



COACHES NOTES

Do not ever take for granted that our role as a youth leader imparts on us a level of wisdom and respect from our players. Realize that we, as Coaches, are in a position to enhance young lives with some very simple advice extending beyond the skills of the sport.

Youth are sponges for information and are inherently caring, emotional, and intelligent. We can add to their emotional intelligence by briefly discussing a topic that will ultimately be one of the most important aspects of their lives now, and in the future—Mental Health.

Passing on a message about mental health can plant a seed in your young players' brain that can grow in multiple ways. Just talking about the subject can be an enormous relief to certain individuals. I know this personally because of feedback I have received as a coach, and from numerous youths, coaches, and families who have reached out since Buddy Check for Jesse started.

Don't overthink what you are going to discuss. The chat a coach has with their players need not be intimidating. Coaches are not expected to be mental health professionals.

Feel free to read directly from the downloadable coaches chat, tell your own story, or just cover the 5 basic ideas below in a shortened version of the chat.

1. Each and everyone of us will have to deal with a mental health issue during our life. Many of us in this room/field etc. are currently trying to manage a mental health challenge or illness right now. And guess what—most of it is invisible.
2. Mental health challenges are no different than physical challenges and they often occur together. One you can usually see (the physical) and one you usually cannot (the mental). Remember, brains hurt, just as muscles and bones do. Brains are treatable and recover, just as muscles and bones do.
3. Mental Health is equally as important as physical health. Superior physical skill does not guarantee that mental health challenges don't exist. How many of your sports heroes lately have started speaking about their own mental health challenges? Mental illness does not discriminate.
4. Each person is different, has their own way of thinking, and each person in this room has their own challenges. You can count on that. Don't expect to know what is truly going on in someone else's head and don't judge someone for acting differently. It may be time to Buddy Check that teammate that is acting differently—perhaps they simply need a little emotional support.
5. You have no idea how much you can help someone who is struggling by just listening, asking how they are doing, and not judging them. If you are struggling, you have no idea how much it can help by just being able to talk it out, knowing someone cares, and knowing you are not being judged or made fun of.

This is what Buddy Checking is all about. Start it at your age. You guys can change the future. Make it your normal way of living your life. Make our world a more compassionate, kind, and understanding place. Learn more about mental health challenges and be sure to Buddy Check your teammates.