



zoomreports

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK



**Tim Glowienka
Adrian Rausenberger
Byron Rausenberger**

Why this Book?

Have you ever stopped and wondered why 70% of Kids quit sports by 13 years of age? The academics will tell you that these are the reasons:

- **Kids Not Having Fun**
- **Lack of Playing Time**
- **Not Improving**
- **Lack of Support**
- **Poor Coaching**

We agree with these as well, but they're superficial reasons. If you dig a little deeper and try to find a common thread, you'll find that the root of the problem is Coaching and coaches. And if you dig deeper still, you'll find feedback. That's right my friends. The f word. Feedback.

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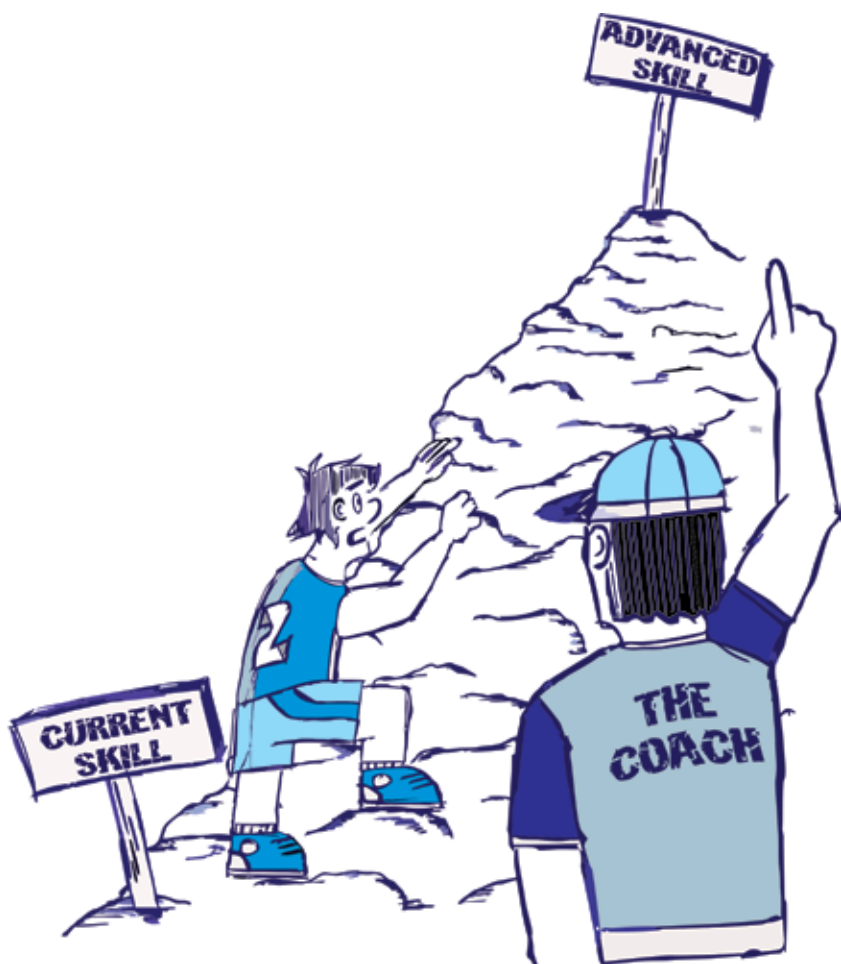
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1

Introduction

We've read a thousand books so you don't have to. That's right. We've done the summer reading, and here's the Cliffsnotes. In case you want to search them out here are a few of our favorites: Maslow, Csikszentmihaly, Robbins, Wilber, Dyer. We've dedicated the last half decade studying feedback, the psychology of feedback, neuro-linguistic programming, gestalt therapy, positive psychology, and read countless books that could bore a librarian to tears. We've applied our findings with thousands of athletes and gotten tremendous results. Instead of making you suffer through the same, we've taken the academic drivel and laid out a concise model that anyone can understand and master. Because that's what we want you to be: a master at giving feedback. A Feedback Master.

1.1 Definition of Feedback



Feedback is...

Feedback is what you say that helps a player move from their current skill level to a more advanced skill level.

Feedback is a science. You can teach how to give feedback, which means you can learn how to be a master at giving feedback. You can learn the best ways to give feedback in any possible situation of your personal life, your professional life, and your coaching life.

Feedback is an art. It's assisting, not insisting. It's being a demanding mountain sherpa that can get the best of his climbers while in the most intense circumstances.

Feedback is helping your players turn into coaches, so you don't have to hold their hand all the time.

Feedback is understanding. It doesn't matter how great of a delivery you have, if you don't listen to what they're saying, not just their words but also what they're body is saying, you could do more harm than good.

Feedback is reading this book, over and over again, and trying some of the techniques here, until you are a master.

Give Them What They Want

Let's face it: players and their parents want feedback. They crave it. They deserve it. And they deserve a coach that understands every nuance of feedback.

If you can't supply it, your players and their parents will find someone who can. You're not the only gig in town. Trust me. The best coaches, teachers, parents, etc are masters at giving feedback. So, why not learn how to give it to them properly?





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Before Feedback Will Work

Before you go out in the streets and start giving feedback, here are a few things that you have to have in order. Think of it like the things you do before you leave the house in the morning. I have a mental check list. Do I have my:

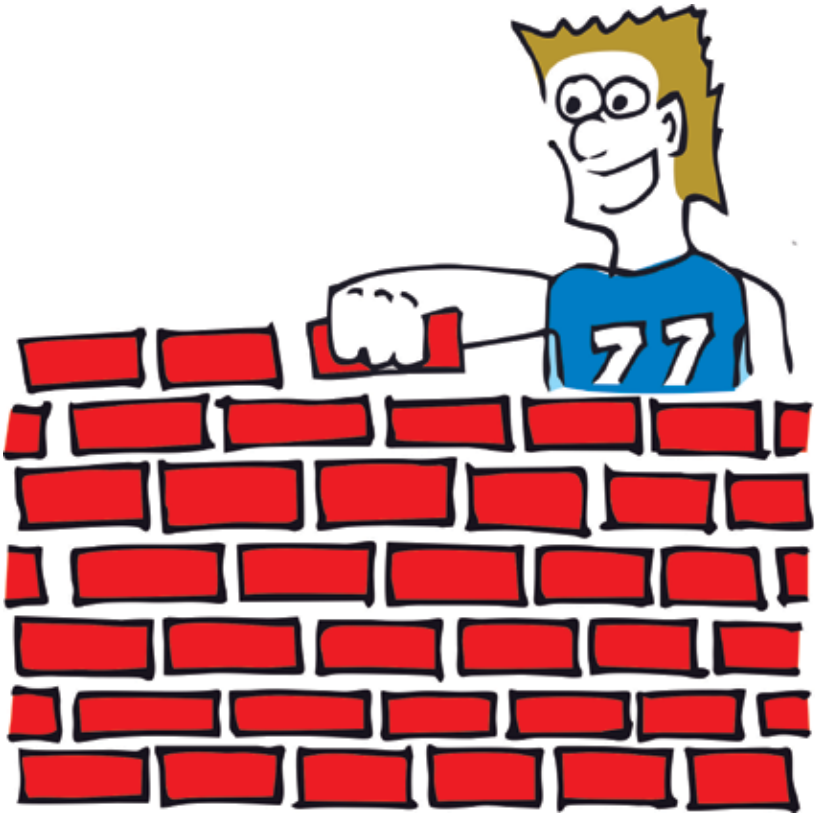
- **Keys?**
- **Wallet?**
- **Phone?**

Too many times I've been at the grocery store, buggey full of groceries, 3-deep in a 20 minute line to discover I'm without my wallet. Frustrating to say the least. Maybe you've been there before too.

