

Reading material 1 - Exercise 6, section 3.

Is it ever acceptable?

Push an athlete so hard that he or she is regularly reduced to tears?

Do you as a coach have the right to reduce a child, young person to tears? How would you feel if it was your own child? What is their age, could it be they do not enjoy the sport and are being forced by their parents? Is your coaching programme inappropriate for the age and development age of those in your care?

Ridicule an athlete publicly?

Do you have the right to ridicule a child in front of their peers? Careful with the definitions and terminology. Think positive when delivering corrective instructions.

Undermine an athlete's feelings of self-worth?

How would you feel? Will it motivate the children and young people in your care to return to your coaching?

Ignore or disregard an athlete repeatedly?

The key word here is repeatedly, as at times certain kids can be trying to grab the coaches' attention at all times and it gets to the point where you could start to "ignore" their repetitive petitions that are disrupting the session. But what if the child is trying to gain attention for a reason? Have you ever been in a session where the coach never gives you eye contact and constantly ignores you? Think back how did this make you feel?

Have sexual relationship with your performer?

No, this is unethical. A coach does not have the right to abuse their position of power and trust. There are certain situations where this can happen consensually, the legal age of marriage is 16 years and some young coaches have a long standing relationships, perhaps with one of their 16+ adults. In Gibraltar it sometimes happens that a coach may stand in to coach a session and this could be a young athlete's partner.

Meet with your performer regularly on his or her own?

Not all sports are team sports so it will not be uncommon for a coach to offer one to one coaching with a performer (golf or tennis for example). It's about the safeguards that you as a coach have put in place, protect yourself and create a safe environment for your performer too. Open communication with parents, with all parties involved, having a second coach or parent present would be advisable.

Provide physical support (i.e. handle) your performer?

There are certain sports where support plays a key part in and is part of providing a safe environment such as gymnastics, shooting. In order for this to be done correctly the coach providing the physical support must be qualified to do so and must discuss coaching techniques with the athlete and possibly parents before offering physical supports. Manual can not only be a safeguarding risk but also a health and safety risk in cases where support has to be offered before a young athlete is able to complete the technique safely i.e. tumbles and somersaults in gymnastics.

Take a performer alone to your home?

It is not uncommon in Gibraltar to coach children whose parents are the coaches' friends or even family. You could find yourself coaching your friends or family member's children who would come round your house anyways. Ethically there is no valid reason to bring a performer alone to your home who you have no direct prior relationship with. Most acts of abuse are committed by people known to the victim. Ensure parents/guardians are always aware if their child is to be in your company alone. Safety in numbers.

Enter a performer bedroom?

There could be a situation even on emergency whilst on an away trip that for the child's safety that you would need to enter a performer's bedroom. However, this situation should only ever be carried out with the knowledge of the parent/ guardian and it is strongly recommended that you are accompanied by another adult or child. Other than for an emergency or for safety reasons there is no valid reason for entering and invading a performer's privacy by entering their room.

Transport one performer regularly on his or her own in your car?

We have had cases in which coaches have provided transport to their performers when they live in close proximity and the training location be on the other end of Gibraltar. This is down to communication and consent from parents. It is also wise to safeguard yourself even those where consent has been gained from parents. An example we share is that this coaches used to give a lift to three performers after training, what the coach would plan is to drop off the last two performers together in order to not find himself in a situation where there was a lone performer in the car.

Raise concerns if you feel the behaviour of another adult towards his or her performer is unacceptable?

This course is aimed at creating the awareness necessary for people to report such behaviour through the adequate channels and protocols. If you suspect poor practise or abuse it is not acceptable to do nothing.

Report the behaviour of another adult (i.e. coach, official and parent) to a senior person, the police or social services?

This course is aimed at creating the awareness necessary for people to report such behaviour confidentially, through the adequate channels and protocols.

Allow parents, family member to take photos of children or young adults whilst they are participating in sport (think mobile phones)

Photographing of children and young people is only allowed by accredited photographers in line with organisation or sports associations protocols addressed in their safeguarding policy. In the case that the sport is being conducted in an open space this is difficult to police, however signs and mentions in programmes and codes of conduct can help to raise awareness. If sporting activities are taking place in an enclosed space, better controls can be implemented. Some sports employ a photographer/videographer for the event. The photographer/videographer will have attended a safeguarding course and will have had a police check. Parents will also have been approached and asked for permission for their children to be photographed.