



HIGHER STANDARDS: FOR ATHLETES

High school can be tough. Being different from everyone else can be even tougher, and sometimes, maintaining high standards means being different.

You want your friends, classmates, and teammates to like you. So, sometimes you may say or do things that you don't really agree with so they will continue to like you. Everyone does this in social situations. They go to a movie they don't really care about because their girlfriend or boyfriend wanted to see it. They eat at a restaurant they don't particularly like because their friend loves it.

Some of these things are harmless, and don't contradict your standards. But sometimes, what your friends or peers expect or want from you doesn't align with your standards.

In those situations, think about:

What do you stand for? and What can you not stand?

If you stand for something, then you should relentlessly pursue it.

If you can't stand something, then you need have no shame giving it the stiff arm.

It helps if you surround yourself with people who also hold strong to their high standards. You and your dreams are worth fighting for. Sticking to your standards might make some people think you're being a snob or just different. But, it's up to you to decide what (and who) you do and don't let into your life. You don't have to let people bring down your standards due to peer pressure or judgement.

Everyone is going to hold themselves to different standards, so don't worry about what anybody thinks of yours. If your standards are healthy, inspiring, and challenging, then you have no one to answer to other than yourself.

When you recognize what you can and cannot stand, and you stick by that in your actions, there's no limit to the success you can achieve.

Athlete's Exercise:

As motivational speaker Jim Rohn said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." You are most influenced by the people you are around the most. Who are the five people you spend the most time with?

You can tell a lot about people based on their motives and the standards that propel them to behave in certain ways. What drives the people you spend time with? What are they motivated by? What do they care about?

Do their standards line up with yours and the type of person you want to be? List a few examples of standards you share and those that you don't.

Who are five people in your life that support your dreams, challenge you to grow, and inspire you the most?

What characteristics of theirs do you respect and admire? How could you emulate or learn from these characteristics?

**SACRIFICE REQUIRED: FOR ATHLETES**

Your actions have a contagious effect on those around you. Will you impact your teammates with positivity, sacrifice, and discipline? Or will you infect your teammates with laziness, giving up, and selfishness? Which do you want to spread across your team? Just like the success of your team is dependent on each member's individual success, your personal success is dependent on your team's success.

If you give up an extra hour of sleep on the weekend to go for a run, your teammates may not see the sacrifice, but they will see the results in your increased speed and endurance during practice. If you give up an evening at the movies to study for the test, your teammates may not see the sacrifice, but they will appreciate that your grades are high enough for you to help them win the next game.

There are other sacrifices that will be more obvious to your teammates, like showing up to practice early to get in a little extra shooting practice or staying late to take additional laps in the pool. Actions like this encourage your teammates to do the same, and that's a win for the team as a whole.

Whether your teammates see the sacrifice or not, doesn't really matter. You will know what you have given up, and what you have gained from it. That's what truly matters.

Let's face it, sacrifice sucks at the moment. It's not fun to stop playing the newest first-person shooter game to study, or stop scrolling through social media to help your family around the house. But it'll be worth it come game day or graduation day. The only way your dreams will become a reality is if you make strides towards them now. Commit now to see rewards later.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. Sacrifice isn't easy, but it's worth it to achieve your goals. How can you apply this message to your daily life?
2. Sometimes sacrifice is required just to improve, but sometimes it's needed to actively discourage negative influences in your life. What are some things in your life you could sacrifice that keep you stagnant or pull you away from your goals?
3. What is your first step towards sacrificing one of the things above? Who or what do you need to help you?
4. What are some possible roadblocks or struggles you might encounter by making this sacrifice? What reminders from this message can you tell yourself when sacrifice gets hard?
5. Everyone likes to be recognized for the effort they put in, but the degree to which that is expected varies by person. Does it matter to you if other people see and acknowledge the sacrifices you make? Why or why not?



MOST VALUABLE: FOR ATHLETES

You cannot achieve team goals alone. Think of the human body. Each limb, appendage, and joint has a specific job, and they all work together to make the body move. A foot won't get very far if it's not attached to the rest of the body. The same thing is true for your team. When you only focus on yourself (selfish ambition), you're like a head without a body—no good for anybody.

Focusing on your team's goals, so that you all move forward together, requires recognizing the value that each of your teammates brings to the team. Maybe someone is really good at lifting everyone's spirits when a game isn't going well or practice gets tough. Maybe somebody is able to pull out the last bit of effort needed to clench the game. Let them know how valuable they are through your words and actions.

How? The easiest way is to simply tell them that their actions are appreciated, but try to be specific about what exactly they do that is so valuable to the team and to you. Slightly harder, but even more appreciated, is figuring out an area where your teammate could use some help, and offering that assistance. For instance, if they don't have reliable transportation, you could offer to be their ride to or from practice.