Similarly, coaches should have a checklist that they should go through before giving feedback. We've found that coaches that are proficient at doing the following 4 things, have a greater impact when giving feedback.

- **Know the Fundamentals**
- **Be in the Correct Mindset**
- **Build Trust**
- **Acknowledge Feelings**

2.1 Know the Fundamentals of your Sport



If you don't know the fundamentals, how will you know

1. **If a player is doing something wrong, and**
2. **What will fix it**

Let me give you an example. You wouldn't ask your butcher to represent you in a court case would you? Probably not. Why? Because the butcher doesn't know the law. And vice versa. You wouldn't ask your lawyer to slice up a nice fillet mignon.

So, my question to you: how well versed are you in the fundamentals of your sport?

Below is a list of coaches that were obsessed with the fundamentals. And the result of their knowledge speaks for itself. They found joy in the fundamentals, and that joy transferred to their athletes. Take a page out of their book. If these coaches were the best with the fundamentals, and some of the the best coaches in the world, shouldn't you model after them and try to be a master at fundamentals too?

Butch Harman - Woods

Joe Martin - Muhammad Ali

John Wooden - 8 NCAA National Championships

Nick Bollettieri - Andre Agassi

Bob Bowman - Michael Phelps

Béla Károlyi - Mary Lou Retton

Yip Man - Bruce Lee

"I discovered early on that the player who learned the fundamentals of basketball is going to have a much better chance of succeeding and rising through the levels of competition than the player who was content to do things his own way."

— John Wooden

2.2 Be in the Correct Mindframe



If your head (and more importantly your heart) is not in the right place, your players' spidey sense will pick it up, and your feedback will be all for naught. So remember,

1. **Be Calm** - Kids do not respond well to stress.
2. **Be in a State of Possibility** - open to new ideas on how to give feedback. Remember what Einstein said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result." If you're not getting the result you want, try something new.
3. **Empathetic** - Think back to the first time you tried to ride a bike. It was tough. You fell down. I'm sure that experience was a positive one for you if your parents were empathetic with you when you skinned your knees.
4. **Confident** - Kids are like sharks and they can smell when there's blood in the water.
5. **Perceptive** - Measure to see if your feedback is working. If it is, keep on keepin on. If not, try something new.
6. **Be Grateful** - This by far is the most important. It will color your attitude, demeanor, communication, feedback with your players. Remember, being a coach is the greatest job in the world. You are changing lives.

“The difference between a good coach and a great coach is often just state of mind.”

— ZoomReports

2.3 Building Trust



Before a player will listen to you, they must trust you.

There are a million ways to earn your player's trust, but here are a couple:

1. **Take an interest in them** - find out what makes them tick.
2. **Learn their favorite word** - From Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People," a person's favorite word is usually their name. Use it like crazy. And better yet, give them a nickname that they'll like.
3. **Do what you say you're going to do** - That shows that you can be relied on.
4. **Don't show Favorites** - Better yet, find something special in each player. That way every player will feel like they're your favorite.
5. **Obey your own Rules** - Consistency. See #3
6. **Don't Criticize** - You catch more bees with honey.
7. **Recognize when they do well** - and be specific what they did well.
8. **Put yourself in their shoes** - When you see the world from someone else's vantage point, it is easier to see what makes them tick.
9. **Smile** - 90% of communication is nonverbal. Your smile can go a long way.
10. **Listen more than you talk** - You were born with 2 ears and 1 mouth. There's a reason for it.
11. **If you are wrong, admit it** - Swallow your pride. Show them you can be wrong. You're human after all.

2.4 Acknowledging Feelings



And now, the final piece of the puzzle: acknowledging feelings. Even if you know the fundamentals of your sport, have the right mindset, and do a great job of building trust, it doesn't matter if you first don't listen and acknowledge your player's feelings. Think about the last time you were upset and frustrated, which led to arguing with a friend. What happened? Probably nothing. But you both argued your point until you were blue in the face. Finally, your friend said, "I understand how you feel." Those magic words were probably the start of resolving the argument.

In the same way, if a player is upset or frustrated, until you acknowledge how they feel, they will not be able to move on and hear your feedback. It's like there's a roadblock between your player and your feedback: it's called their feelings. And until you validate how they feel, ain't no way your pearls of wisdom are going to make it through.

Below are typical coach responses when a player is having trouble mastering a skill.

DENY FEELINGS RESPONSE

COACH - "It is easy. You will get it."

ADVICE RESPONSE

COACH - "You should put more effort into it."

PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE

COACH - "You get out what you put in."

While you may see nothing wrong with these responses. Let's take a further look at what the player typically thinks after hearing your responses.

DENY FEELINGS RESPONSE

COACH - "It is easy. You will get it."

PLAYER - "Don't tell me it is easy. It's not. If it is so easy, why can't I get it. Am I stupid?"

ADVICE RESPONSE

COACH - "You should put more effort into is."

PLAYER - "I am putting effort into it. Is my best effort not good enough? What is wrong with me?"

PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE

COACH - "You get out what you put in."

PLAYER - "That makes no sense to me. Here I am having trouble, and that is the best thing you can come up with. Now I'm even more frustrated with you! That is the last time I show you my frustration."

As a coach you need to acknowledge the feeling. Even if it is wrong. The player can not process quality feedback until you let them know it is alright to have feelings of frustration.

