or Flipboard, post-its and markers

Exercise: Thinking, feeling, saying and doing

Explanation:

Explain to the players that mapping out your thoughts, feelings, what you say, and how you act, will help you gain insights into how your thoughts and feelings are connected to the things you say and how you act. That is why today, they will be working on creating an empathy map.

This card consists of four parts: Thinking, Feeling, Saying, and Doing.

Give them an example by using yourself as an example: If I get nervous, I am afraid I will make mistakes. If I feel that way, I start to breathe more quickly, I get hot and start saying sorry for everything I feel I'm doing wrong. This leads me to make more mistakes.

Draw a large circle and write our team on top of the paper. Divide the circle into four pieces and label each quarter with one of the words: Thinking, Feeling, Saying, Doing.

Give every player four post-its and ask them to write a feeling on the first one. On the second one, they write down a thought that pops up when they feel that way.

On the third one, they can write down what they often say when they feel that way and on the last one, what they do if that happens.

The players can stick their post-its in the quarters of the board (start with your own). As soon as everyone is done, read the notes. Do make sure that the space feels safe, that players are open to listen and respond compassionately to what is shared.

If there is a player that gives an example in which they do the opposite of what they feel then stop the process and take a moment to discuss it. Why do we sometimes do or act the opposite of how we feel?

If the other players don't come up with an example, give them an example in which you present yourself differently from how you feel.

Take a picture of the circle and post-its and share it with the players to reflect on later. Tell them they can repeat the exercise after they've had a fight or whenever they struggle with something.



I blow you away



This exercise shows players a way to release stress. It is a simple mindfulness exercise that they can use before important moments.

Goal: Strengthen emotional regulation
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: Paper and pens

Exercise: Ik blow you away

Explanation:

Ask your players to visualise (imagine) how their stress or tension looks like in their minds or heads. Does it have a colour, does it make a sound, does it have a texture or weight (is it black, treacly, thumping, heavy)?

Ask them to imagine how they exhale or breathe out the stress or to imagine how the stress leaves their body through their feet and disappears into the ground.

Let them imagine how the feeling in their body changes into their favourite colour, plays their favourite tune and how it brightens and feels light inside their head, shoulders, chest, arms, hands, legs and feet. A couple of dance moves and laughing together are perfect ways to release tension!

Players who find it difficult to imagine themselves can imagine that their stress and tension look like dark thunderclouds floating in their stomachs. Ask them to blow out these clouds by breathing in deeply through their nose and then slowly releasing all the clouds through their mouths. Let them repeat it 5 to 10 times, or until they feel like all the clouds have left their body.

An alternative way to do this exercise is by asking players to write down their biggest fear or worry, shred it to pieces and flush it through the toilet or throw it away.



What would you do?



Research shows that youth often responds by "freezing" during complex and tense situations. This means that, if the youth doesn't know how to respond to a situation, they will often ignore it or stay silent. This exercise helps players with making difficult situations and teaches them to confront those moments.

Goal: Strengthen problem-solving skills
Duration: 20 minutes
Materials: Pen and paper (optional)

Exercise: What would you do?

Explanation:

Give your players a list with a couple of situations in which they would have to make a difficult decision. Ask them to write down how they would come to that decision, how would they handle it?

Discuss the answers to each situation with the group, did they find them difficult to solve? What solutions did they come up with? Which sound the best and why?

If the players respond positively to this exercise, you can ask them to bring in difficult situations to discuss with the group.

For example:

- Someone seems to be out to get you and is bullying you. What do you do?
- A teammate has given you a nickname that makes you feel uncomfortable, what do you do?
- You have hurt your ankle right before an important game, what do you do?
- While you and your friend are chilling out together, your friend accidentally steps on your laptop and it breaks. What do you do?
- You witness a girl being harassed by a group of boys at the club. What do you do?
- You notice that one of your teammates sits alone a lot. What do you do or say?



Do I have the time?



This exercise helps youth players learn how to prioritise and effectively negotiate goals.

