

Filling Players' Emotional Tanks Tools

■ BUDDY SYSTEM

Coaches should not be the only people responsible for filling emotional tanks. Partner athletes before a practice or a game, and ask them to be responsible for filling each others' tanks. When their partners make mistakes, they are responsible for helping them bounce back quickly. When their partners do something well, they are the first to praise them. At the end of the practice/game, ask your athletes to share what their teammates said or did to keep their tanks full.

■ POSITIVE CHARTING

Coaches tend to think that they add value only by telling players what they are doing incorrectly and then correcting them. But it is equally important to point out when players are doing things correctly and to reinforce them, so players will continue to do them. "Positive Charting" is a technique for recording positive efforts and plays made during practices or games. Your positive chart can simply list of all of your players with space to note two or three of their specific positive acts. The role of filling in the chart can rotate between your assistant coaches, your bench (if players are mature enough), and even parents. Reading the completed chart to your players to start the next practice never fails to fill tanks.

■ WINNERS CIRCLE

After the game is over, it's tempting for you to comment first. The "Winners Circle" has your players talk first. Depending on how many players you coach, you can all gather in a circle, or divide into different groups of players. Once gathered, have each player comment on something specific that a teammate did well during the game. As the coach, you go last, and it's your job to have something specific, truthful and positive to say about each player who has not yet been recognized. Players grow to look forward to this closing ritual, which builds a tank filler into the end of every competition.

■ COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

Coaching your own child can offer some of life's greatest moments, though it requires a delicate balance between coaching and parenting. Make it clear to your child when you are in coach "mode." Be sensitive to favoring or penalizing you child. Serving as both coach and parent gives you even greater than usual influence on your child's emotional tank! Emphasize that you love your child, regardless of on-field performance. When your child is still young enough, it can be effective to have one piece of clothing that signifies when you're in coaching mode. You can say, "Now I'm putting on my coach hat, where I need to give equal attention to everyone." When coaching your older children, leave your coaching mode at the field, so your children don't feel they are being coached by you 24/7.



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