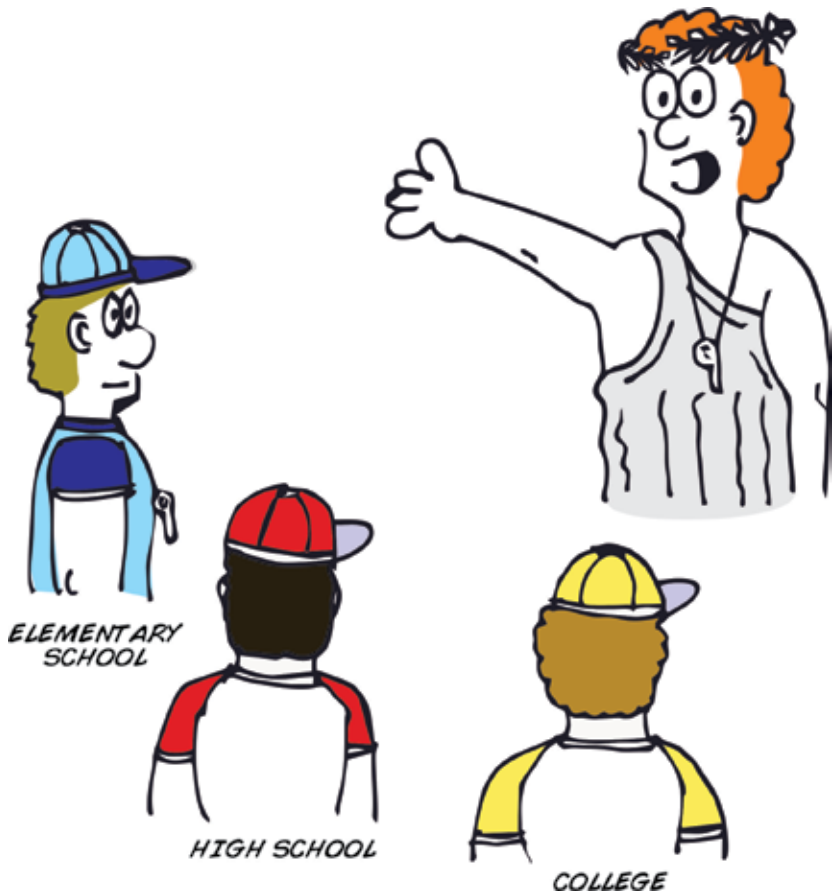
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How to Give Feedback

In this section we're going to go into depth about the optimal ways to give feedback. We're going to share with you stories about some of the world's best coaches and how they gave feedback to their world-class athletes.

You're going to see what the best coaches do on a day-to-day basis. In all, there are 7 strategies here on how to give feedback. The challenge to you is, after you've read this section, to apply one of these strategies. And as you become a master at a certain strategy, move on to another and keep honing your craft.

3.1 Know the Categories



There are millions of ways and styles of giving feedback, but they all fall into 4 basic categories. We've outlined them here below, and structured them in a way that increases in effectiveness.

- 1. Feedback about the self.**
- 2. Feedback about a task.**
- 3. Feedback about a process.**
- 4. Feedback that makes player better at self assessing.**

Elementary School Feedback Examples

We all started in Elementary School. Ah yes, the good ole days, where it was all about recess, playing, and name calling, which is essentially what the first level of feedback is: name-calling. Feedback at the Elementary school level sounds like, "you're a good athlete," or "you're a wizard at chess." It's a comment that you make about a player.. You know you're giving Elementary feedback when you use words like "you are," or "he is." Basically any forms of the verb to be.

This type of feedback is bad for a bunch of different reasons. First of all, you've given the player an identity. You are This or you are That. And I know you're probably shaking your head saying, "That's the kind of feedback I give all the time. Why is that bad?" Well, what if your player doesn't have the same identity that you've just given? Or what if your player accepts the new identity and next game doesn't live up to it? Now anxiety sets in, next self doubt, lack of confidence, and thus begins the downward spiral....

Elementary School Feedback Examples

<i>You are a great Baseball Player.</i>	<i>You are a great defender.</i>
<i>She is so good.</i>	<i>She is the next Mia Hamm.</i>
<i>He is Awesome at Soccer!</i>	<i>He is as good as Jordan for his age.</i>
<i>Good girl!!</i>	<i>You are a great team.</i>
<i>You are the best goal scorer.</i>	<i>He is unstoppable.</i>
<i>You are the best player on the team.</i>	<i>You are one of the best.</i>

High School Feedback

Congrats! You just graduated from Elementary School! So, “where from here,” you ask? Great question! Well, after elementary school you went onto Middle/High School. And here, recess is gone. No more having fun. Here all the system cares about is making sure you pass or fail. No warm fuzzy comments, just black and white. Tests. All kinds of tests. ACTS, SATS, AP tests, state assessment tests, blah, blah, blah. Red X's littering the page, at least mine growing up.

So, High School Feedback merely informs you if are doing something correctly or incorrectly. No attaboys, kudos, pats on the back, just the cold hard right or wrong. Believe it or not, High School Feedback is much more productive than Elementary School Feedback. Why? Because at least you now have feedback that says if you are getting better or not. And much to your relief, the feedback is not about your identity; it is about the task at which you are trying to improve. So you feel no anxiety as to living up to a coach's perception of you.

But again, going back to our definition of feedback, which I'll repeat, is helping a player bridge the gap from where they are skill wise, to where they want to be, High School Feedback provides some value, but there's not much there to help the player move forward and understand more.

High School Feedback Examples

<i>Not quite.</i>	<i>Keep it up.</i>
<i>Try again.</i>	<i>Bingo!</i>
<i>That's right.</i>	<i>Well done.</i>
<i>You're wrong.</i>	<i>Nice job.</i>
<i>Come back when it's better.</i>	<i>Excellent.</i>
<i>Better.</i>	<i>Needs more work.</i>

College Feedback

Continuing on your crash course, you've now graduated high school and you're off to college. You're surrounded by professors, who are talking about theories, philosophies, and laws. You start to understand what Einstein meant by $E=mc^2$. You're getting a little smarter and you now know that your feedback has to be specific, and has to instruct.

The next level is College Feedback. It's specific and provides direction. For example, if you were a baseball coach coaching the swing, College Feedback sounds something like this: "Remember to keep your elbows near your body so that the bat moves in a tight circle." Wow, what a refreshing thing to hear after all Elementary and High School Feedback. College Feedback has something of value. I hope you can see and hear the difference between Elementary and High School and now College Feedback, where the latter helps in moving a player closer from where they are skill wise to where they want to be.

And if you want to really kick it up a notch, sorry Emeril, you can even add another comment like, "Great stuff. You're making a lot of progress. Remember to keep your elbows near your body so that the bat moves in a tight circle." I don't want to beat a dead horse here, but I want to make sure you get the distinction. Just remember College Feedback has to instruct and be specific. And I know I sound like Captain Obvious here, but it's such a simple change that you can make when giving feedback. I won't bore you with the psychological benefits of giving your players College Feedback. Just know that it's MUCH better than our previous two levels. And

think about yourself here for a second. Do you think, after giving College Feedback to your players, you'll feel good about yourself as a coach? That you helped a player really understand how to get from where they are to where they want to be? Once you start giving College Feedback, you won't be able to go back because you're going to connect with your players on such a deeper level, and they'll enjoy their sports and their time with you more.