- Goal:** Strengthen critical thinking skills
Duration: 10 minutes
Materials: To-do list, pens (other materials optional)

Exercise: Do I have the time?

Explanation:

Create a list with tasks/exercises and connect a number of points to each of them. The longer a task will take to complete, the higher the number of points.

The point is to create such a long list, that the players will never be able to complete everything on it but will be forced to make choices about what they will and will not do.

Put joined tasks on your list like:

- Do 25 jumping jacks together
- Collect 12 cups
- Run 3 rounds around the field together

Divide the team into groups of 5 or 6 players and give them 10 minutes to collect as many points as possible.

Reflect on how they made their decisions and how each group decided on the value of each task.



Concentration grid



This exercise teaches players to stay focused on their task, when distractions appear. They will also learn to recognise in which moment they often lose their focus.

- Goal:** Strengthen concentration skills
Duration: 15 minutes
Materials: Pen, paper and the concentration grid

Exercise: Concentration grid

Explanation:

The idea is to have them cross out as many consecutive numbers as possible. For example, after 00 they can cross out 01, 02, etc.

The entire exercise consists out of 5 different rounds. Each round takes about 45 seconds. Let the players start after your mark and write down their score after each round.

They can start the next round at the number they ended within the round before. You can also have them count backwards from 99 if you want to make it a bit more challenging for them.

- **New**

The players execute the task as quickly as they can. (mark your score)

- **Distraction**

The players execute the task as quickly as possible but distract all of the players as much as you can!

- **Setting a goal**

Ask the players to set a goal and try to reach it.

- **Improve your record**

Let the players look at their highest score and ask them to improve their personal record during this round.

- **Cooling down**

No pressure, this is just for fun!

Explain that the results will likely show that some perform at their best when the pressure is high, some perform at their best when they have a clear goal to reach, and some when they are relaxed.

In which round did they make mistakes? Which round was their best round? Which round did they feel happiest with? What did the exercise tell them about their own preferences and performance?



Hand-out: Concentration grid

Explanation:

Write down your scores in the table below. Write down the numbers you crossed out, how well your concentration was and if you felt comfortable per round.

Condition	Number	Concentration	Pleasant
New		Poor (P), Average (A), Great (G)	Yes (Y) or not (N)
Distraction			
Goal			
Record			
Relaxed			



Results:

1. New

Good & Comfortable: You do well in new situations, with room to explore and find your own way.

Poor & Uncomfortable: You are probably not a fan of new situations, they can take a little time to get used to. Repetition creates peace of mind in your case.

2. Distracted

Good & Comfortable: You work well under distractions, you perform better when you have the ability to distract yourself, right until the match.

Poor & Uncomfortable: Take time to ground yourself before you have to perform, walk in nature, listen to music or meditate and clear your head.

3. Goal setting

Good & Comfortable: You perform best when you have a clear goal or something to focus on.

Poor & Uncomfortable: You have trouble with high expectations, it feels uncomfortable and can have a limiting effect on you.

4. Improve your record

Good & Comfortable: The higher the goal and the further you push yourself, the better you perform.

Poor & Uncomfortable: As soon as you feel you must reach a certain goal or do better than you did before, you get impacted negatively and perform worse than you normally would.

5. Cooling-down

Good & Comfortable: You perform best when you are relaxed and at ease. If this is you, it is best to focus on having fun and the process itself instead of on how you or your team performs.

Poor & Uncomfortable: You perform better when having set clear goals for yourself.



Concentration grid

84	27	51	78	59	52	13	85	61	55
33	29	57	31	90	97	04	92	60	28
32	96	65	39	80	77	49	86	18	70
00	88	46	01	81	98	95	71	87	76
48	82	89	47	35	17	10	42	62	34
56	69	94	72	43	07	93	11	44	67
53	79	05	22	54	74	58	14	91	02
40	20	66	41	15	26	75	99	68	06
50	09	64	08	38	30	36	45	83	24
03	73	21	23	16	37	25	19	12	63



I see myself



This exercise teaches players how to use visualisation techniques, these will help them prepare for matches. The body doesn't recognise the difference between mentally and physically rehearsed techniques and this technique is highly effective because of it. It contributes to their self-confidence, technique, focus, task-oriented mentality, and resilience.