When you form the habit of appreciating and acknowledging the value of your teammates, you'll be amazed at how much you can accomplish together.

Team goals are never achieved alone. There is freedom, excitement, and motivation in the fact that you have an entire team of people who have your back, and you have theirs. Your teammates' successes are not something to be jealous of, but to celebrate, because they are moving your entire team towards a shared goal.

Athlete's Exercise:

When do you feel most jealous of your teammates? List 3 specific things that have previously caused you to feel jealous.

List 5 ways you can celebrate and encourage your teammates or classmates. Be creative!

Your relationships with your teammates probably vary from person to person. There are always going to be some people that you know better than others. Who is someone you could get to know better? How can you go out of your way to make that person feel more valuable?

Write down 5 teammates names. How would the team be less successful if those people weren't around? What specific thing(s) do they do to help the group succeed?

Goals are easier to achieve together. What are your goals for this week, month, and year? How can you and your teammates work together to achieve those goals? How can you help teammates reach their goals, too?



R FACTOR: FOR ATHLETES

Responding well isn't a skill you're born with; it's something you have to learn. When children are upset, they cry. When they're mad, they throw a tantrum. Managing your emotions and responding positively with a solution-oriented mindset is a skill you learn as you approach adulthood.

When coach is giving a pep talk in the locker room, you may get fired up about pursuing greatness. But then if you get frustrated during the game, the emotional part of your brain tries to box out the rational side. That causes mistakes, miscommunication, and further frustration. Things can spiral out of control quickly if you simply react.

The best way to fight this emotional domination is preparation, and a big part of that preparation is remembering the higher standards you set for yourself a few weeks ago. Those standards should become your filter for responding vs. reacting.

Let's say you've set high standards of truth and open communication for yourself. One day, you find out your teammate has been spreading false rumors about you behind your back. Do you react or respond to that?

A reaction might be to make fun of them in front of a group of people or start spreading lies about them to get even. This isn't the right play. It's okay to be upset, but it is not okay to react out of that negative emotion. Fueling the gossip with more gossip does not help find a solution.

Instead, a response would be controlling your attitude and approaching them privately to talk about their reasons for spreading rumors to try and find a solution. This adheres to your standards of open communication, and it can bring you closer to your teammate.

Reacting to negative situations leads to more chaos. Responding to the situation with careful thought leads to growth.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. At the top of a blank piece of paper, write the last time you got really mad at someone or something.
2. On the right side of the paper, write the emotions you felt in that situation. Ex: angry, spiteful, hurt, frustrated, vengeful, anxious.
3. On the left side of your paper, write the personal and/or team standards you hold yourself to follow.
4. In the center of the paper, write how you reacted to the situation listed in the first step.
5. Compare the lists from steps 2 and 3 to your actions. Did your actions line up with your standards or with the emotions you felt?
6. If your actions were more emotionally-driven, how could you have responded differently so your actions were in line with your standards? If they lined up with your standards, what did you learn from responding in the way that you did?

WEEK 05

KNOCK KNOCK FOR ATHLETES



KNOCK KNOCK: FOR ATHLETES

There is nobody in the history of the world with more opportunity than you have right now. With worldwide access to knowledge and communication, if you aren't hearing opportunity knock, it's your own fault. Let these words take root in your heart so they will affect how you act: it's not access to opportunity that leads to success, it's action.

Access to first class sports facilities doesn't equal success. Access to the world's information at your fingertips doesn't equal success. You have to take action and use those resources to build doors.

Let's look at a prime example of access vs. action: Google. In the technology-driven world we live in, access to Google doesn't seem like that big of a deal. But if you zoom out and gain some perspective, Google gives you the world's information at your fingertips, but most people aren't doing anything constructive with it!

Success is created by using a resource to build a door in your life. You can enroll in a virtual coding class and teach yourself how to build iPhone apps or learn a second (or third) language through tons of free classes and apps. You could use free course resources and textbooks on a wide range of subjects from several universities (including, Rice University, MIT and the University of Minnesota) to teach yourself about a new subject, or expand on what you're learning in school.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. When it comes to your goals and dreams, what types of opportunities do you hope will come knocking in the future?
2. Based on your answer above, what relevant resources do you have access to? Think big and small. Is it a world-class weight room? Library card? Bike? Internet connection? Mentors?
3. Even if you grew up poor with few resources, you still have the most precious resource that exists: time. Where do you spend most of your time, energy, and effort? Are you spending your time building doors for the future or focusing on the chains of the past?
4. If you were to trying achieve your biggest goal in the next six months, what would you need to do differently today? How would you use your resources if your dream was on the horizon?
5. If this hypothetical situation were true, how would you design your days?