College Feedback Examples

<p><i>Continue working on your jump shot. I want to see you have the ball more on your fingertips than your palm.</i></p>	<p><i>You've made marked improvement with your shooting technique. Remember to make contact high on the ball, low on your instep.</i></p>
<p><i>Remember to use the proper technique. When the ball is approaching, turn your body, step into shot, have the strings point in the direction in which you want the shot to go, and follow through.</i></p>	<p><i>Overall, you have a pretty good attitude, but at times you beat yourself up over mistakes that you made and your self talk can be critical and negative. Doing that is fine, but it takes you out of the present and focused on the past. And if you're dwelling on the past you can't do your best in the present. So instead, do a quick analysis of the situation and ask yourself, "what can I learn from this?" and then continue playing.</i></p>

<p><i>Work on having a positive attitude. The great players never stopped learning, and are committed to constantly improving. A really simple way to look at your development is to try to be better today than you were yesterday.</i></p>	<p><i>I'd like to see you work on your back set and really master the basics. Remember, your hands should be raised in front about 7 inches above your forehead. Think about making a window with your thumbs and pointer fingers. The ball should only make contact with your upper two joints of your fingers and thumbs, not your palms. And to finish a good back set, arch your back so that the ball is directed toward the ceiling, about 5-6 feet higher than the top of the net.</i></p>
<p><i>Proper technique is so important to keeping possession of your dribble. Make sure that your knees are slightly bent and a little wider than shoulderwidth. When bouncing the ball, use your finger tips and thumbs. Finally, try to only dribble the ball to knee height. This makes it very hard for defenders to deflect or steal the ball.</i></p>	<p><i>Your receiving needs work, so I'd like to see you really focus on having the proper technique. Before the ball arrives, make sure your body is nice and low for balance. Keep the head of the stick on the ground facing the ball and cushion the ball as it arrives.</i></p>
<p><i>The proper stance is the first step to becoming a great pitcher. Make sure your body is upright and your weight evenly distributed on each foot.</i></p>	

Socratic Feedback

So what's next after College Feedback? Can it get any better? You betcha. At the end of our journey is the highly coveted Socratic Feedback. That's right, what would our lesson be without some famous Greek philosopher, right? We all know the Socratic method: answering questions with more questions. In essence, the Socratic method encourages those to arrive at their own answers and feedback. Socratic Feedback is all about trying to get the student to become the teacher. The player to become the coach. That's right. Your position is getting eliminated. Just kidding. But the hands-on approach that you had to take before is taking a backseat to being more of a guide.

So feedback for a soccer coach when giving Socratic Feedback about passing might sound like, "I've seen you do this successfully before. Think back to when it worked, and remember what the ball sounded like as you hit it. What did the ball sound like going over the grass? How did it feel coming off your foot?" Here you're not telling the player what to do, but creating an environment of guided discovery, where your players can come to their own conclusions about things. You are teaching your players to self-assess.

You are teaching your players that when they get stuck, they have the tools to figure out how to fix their issue, which is ultimately the goal because during the game you can't coach every play.

Socratic Feedback

<p><i>Think about how you have successfully done this in the past. What position were your hands in? Why would you want one hand more open or closed? Would that change the angle of your club?</i></p>	<p><i>What feels better?</i></p>
<p><i>Does it feel more natural to have your weight on your front foot?</i></p>	<p><i>Your receiving needs work, so I'd like to see you really focus on having the proper technique. Before the ball arrives, make sure your body is nice and low for balance. Keep the head of the stick on the ground facing the ball and cushion the ball as it arrives.</i></p>
<p><i>Are you nervous? What can you think about that will give you confidence? What did you feel like after your game against the REDS?</i></p>	<p><i>When do you think you run your fastest? Is it when your arms and legs are moving side to side or straight towards your destination?</i></p>
<p><i>When you hit the ball perfectly, what sound does it make?</i></p>	<p><i>When the ball slices, where is your club face pointed? What is the swing path of your club?</i></p>
<p><i>On defense, when the ball is on the far side of the field, where should you be? Is the player you are marking a big threat? Can you help cover for your teammate?</i></p>	<p><i>What run can you make that will open up the field for your teammate with the ball?</i></p>

"The greatest sign of success for a teacher... is to be able to say, "The children are now working as if I did not exist."

— Maria Montessori

Congratulations!

You've just completed your crash course in Feedback School! That was relatively painless, right? I hope so. And I'm confident that if you start using College and Socratic feedback, and stop using Elementary and High School feedback, you're going to see a big difference in your players.

3.2 Provide the Optimal Challenge



Players quit sports for 2 main reasons.

- 1. They are bored because the coach is not challenging them.**
- 2. They are stressed because the coach is over challenging them.**

How the Video Game Industry handles Challenges (Be more like Xbox, Nintendo)

The video game industry is a multi billion dollar industry. How did it become so big? By ensuring that gamers continue to play their games. They have invested millions and millions of dollars in research on how to do this. They don't just leave it up to chance. And what they have figured out is that in order to get a player to continue to play their game, to spend hours after day, the player has to be challenged just the right amount. If the challenge is too low, the player quits. And if the challenge is too high, the player quits. Think back to a time when a friend handed you the controllers during a very challenging level of a game you had never played before. What happened? You probably experienced anxiety because the challenge was too great. And odds are you quit playing. Can you also think back to a time where you had beat a game so many times, that you became tired of playing it and quit. I think so. So what has the video game industry done? They have developed a strategy for ensuring that the player is challenged just the right amount.

Sure, this sounds pretty obvious. But do your training sessions provide the right amount of challenge? Maybe they do, maybe they don't. But the great news is that just by becoming aware, you can be better.

Angry Birds

The video game Angry Birds have mastered this strategy. If you haven't heard about this game yet, crawl out from under your rock and google it (and if you don't know about google). This is a game where you use a slingshot to fire birds into building structures. You can fire these birds with different speeds and trajectories. If you successfully knock down the structure, you move to another level. On Level 1, Angry Birds knows that you have never played the game before. So what do they do? They give you a super easy challenge where they know you'll experience success. On Level 2, they give you a more challenging structure to knock down. And now you're hooked. On Level 3, they introduce another bird that is more difficult to fire. On Level 4, they give you a bigger structure to knock down, but give you 2 chances with different birds.

They continue to make the challenge harder and harder from Level to Level. But they try to make sure that the challenge is never too great that you end up quitting the game. And they never make a new level easier than the previous one, because they know you will definitely quit the game. They know how addicting this strategy is. The millions of dollars they spent on research tells them so or tells you so?

Coaches, Borrow from the Video Game Industry

Well, we as coaches don't have millions of dollars to spend on research. But let me assure you, we can use the same strategy the video game industry uses, and get the same results. More motivated players that love to learn and improve.