Goal: Improve self-confidence
Duration: Varies per player
Materials: A picture

Exercise: I see myself

Explanation:

This exercise is divided into 5 different levels which will be addressed during several sessions. You can do this exercise as a group or use it on an individual basis. Start at level one and don't proceed with the next level until the player has successfully gone through the entire level before.

For some, this exercise will be more challenging. Not everyone finds it easy to visualise something: sometimes it is more about how something feels. Ask those players to imagine how the image or action feels.

Level 1: Remember an image

Show the players an image (start with simple images and progress to more complex images).

Let them study the image in great detail and ask them to remember as many of those details as they can (take a mental picture).

Ask them to close their eyes and imagine the image in their head with as many details as possible, the colours, the shapes, and the figurines.

Repeat the process and rise the level of complexity until everyone is able to make a mental picture of a complex image.

Level 2: Let's turn

Ask the players to take an object from their bag, like their keychain, a shirt, a shoe, or a pen.

Ask them to look at the object and take in every detail. Give them all the time they need. Let them close their eyes and visualise their object in their minds with as much detail as possible. Ask them to turn the object around in their mind and look at it from every angle. Ask them to touch the object in their mind, how does it feel? What details do they see, smell or feel?

As soon as they manage this, ask them to imagine shining a bright light on their object. Can they see the shade? What do they notice?

Level 3: With open eyes

Ask the players to visualise the object from level 2 again. Remember how it feels and looks. Now repeat the process but keep your eyes open. Imagine the object lying right before you on the ground or holding it in your hand.

How does the image or feeling change when you turn the object around?



level 4: I am there

The next step is to visualise yourself within a certain situation.

Ask the players to close their eyes and imagine being in their favourite place. Where are they? Ask them as many details as you can. Do they feel or hear the wind? Is it warm or cold? Do you feel the sun on your skin or the water tingling around your feet? What do you hear or smell? Is there something to eat or drink? If so, how does it taste, and how does it feel in your mouth?

Level 5: Mental rehearsal for a game

Proceed with a mental rehearsal of a physical team play or technical skill. As soon as you have explained the technique or play in detail and each player knows their position and role, ask them to go and stand in position.

Let them:

- Take a deep breathe and close their eyes
- Go through the play or technique in their mind, one step at the time
- Answer which of their skills will help them succeed in this play or mastering this technique?
- Walk through their role and responsibility in detail: what do they do, when, and how does every step feels?

- What is their goal? Play your every movement in your mind and feel them in your muscles, which muscles do you use, and at what point in time?
- What will you do if ... (let them visualise relevant scenario's)
- How do you feel if you have mastered the technique or the moment you successfully finish your play?

