

Participation in youth sports has been strongly linked healthy and socially productive lifestyle outcomes. Every child deserves that opportunity. As coaches we are the gatekeepers of that opportunity. Putting a priority on sports specialization over participation for the most talented denies opportunity and causes 70% of youth to quit sports by age 13. Many “late bloomers” and “social contributors” are lost. Youth *Coaches of Excellence* have a diverse plan for inclusion.



Inclusive Coaching

Being inclusive means adapting and modifying coaching practices and activities to ensure that every participant - regardless of age, gender, ability level, disability and ethnic background has the opportunity to participate if they choose to. Good coaches adapt and modify aspects of their coaching and create an environment that caters for individual needs and allows everyone to take part. The onus of inclusion rests with the coach.

Many people think that you need special skills or knowledge to coach participants with a disability. This is not the case. The basic skills of good coaching, when applied with an inclusive philosophy, will ensure that the inclusion of all participants including people with a disability becomes a natural part of coaching.

Planning for Inclusion;

The acronym CHANGE IT provides a tool that can be used to help modify the activity. Consider modifying the following factors to meet the individual needs of the participant:

Coaching style — for example, demonstrations, or use of questions, role models and verbal instructions

How to score or win

Area — for example, size, shape or surface of the playing environment

Number of children involved in the activity

Game rules — for example, number of bounces or passes

Equipment — for example, softer or larger balls, or lighter, smaller bats/racquets

Inclusion — for example, everyone has to touch the ball before the team can score

Time — for example, ‘How many ... in 30 seconds?’

When preparing a coaching program, examine what, if anything, needs to be adapted or modified. In other words, what or how the participant can:

- see (predominantly relevant to participants with vision impairment)
- hear (predominantly relevant to participants who are deaf or hearing impaired)
- move (predominantly relevant to participants with a physical disability)
- learn, recall or reproduce skills (predominantly relevant to participants with an intellectual disability)
- perform tasks and activities (relevant to all participants).

There are very few disabilities or medical conditions that completely preclude participation in sport. People with a disability take part in sport and physical activity for the same reasons as other people: to improve fitness, develop new skills, increase social contacts, and to have the chance to achieve and receive recognition.

Qualities and skills of an inclusive coach;

Qualities Attributes

- Patience
- Recognizing that some participants will take longer to develop skills or make progress than others
- Respect
- Acknowledging difference and treating all participants as individuals
- Adaptability Having a flexible approach to coaching and communication that recognises individual differences

Skills Attributes

- Organization
- Recognizing the importance of preparation and planning
- Safe practices
- Ensuring that every session, whether with groups or individuals, is carried out with the participants’ safety in mind
- Knowledge and Utilizing knowledge of training activities and how to modify them in order to maximize the potential of every participant