Lets go over how to use this strategy when giving feedback to your players. We will start with a player at a certain skill level. If the player seems bored, that means you have to find a more difficult challenge that will motivate the player to improve. If the player seems anxious and stressed, then you have to reduce the challenge to fit their current skill level. Constantly monitoring where your players' skill is relative to a challenge is key. Once the player is proficient at the challenge, you can then show them a more advanced skill and challenge. It is as easy as that.

“Players that are more engaged are less likely to Goof Off during practice. Goofing Off is the result of Boredom or Stress.”

— ZoomReports

Story - Boredom

Not surprisingly, Andre Agassi was an exceptional youth tennis player. So great that playing tennis became boring. His competition could not give him a challenge. It got to the point to where Agassi came up with his own odd ways of making tennis more challenging. If he knew he was facing a mediocre opponent, Andre would show up to a match wearing jeans and untied high tops. Could you imagine being his opponent? Seeing this crazy looking guy stroll onto the court and whip your ass? And what's more, if his opponent still was unable to give him a challenge, he would quit in the middle of a point and walk off the court.

Moral of the story is, without a challenge, there was a good chance Agassi would have fizzled out of playing the sport of tennis. Lucky for us, Agassi found a great coach in Nick Bollettieri. Bollettieri immediately knew that, in order for Andre to take his game to the next level, he had to create an environment with new challenging training techniques.

One way Bollettieri made practice more challenging was by having his practice partner serve balls from 2 steps inside the baseline. This reduced the reaction time Agassi had to return the serve. And what's the result? If you ask any tennis aficionado, Agassi had arguably one of the best, if not the best, return of serve.

Great players need a challenge. Great coaches know that these great players need a challenge, and they devise clever ways to challenge them. How many Agassis have we lost because they became bored with their sport? Can you think back to a player that you coached that might have lost interest because the training environment wasn't challenging enough?

Story - Stress

Here's a story that I love to share with coaches. One day I was at a youth soccer tournament and I was walking by a field on my way to my next game, when I heard this coach screaming, "Come on boys!!!! It's 8 to 9. Keep it going!!!" As soon as I heard that, I thought, "Wow, that is a high scoring game. I've got to watch a bit of this."

After watching no more than 2 minutes of the game, I realized there was no way this coach's team had 8 goals. The other team was clearly superior in technique and tactics. However, as I was about to leave, I heard the coach yell, "It's 9 to 9 now, great job." I turned around to see if I missed a goal, but no one had scored. Intrigued now, I asked a parent from the team with the coach I was observing what the score was. He said that his son's team was actually losing 7 to 0. Well this left me even more perplexed because despite losing 7 to 0, the players were still highly motivated and excited.

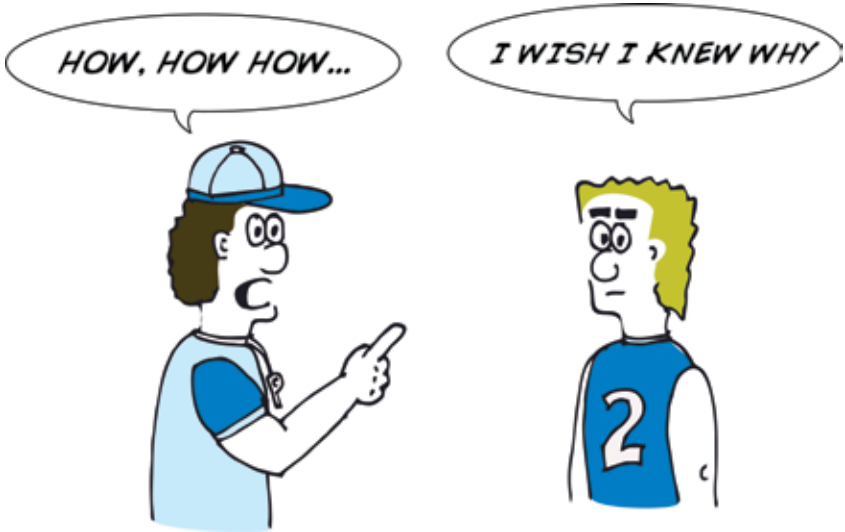
With seconds left in the game, the coach yelled out, "Great job! It's 10 to 9." After the final whistle blew, it was like the coach's team just won the World Cup. Did they not realize they just lost 8 to 0? I had to talk to this coach.

I made my way over to the other side of the field and introduced myself. I said, "What was up with the scoring you were yelling out? And how did you get your players to stay motivated despite losing by 8 goals? And his response was that he knew the other team was much better and that his players knew this as well.

So he devised a new challenge. Instead of keep tracking of goals, they would keep track of the number of times they, and their opponent, could string together 5 passes. 5 passes was a goal. Counting this way kept players excited about playing, despite being dominated on the scoreboard.

What's the takeaway? Be creative. Find new ways to challenge your players. It's all about finding the game within the game. So, try this. Think about something you do in training. Whatever it is, try changing the challenge like Bolletieri did with Agassi, or this youth soccer coach did with his team. And think about this: what if you did this for every training session? Or better yet, what if you did this for every player? Observe where each player was skill-wise, and devise a specific challenge. Do you think you could get more out of your players? Do you think they'd be more engaged during training and develop faster?

3.3 Provide the Why



How Jack took his Game to the Next Level

Jack Nicklaus is arguably the best player ever to swing a golf club. His record of the most majors still stands after many years, and his closest challenger is Tiger Woods, whose major form is not what it used to be. However, it wasn't always peaches and cream for Nicklaus. As he made the jump from amateur to professional, he realized that he needed to be better to achieve the results he was after. There, the players, courses, and stress were more challenging.

He said his game did not reach the next level until Jack's dad had a conversation with Bobby Jones at the 1961 Masters. Bobby said he was always a good golfer, but he became a great golfer after he understood his swing well enough to make corrections during a tournament. When Nicklaus heard this story, he decided that he would make an effort to understand his swing so that, like Jones, he could make needed adjustments during tournaments. From that point on, when Nicklaus would visit his teacher Jack Grout he would ask more questions about the **WHYS** of the swing and fewer about the **HOWS** of the swing. Why do you take the club back in this way? Why do you turn in this manner? Why do I hold the club in this way? When Nicklaus understood the theory behind these **Why** questions, his game was able to move to the next level.

It's so easy as a coach to explain the mechanics (the **how**) of shooting a basketball, hitting a baseball, spiking a volleyball, etc. Anyone can do that. But the real challenge lies in explaining the **why** behind the **how**. The **Why** allows the player to understand why the **How** is important. With this understanding, the player can make the necessary changes on their own.

“The importance of the How diminishes if the player doesn’t know the Why”.

— ZoomReports

How Feedback

Not Mentally Stimulating - Giving how feedback is like giving Orders. Do this like this, Do that like this. No one likes taking orders. If you do take orders, you at least want to know why you should take these orders.