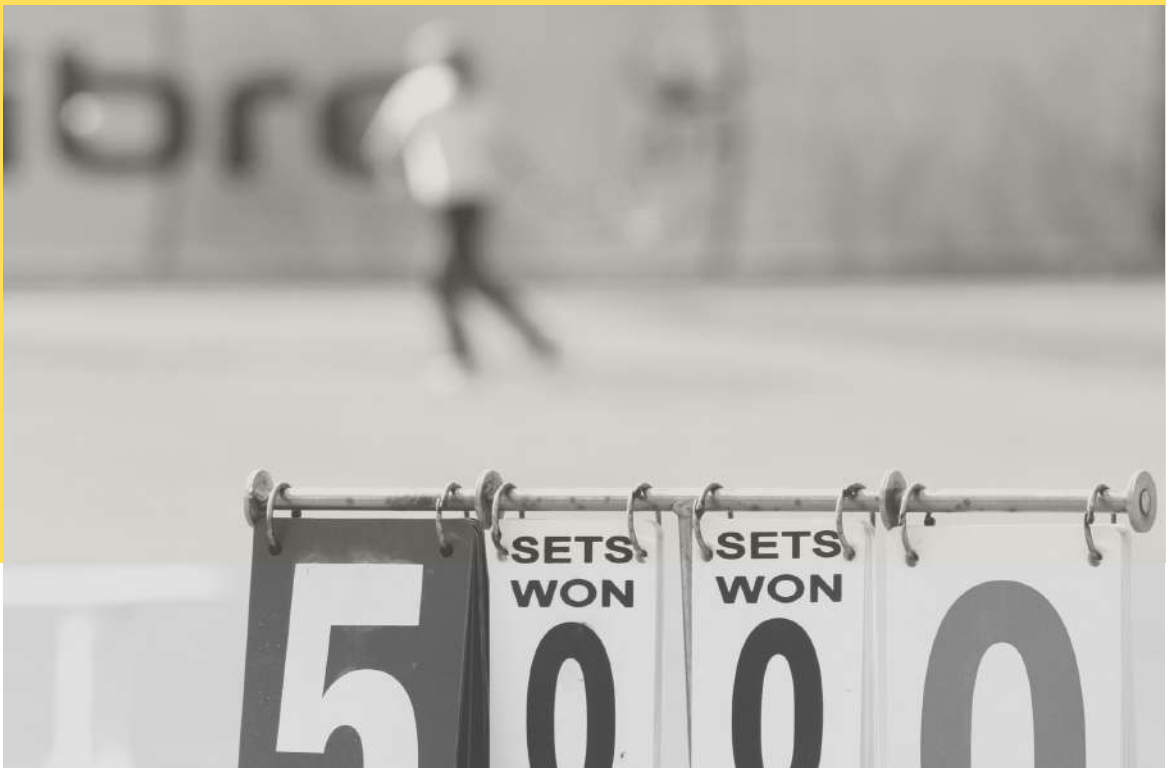
Ask the more motivated players to use a notebook in support of their mental preparation. They can write down the answers to these questions and the different tactics for each scenario after their visualisation.

Encourage them to go through their notes on a regular basis (for instance before going to bed).

You can also ask players to rerun important/defining moments of a game or practice in their minds. Ask them to repeat their successful actions. Let them repeat the timing, tactics, muscle use, or force in their minds.



My idol scores



This exercise teaches players how to use mental imagery to prepare for a game. It will help build self-confidence, technique, and focus.

Goal: Build self-confidence
Duration: 15 tot 20 minutes
Materials: None needed

Exercise: My idol scores

Explanation:

Make sure that all players are seated comfortably. Ask them to think of their sports idol, for example, Lionel Messi, Michael Jordan, or Eva de Goede.

The players imagine (with their eyes closed) how they embody their idol. Let them imagine their hands, feet, how their muscles flex and how they move as their idol.

Describe a situation in which they, being their idol, are making a decision-making penalty, sprint, pass, corner, or move. Stretch the importance of the moment, for instance, a WC-final. Let them address all of their senses, how do they feel (do they have an adrenaline rush)? What do they smell (the grass)? What sounds do they hear (the audience)? How do their feet and arms move? How long are their strides?

Help the players to create the image as detailed and strong as possible by guiding their minds through asking questions. Let them envision themselves, succeeding at that very moment. Where does the ball hit the net? When do you pass by your last opponent? How do your teammates react when they see you? And what about the audience watching you? What do you do after you score/succeed?

Ask them to re-open their eyes when they are done with the exercise, let them do so slowly and without talking. As soon as everybody is ready, reflect on the exercise together. How did it feel?

Explain to them that when we imagine certain situations so vividly, it actually has a proven positive effect on how we perform in real life. Our body doesn't have the ability to differentiate mentally and physically practice effectively. This means that if we are able to rehearse something in great detail by visualising it, it is enhancing our actual skills and muscle memory.

If they have a hard time believing it, let them close their eyes again and describe how they are holding a big juicy, bright, shiny yellow lemon in their hand. Let them take a kitchen knife and cut the lemon open, the juice splashes all over your arms, you bring the bigger half to your mouth and then you take a big bite out of the lemon. What happens in their mouth when they do so?