BECOME PERFECT: FOR ATHLETES

Life will happen, bad things will come, you'll make mistakes, and you'll think you've been disqualified from achieving things in life. Struggles do not disqualify you from reaching your goals and dreams. No one is perfect, and no one else expects you to be perfect. Your struggles and failures are the things that qualify you to become perfect.

Failures level you up. Struggle garners experience.

Imagine you are playing a new video game for the first time. You have no idea what you're doing, so you're getting shot at, falling down trap doors, and missing all the boosters. You lose a few rounds, but you learn something new each time. Then, after a few tries, you've learned what to avoid, how to fight, and the best path to victory. Your reward? You level up.

The same concept goes for the game of life. You make mistakes, fail, get back up, learn along the way, and level up! There is no shame in your struggle. It is from your struggles that you find:

Wisdom: By taking a good, hard look at your mistakes and figuring out what lessons your struggles can teach you, you grow in wisdom and experience.

Strength: Determination to learn from your mistakes and put in the work to prevent repeating them shows you how strong your character is.

Gratitude: Having a grateful heart and looking for the silver lining in every failure or struggle will help you maintain a more grateful and positive outlook in other areas of your life.

The people who make mistakes are the people who try. They are the people who live life bravely, who are scared or don't know how to do something, but they try it anyway. Be thankful for your mistakes and failures, because those will become your biggest lessons in life.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. What is a struggle you recently dealt with or are dealing with now? Or if, everything is rocking in your world, describe a mistake you made.
2. If your best friend was struggling with something similar or made a similar mistake, how would you encourage him or her to handle it? How can you take that advice and begin to handle your struggle or mistake with that wisdom now?
3. Who is a mentor or someone older than you from whom you can seek advice or an outside perspective about failures and struggles? Be bold and reach out to them this week to get their perspective.
4. What wisdom did you acquire from the experience described for question 1? What strength did you discover?
5. What are three things you can be thankful for about that struggle or failure? What are some positives that came from this experience?



WHAT IF?: FOR ATHLETES

You can waste a lot of time on the road to success if your focus is on the wrong thing. In football, practice equates to about 92% of the sport, while the game maxes out at only 8%. Are you going to call the 92% a wash if the 8% doesn't end with a win? That would then make it a 100% waste of time. This is a losing mindset.

Don't think like this. You are growing every step of the way. When you first started playing sports, you probably weren't very good, but with practice and experience you improved. From the start of the season to the end, you learn so much. If the 8% doesn't pan out, you've still gained 92%. The process is so much greater than the end result.

Set yourself to being all in regardless of the outcome and enter into the "zero waste" mindset. You are not wasting practice time, weight room time, study time, or family time. The blood, sweat, and tears were not wasted. Your effort and commitment were not wasted.

The outcome isn't what matters. And this doesn't only apply to sports. Think about school. You spend a lot more time listening to lectures, reading the textbook, and studying than you do taking tests. But it's all learning. Not doing well on a test isn't a sign that you learned nothing, or that all that time spent studying for the test was wasted.

Life is a constant learning experience, and the lessons are just as rewarding as the results, if not more rewarding. If an outcome didn't turn out the way you wanted, focus on what you learned and how you will approach the situation differently next time. It will always be a win if you learn from the process.

Athletes' Exercise:

1. List a few areas in life where you only focus on the outcome and don't appreciate the process. Name three positives you gain from the process, regardless of the outcome.
2. When was a time you were not happy with the outcome of something? What were some things you learned? What are some things you are thankful for?
3. Describe the most recent time you thought something was a "waste of time." Why did you feel your time was wasted? Now, list 3 benefits or silver linings from that experience. Was your time really wasted?
4. What have you learned so far this season that will benefit you for the rest of the year and into the future? What about last season?
5. If you were trying to explain the concepts you learned this week to someone several years younger than you are, how would you go about it?



NO EXCUSES: FOR ATHLETES

In life, everyone has emotional and mental backpacks filled with “bricks”. These bricks are created by the things you experience and believe about life. Some come from experiences you choose, and others are beyond your control. Even though you might not have chosen the bricks in your bag, once they’re in there, they fall into only two categories:

1. Bricks you chose to put in your backpack.
2. Bricks you chose not to take out.

Bricks can be expectations and perceptions of yourself, beliefs about your strengths and weaknesses, or memories of times that you’ve failed. Life may drop a brick in your bag unexpectedly with circumstances you can’t control, but it’s your choice to keep it in the bag. Making excuses for why the bricks are in there doesn’t lighten the load. Every excuse is actually a missed opportunity to have grown, learned, and improved.