Limited Understanding - Only giving How feedback is like only teaching a student How to Spell the word "Dog." The student has to memorize the spelling. Giving Why feedback is like teaching a student Why D-O-G spells "Dog." Why letters make sounds that make words.

Rely on Coach - If the coach only tells you How to do a skill, when things are not working, you have to rely on the coach to tell you what is going wrong and How to fix it.

Why Feedback

Mentally Stimulating - What is a toddlers favorite word? Why. Why is it their favorite word? Because they love to know why things work. Because it is mentally stimulating.

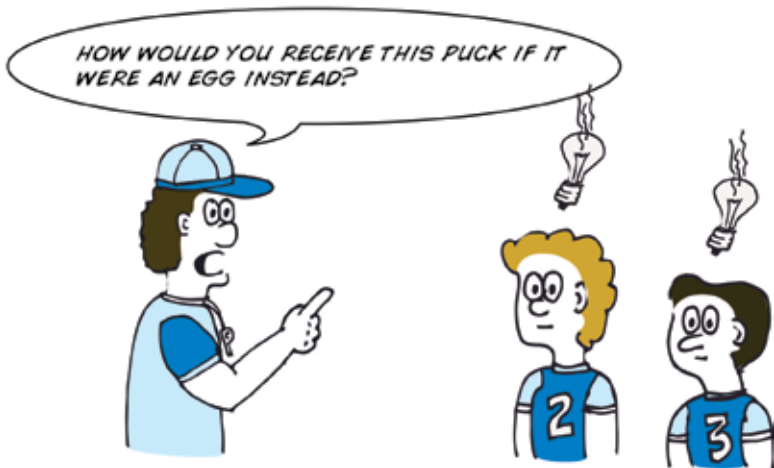
Complete Understanding - If Einstein only understood How Physic Equations worked, and did not understand Why they worked, he could never have theorized $E=MC^2$

Can Rely on Yourself - When you know Why a skill works, you have the power to correct skills when they are not providing the desired results.

"A player should be interested in learning why things are done a certain way. The reasons behind the teaching often go a long way to helping develop the skill."

— John Wooden".

3.4 Use Metaphors



Metaphors are powerful. They allow you to learn difficult skills in a fraction of the time. Take mathematicians; they literally use metaphors when solving new, complex problems. They break them down into things smaller problems that they already know how to solve.

To understand why metaphors are so powerful, let's quickly analyze the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, better known as NLP. Simply put, here is what NLP means. If you told yourself to jump (language), the cells in your body would speak to each other (neurons), and only the jumping muscles in your body will move (programming).

What are the implications of this? Certain thoughts make certain muscle groups move. Before you can jump, you have to think about jumping. From there, your neurons will communicate with each other. And then in a coordinated way, only your jumping muscles will respond.

Lets try this out. Sit down in a comfortable chair. Now, without moving any part of your body, I just want you to think about how you shake hands. As you think, try to notice if you can feel any of your muscles trying to move. My bet is that all the muscles that you use to shake hands are trying to perform the action. Many of them are tensing up.

How does this knowledge help me give better feedback? Well as we stated earlier, certain thoughts cause certain muscle groups to move. Why not take advantage of this by using metaphors. Get your players thinking thoughts that will get their desired muscle groups to move.

For instance, let's say you are a golf instructor, and you are teaching a player how to grip the golf club with their right hand. You will continually have to go over where the player should place all of their fingers. Very tedious. Or you could use a metaphor. You could tell a player to grip the club like they were shaking hands. Why, because when the player thinks about shaking hands, their hand shaking muscles will start to move. So the player doesn't have to relearn this skill. This metaphor allows the player to bypass the learning of a new skill.

You have to know what interests your players have. Then you have to re-search them.

Tips for developing metaphors

Make what you're teaching look like something your players have done before.

Make what you're teaching feel like something your players have done before. Relate it to something you have seen them do before.

3.5 Know how to Reframe



Being able to reframe a situation is an invaluable skill that all coaches should master. For our intents and purposes, to reframe, is to look at, present, or think in a new or different way. Sounds simple enough, right? Well, what if the fate of your season came down to one possession with seconds left on the clock? How would you react? One example that comes to mind was during the Duke UK basketball game in the 1992 NCAA tournament. I still remember where I was and with whom I was watching the game. For brevity sake, I'll give you a synopsis of the last 2.1 seconds.

Sean Woods from Kentucky just hit a miracle bank shot to give them a 1 point lead over the Duke Blue Devils with only 2.1 seconds remaining on the clock. Coach K could see the shock in his player's eyes. He could see how deflated they were. What were the chances they could win the game

now? Following the game, Duke forward Grant Hill even admitted to thinking about what beach he would be on during the NCAA final.

Coach K knew that he had to act fast and with conviction. He had to reframe his player's thinking. He easily could have said, "That's a tough break," or he could have hung his head too. But, being the great leader he is, once the players got to the bench, the first words out of Coach K's mouth were, "We are going to win!" Wow! What a way to reframe their thinking! Imagine seeing a fluke shot by Kentucky just go in. Imagine knowing that there are only 2.1 seconds left on the clock. What are the odds you can win? Your National Championship dreams are all but gone. Now imagine that you get back to the bench, and the first words out of your coaches mouth are, "We are going to win!" The players just went from doom and gloom to a state of possibility. "We are going to win." Talk about a change in mindset. That thought probably never crossed your mind. And without that thought, without thinking there was a chance, without Coach K reframing the situation, there was no chance of winning.

The rest is history. Grant Hill throws a full court pass to Christian Laettner. Laettner takes 2 dribbles, and hits a mid range jumper to win the game. Reframing a challenge is a great way to get a player to see bright side of a situation. When a player is very upset, without a level of trust, reframing will never work. You must establish trust. National Championship dreams are all but gone. Now imagine that you get back to the bench, and the first words out of your coaches mouth are, "We are going to win!" The players just went from doom and gloom to a state of possibility. "We are going to win." Talk about a change in mindset. That thought probably never crossed your mind. And without that thought, without thinking there was a chance, without Coach K reframing the situation, there was no chance of winning.

3.6 Catch them Doing Right



Question. What would motivate you to improve at your job more? Your boss telling you what you are doing wrong? Or your boss telling you what you are doing right? I think it is safe to say you are much more motivated to improve if your boss compliments you on something you have done well. And I bet you will make a bigger effort to find what you are doing wrong, and fix it.

Why then, do we as coaches spend 90% of our time pointing out what players are doing wrong? It would seem to make sense that if we are looking for ways to get our players motivated to practice and improve, we should spend 90% of our time complimenting them on what they are doing right.

