

TOP 10 TIPS

Behavioral Health: Female Athletes By Nancy Dorsey

#1 They Matter – What “Being There for Them” Really Means

Meet kids where they are and where they are may not be an awesome place. Understand that for a lot of kids, the best part of their day is being in a gym at practice. Do what you have to do to make sure when they leave, they still have a smile on their face. Do what you have to do to let them know they were seen. Do what you have to do to make sure they know you are there if they need you.

#2 This is a “We” Thing – and “We” Can Provide a Good Example

Coaches can share things/hardships about their own lives and how they overcame them. These things don't have to be sports related, they can be about life. But kids often look up to their coaches and see us as strong people. If they see someone they can respect overcoming a hardship, it gives them faith that they can do the same. (This is easier to do the older they are i.e. high school). Sports should be about moving forward... using adversity as an opportunity to grow.

#3 Investments Yield Rewards – Double Underline this One!

Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
Kids will always work harder and smarter for someone who cares about them as a person.

#4 Adele said, “...Just Like a Movie” Project the right image... celebrate your own awesome!

Model positive self-talk and talk about it a lot. The voice we hear the most is our own... in our head. So, we might as well say nice things to ourselves. Rather than “I'm terrible” talk we have to practice saying things that we did right. So, at the end of practice or, before it starts, ask them. Have them say those things publicly. Also, discuss why doing that is hard. This helps normalize this behavior. The #1 Advocate Tip is to talk and discuss important matters with those that we trust.. and that requires being able to trust and open-up.

#5 The Team “We” Factor – Bonding as Sisters

Celebrate other peoples' awesome. Model this positive talk for the kids. With social media we are so hyper critical of people. Kids in this generation have it harder because there is little they can do without the scrutiny or opinion of others. At the end of practice, stand in a circle and have them tell the person to their right or left something they did well that day. Normalize giving compliments. Looking teammates in the eye to tell them they did something well is a good thing.

#6 Ladders Are Climbed One Rung at a Time

Goal setting is important. Talk to them about setting realistic, achievable goals. Have them write them down, share them with others. Then they can either cross them off their list or see their goals achieved through effort. When that happens, they will derive/feel a warm sense of accomplishment and contribute to building their self-confidence.

#7 We Got This!

Teach them how to “tighten their ponytail and move on.” In other words, mistakes are part of every game and a part of life. Dwelling on mistakes doesn't help anyone at all. Finding a way to overcome them... and quickly, but also to learn from them. There is so much transfer from our court, out of the pools, off the playing fields and links to life. Talking about those things is huge.

#8 We Got This!

Pressure is totally self-imposed. Instead, talk about treating pressure as a privilege or a challenge. Talk to them about looking that pressure in the face and literally saying “bring it on.” Teaching them they are strong and there is no obstacle they can't overcome with hard work, a good attitude and some good old fashion faith.

#9 Roller Coasters Go Up & Down — Enjoy the Ride!

Discuss how their worth in life doesn't come from any one performance. They will have good days, bad days, and great days. Their value as a human doesn't change based on what type of performance they had.

#10 Leave the Extra Luggage at Home

Coaches can't bring their baggage to practice if they expect kids to do the same. Sports are an incredible release from stress, anxiety, depression or anything that could be bringing us down. Coaches should teach kids to use sports/exercise as stress relief; as a healthy way to overcome these things. This is an important life-long lesson!