Ask players to repeat certain exercises or plays in their heads before they go to sleep or right after they wake up. Let them imagine being their sports idol while doing so.



A positive conversation with myself



This exercise helps players gain a more positive mindset through self-affirmation and inner dialogues. Players learn how to use this skill to improve their personal resilience and self-confidence.

Goal: Improve self-confidence
Duration: 15 minutes
Materials: Hand-out

Exercise: A positive conversation with myself

Explanation:

Start the training with a positive affirmation like: Today we are going to have a great practice!

Continue by asking your players if they know what an internal dialogue is. Do they talk to themselves and how does their voice sound when they do? Ask them how they think this inner voice influences them. What happens when you talk to yourself negatively, and what happens when you talk positively?

Offer them the hand-out with 52 positive statements. Ask them if they have any good statements they use themselves (or can think of) and are not on the list.

Proceed by talking about ways to stop or diminish negative self-talk. Possible examples are:

- Question your negative thoughts (would I say this to my best friend?)
- Regularly write down things you are thankful for
- Pick your own mantra or song text that you can listen to or sing when you feel insecure
- Call out stop!
- Distract yourself by doing a physical activity

Then teach your players how they can reframe a negative thought (that isn't helpful) to a positive thought that enables them to take action and offers them more control.

For example: "we played poorly" becomes "we have learned that we need to work on X during practice" or "I am worried that nobody really likes me" becomes "It is okay to feel insecure sometimes and I will ask X how they deal with that feeling to see if that could help me".

Brainstorm with your players:

Situation #1

You walk into the canteen and see a spot at the table. The other players sitting at that table don't respond enthusiastically to your arrival and say: "Sorry, we have no spot left for you".

Negative thought: "They don't want me there because they don't like me"

Positive thought:

Situation #2

You have an important question to ask your trainer but they say they don't have any time for you.

Negative thought: "I can't fix this without them".

Positive thought:



Situation #3

You and your brother/sister are fighting over who gets to play on the Playstation. Your parent comes in and starts screaming at you, while you weren't even the one who started the fight.

Negative thought: "They always blame me! They are never on my side!"

Positive thought:

Situation #4

You just lost a game and your teammates comment on your performance. You weren't in shape and usually perform better.

Negative thought: "I sucked, the whole team hates me now"

Positive thought:

Situation #5

You are preparing for an important game and suddenly start feeling very insecure.

Negative thought: "I don't think I can do this. They are so much better than I am."

Positive thought:



A positive conversation with myself

Don't forget:

- I am enough
- There is nobody better in being me than me
- I learn and grow
- I am beautiful inside and out
- All my challenges have solutions, I just have to find them
- I forgive myself for making mistakes
- My challenges make me grow
- I like the way I am
- Today is going to be a great day
- I am confident
- I control my own destiny
- The people around me, care for me and love me for who I am
- I believe in my goals and dreams
- I stand up for what I believe in
- It is impossible to know everything but possible to learn something new with every experience
- Today I choose to think positively
- I can always improve what I want, as long as I commit to it
- I give myself permission for making choices
- I will do better next time
- I have everything I need
- My possibilities are endless
- Everything will turn out well
- I believe in myself and the people around me
- I am proud of myself
- I deserve to be happy
- I am free to make my own decisions
- My mind is a car and I am driving
- I am worthy of being loved and respected
- I will make a difference
- Today I choose to be confident
- I take charge of my own life
- I am capable of changing my dreams into reality
- I matter
- My positive thoughts will help me feel better
- I won't let my fears or doubts stop me today
- I am ready and willing to learn
- Every day offers new opportunities
- If I fall, I just get back up
- I will compare myself to nobody but me
- Trying my best is enough
- I accept who I am
- I can become who I want to be
- I make my own memories
- I am unique and have my own strengths
- I am capable of solving my problems
- It is normal to make mistakes
- I make the right decisions
- I work hard for my own happiness
- I am in charge of my feelings
- I am building my future
- I will make the world a better place
- I am ready for today!
- Today was tough, tomorrow I will try again
- I am important/interesting