Years back, the automobile company Chrysler decided to give this theory a test. They told all of their managers that they could only compliment their employees. They could not point out things they were doing wrong. I know what you are thinking. Within weeks, the company went to hell in a handbasket, right? Wrong. The exact opposite. Productivity went up 30%. Employee morale improved drastically. How is that possible? How did the company run when employees were permitted to keep performing tasks incorrectly? Well, maybe these employees actually knew how to perform these tasks, they just weren't motivated to do so. How often are you catching your players doing right?

3.7 How to Set Goals



There are countless books written on setting goals, and there are even more catchy acronyms on what make up an acceptable goal. So I won't bore you with what you have probably already heard or read about.

What I am going to try and do is give you a new appreciation for how you choose to set goals for your players. Because the way in which you set goals could mean the difference between having a player that is happy or depressed. Depressed? You heard me right. The majority of the goals that coaches set for their players actually cause Depression.

Before you close this book and toss it in the fire for warmth, I understand, energy costs have gone up dramatically, hear me out.

I'm going to make a big assumption here and assume that you are all psychology majors and are familiar with the remarkable work of Abraham Maslow. If not, here's your crash course. He is one of the pioneers on the field of Self Actualization, which is just a fancy word for a person's ultimate Goal in life. (Side note: if you want to go to the source, you should read his pioneering book called: *Towards a Psychology of Being*) What is that ultimate Goal? Maslow defined it as continued growth: To keep improving in whatever you do. And a person is only truly happy when they are in the process of growing and improving. What happens when a person stops improving? You guessed it. Depression.

How does this apply to a coach setting player goals, you ask? Well if you want depressed players, set goals that are outcome based. Goals like winning a championship game, shooting 6 under par, or being the leading scorer in the league. Why do these types of goals cause depression? Be

cause there is an end date. Or better yet, an expiration date. Just like the milk you buy. And what happens to the milk after the expiration date? It spoils.

Outcome based goals can provide motivation in the short-term. But what happens when you reach an outcome? Let's take a look at both sides: if you lose before making it to the championship game, the goal is over. If you win the championship game, the goal is over. What a catch 22. You are depressed either way. Sure, there's this great sense of euphoria once you win the state championship or shoot the record round under par, but it is short-lived. We're all hardwired to keep growing towards more things and accomplishing things of more complexity, and outcome-based goals just don't provide that.

Happiness lasts forever!!! Ask yourself next time you set a player's goal. Will this goal make the player happy or Depressed? It is scary that we coaches have this much power. But with great power comes great responsibility. - Spiderman's Uncle.

On the other hand, if you want happy, more motivated players, set goals that are learning based. Goals like, consistently shooting a soccer ball without any spin. Hitting a low fade golf shot under pressure. Making your bounce passes always hit your teammates in the chest. Why do these goals cause happiness? Because there is NO end date. You can always grow and learn how to improve these goals. The learning is never over.

4

How Not to Give Feedback

So we've just covered the right ways to give feedback. In this next section we'll discuss three things to avoid when giving feedback. They may seem pretty obvious to most, but it's good to get a refresher on what to steer clear of.

4.1 Provide Too Much Feedback

- *KEEP YOUR HEEL DOWN*
- *KEEP YOUR TOE UP*
- *LOCK YOUR ANKLE*
- *MAKE SURE YOUR PASSING FOOT PERPENDICULAR TO TARGET*
- *MAKE SURE YOUR PLANT FOOT IS POINTED TOWARDS THE TARGET*
- *KEEP YOUR WEIGHT ON THE BALL OF YOUR PLANT FOOT*
- *KNEES BENT*
- *CHEST OVER THE BALL*
- *SQUARE YOUR HIPS*
- *KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BALL*
- *ARMS OUT FOR BALANCE*
- *BOUNCY FEED*
- *HIT UP ON THE BALL TO GIVE THE BALL TOPSPIN*
- *EXHALE*
- *FOLLOW THROUGH TOWARDS THE TARGET*
- *HEAD UP SO YOU CAN SEE OPPONENTS*



*INFORMATION
OVERLOAD*

Information overload stinks! You experience it every day. A sales person calls you about their latest and greatest offer. Your inbox is full of crummy ads that you have no interest in. While you watch TV you're bombarded with commercials constantly. There's been an explosion of media and you're assaulted with it daily. But how much of it gets through? What messages stick with you and cause you to do something? If you're like me, not much.

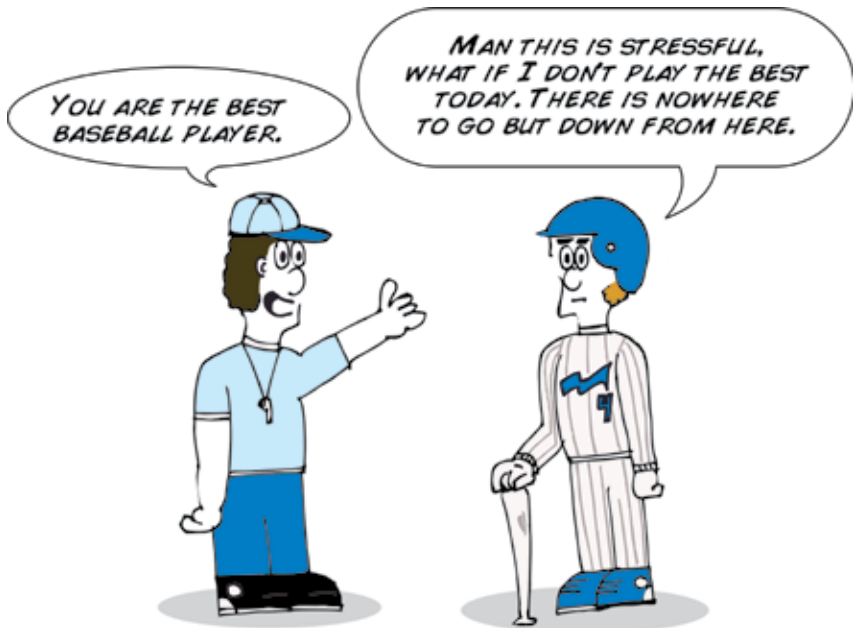
I know this has nothing to do with coaching, or does it? The same way that the media overwhelms us all, could you be overloading your players with too much info? I know I've been guilty in the past of trying to give out as much information as possible. Let's take passing a soccer ball for example, here are just a few points you could bring up to your players.

- **Keep your heel down**
- **Keep your toe up**
- **Lock your ankle**
- **Make sure your passing foot perpendicular to target**
- **Make sure your plant foot is pointed towards the target**
- **Keep your weight on the ball of your plant foot**
- **Knees bent**
- **Chest over the ball**
- **Square your hips**
- **Keep your eyes on the ball**
- **Arms out for balance**
- **Bouncy Feed**
- **Hit up on the ball to give the ball topspin**
- **Exhale**
- **Follow through towards the target**
- **Head up so you can see opponents**

If you went through this laundry list of pointers, how do you think a player would receive this? How much of it do you think would stick? The answer is not much. For the most part, your short term memory can only recall 7 numbers or letters. That is why phone numbers are only 7 digits long. Many times your short term memory can't even remember 7 digits. Many times all a person can recall are the first and last digit.

As a coach, it is very enticing to put all of your knowledge on display to your players. Who doesn't want to show off how much they know? The key is to pick one or two instructions, and stick to those.

4.2 Tie to Personal Identity



Remember back in the first chapter how we laid out the four levels of feedback? And the first (least effective) way of giving feedback was to say something about a player. Example: “you are this” or “you are great at that.” Basically, this type of feedback gives the player an identity. We refer to this as elementary feedback or the lowest form of feedback because it provides little value, and in fact, can do a quite a bit of harm.

To show you how harmful, let’s take a look at a few professional athletes. Pretty much their whole athletic life, from the time they started playing to the time they finished playing, they have heard how great they were. Their coaches, parents, teammates, and fans would tell them how special of a player they were. So the inevitable happens. The player ties their identity to being an excellent athlete.

What happens when these players retire from the game? What happens when they don’t hear how great they are on a daily basis? What happens when they can’t display their athletic skills on the field anymore? Well in the case of many professional athletes, they can go into a deep depression. And unfortunately, the depression can lead to death, as is the suspected case with Junior Seau and Dave Duerson.

4.3 Use Guilt to Motivate



No matter how well intended, using guilt as a motivator rarely works. Let's go over some ways that coaches use guilt.

- **Don't let me down**
- **Make me proud**
- **Why didn't you play better, I have put a lot of effort into training**
- **Do you not listen to my coaching**
- **Don't let your teammates down**
- **Giving the silent treatment after a bad game**

A player is rarely motivated by guilt. More than likely, these are the feelings a player experiences after a coach has used guilt to motivate.

- **Hurt**
- **Pressure and need to gain approval by being the best**
- **Focus on pleasing instead of the task at hand**
- **Low self esteem**
- **Self sabotage**

As you can see, nobody wins when a coach motivates with guilt.

5

How to Improve at Giving Feedback

Repetition is the mastery of skill. To become great at anything, you've got try something over and over again until it becomes second nature. We've provided some strategies in this section that will accelerate your development at becoming a Feedback Master.

5.1 How to Practice



So we are all coaches. And we all know that in order to improve at a skill, you have to practice. So how do you practice giving better feedback? Well one way is to always ask yourself how you could have given your players better feedback. After every practice and game, ask yourself how well your feedback worked and how it could have been better.

Questions Masters Coaches Ask

- "What feedback can I give to help this player improve?"
- "Can I phrase my feedback in a different way to make a bigger impact?"
- "Can I change the content of the feedback?"
- "How do I phrase this feedback?"
- "Should I use a different metaphor?"
- "Are the player's skills up to the challenge?"
- "Is the challenge up to the player's skill?"
- "What feedback worked with similar players I coached in the past?"
- "Am I in the right state of mind to give this player feedback?"

Questions Regular Coaches Ask

- "Why do I get the rotten players?"
- "He will never improve. When will practice end?"
- "How come these players just don't get it?"
- "When will I get a team made up of the top players?"

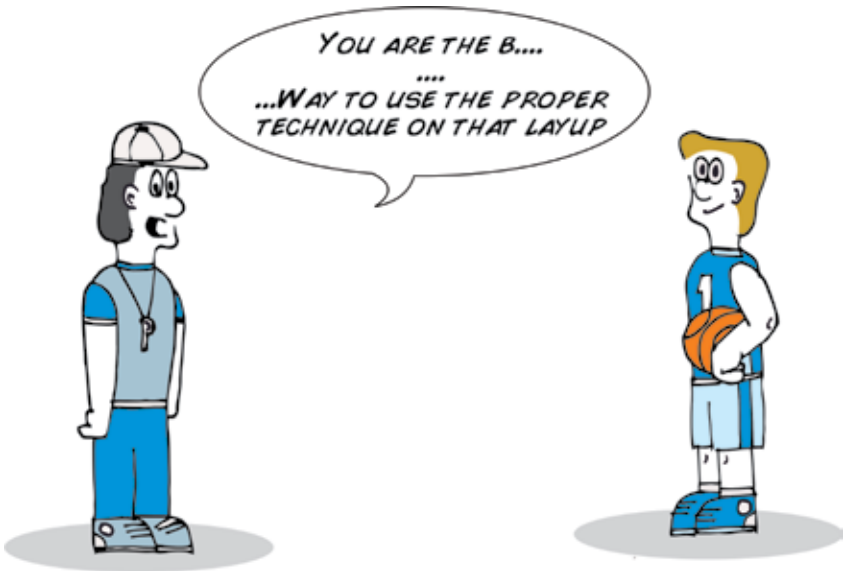
Feedback Database

By asking and answering these questions daily, you will start to create your own Feedback Database. You will figure out what feedback works for every type of player in all types of circumstances. As your Feedback Database grows, you will be able to determine what feedback will work best with players.

Compound Interest

Feedback Masters don't just occasionally ask these questions. They do it constantly. And guess what, after asking this question every day for 1 year, they build quite a mental database for helping players improve. Lets say they improve 1% every day for 1 year. Do the math, and remember from math class how compound interest works. You would be 38 times better at giving feedback than a regular coach. If a player is having difficulty, you will more than likely have the feedback to help.

5.2 How to Catch Yourself



We as humans develop habits. There are many benefits to habits. For one, they allow you to perform mundane activities without much thought. That way you can focus on more important issues. On the flip side, there many downsides to habits. I am sure you can think of a few habits you wish you did not develop.

Coaches also develop habits when giving feedback. In order to focus on how a player is performing a skill, coaches develop habitual ways of phrasing feedback. Unfortunately, some of these phrases coaches use provide the player with feedback on the self. Which as we have discussed, have negative consequences.

Habits are tough to break. That is because you are typically doing them unconsciously. So in order to break these habits, you need a trigger that breaks your habitual train of thought. Then you can consciously change that habit and replace it with a more useful habit. We suggest that you create trigger words. Words that when you hear them, make you stop in your tracks. But the key is to replace the bad habits with more empowering ones.

Trigger words that typically result in feedback on the self.

You are... ***He is...*** ***She is...*** ***Good boy...***

Productive feedback words that you can use in place of your trigger words.

Think about how you did it before. . . ***Continue to . . .***
Why is it important to . . . ***Keep your . . .*** ***Watch how . . .***
Try to . . . ***Notice how ...***

5.3 When You Are a Master



Feedback Master - A coach that can help any player improve with feedback.

So today is the first day in your quest to become a Feedback Master. And the best part about your quest? It's a Learning Goal. It's a goal that doesn't have an expiration date.

And as we have learned earlier from Abraham Maslow, learning goals will provide you with a happy and fulfilling life.