The weight of this backpack is like an emotional anchor that slows you down from achieving your goals. If you’re not getting what you want, then you can change it. You’re the driver on the road to success, and excuses are your brake pedals.

If you want to wait for your dreams, if you want to slow down your growth, then keep making excuses. But if you want to use every day as a training day towards success, then live by the mantra “no excuses.”

Why? Because you cannot change the past, but you can impact your future. Excuses pull you back even when you want to move forward. Excuses limit your growth which in turn limits your success. The bricks you choose to carry, and the excuses you tell yourself (and others) so you can keep them there are weighing you down. It’s time to find a way to lighten the load.

Athlete’s Exercise:

1. What “bricks” (circumstances, insecurities, etc.) are weighing you down? Which one would you like to get rid of most? How do you feel when you focus on that brick?
2. What excuses do you tell yourself that have prevented you from taking the brick out before now?
3. Imagine that brick was out of your life, how do you feel? What positive impact would removing that brick have on your life? Are you willing to take it out of your backpack?
4. List 3 excuses you tell yourself to keep from relieving yourself of the brick.
5. Write a positive counter-argument for each of the excuses you make for keeping that negative influence in your mind. Ex:

Excuse: I don’t have time to run in the morning.

Counter-Argument: I don’t want to get up early in the morning to run, but I know I will feel better after I do.

WEEK 09 5 P'S FOR ATHLETES



5 P's: FOR ATHLETES

While victory might be rewarded on the playing field, it's earned on the practice field.

If you want to win in the game, you've got to win in practice. Keep repeating this to yourself until it sticks: Prior preparation permits proper performance.

Why does it matter if you're fast, if you're not your fastest, yet? Why does it matter if you can bench 200, if you know you could eventually work your way up to more weight? Aim to become better, faster or stronger. That's real victory.

There are 168 hours in a week. Adrian Peterson, Michael Phelps, LeBron James, Steph Curry, Serena and Venus Williams, Lionel Messi, and Abby Wambach all have 168 hours in their week. The difference between fame and just being a face in the crowd comes down to how you spend those 168 hours.

You could spend them playing video games, hanging out with friends, or goofing off at practice. Or you could spend them studying, putting in extra time on the track, and giving every moment in practice to improving. Downtime is important for reducing stress and taking care of yourself. But if you honestly assess the amount of time you spend relaxing rather than preparing, does your assessment show that you're giving all that you can?

You stand out among your peers when you make the most of your 168 hours. If you want to be successful in the 8 percent, you've got to prepare in the 92 percent. Practice and the game are directly linked.

You can tell how much you love your team by the choices you make grinding at practice. You can tell how much you want to win in the game by the choices you make every day—on and off the field.

Athlete's Exercise:

Dissect how you spend your 168 hours in a week. Figure out where your 92% is spent, and you'll see where your future lies. How many hours are you spending sleeping, eating, studying, practicing, scrolling through social media, spending time with family and friends?

Where do you spend the majority of your time? Is it helping you prepare to succeed?

What's one thing you can do today to better utilize your time? Come up with a reminder for yourself so that you'll continue doing that thing for the rest of the week and beyond.

Think about how your teammates spend their time in practice. Are you giving as much as they are? Are you giving more? How can you encourage yourself to give more and encourage your teammates to do the same?

Are you currently satisfied with how you're spending the 92%? At the end of the season, will you be happy with how you finished?



EIGHTEEN INCHES: FOR ATHLETES

Are you guaranteed success when the perfect play is called? No.

In any sport there are competing forces that try to take you down. Just because you know what to do doesn't mean it's going to happen the way you plan. If the right play is called, but not executed well, it's worthless. In other words, if right thinking doesn't turn into right doing, it is worthless.

The same goes for the game of life. Making a plan does nothing if it doesn't take root in your heart and turn into action.

So how can you transmit information from your head to your heart? Become coachable. Your coach has your best intentions at heart—whether you believe that or not when he's demanding you run suicides.

Being coachable requires two things: respect and action.

Respect means you have a listening ear and process what your coach says. It means seeing value in his or her words of wisdom, and taking those words to heart.

Next comes action. Respect coupled with action is a sure recipe for success. If you are coachable and listen to what your coach says, let it into your mind, let it sink into your heart, and then take action.

Do the drill, perform the task, and run the play. Over and over again. That repetition will drill those lessons deep into your mind and heart.

In the same way, thinking about your dreams and even feeling the passion for your dreams won't make your dreams a reality. At some point, those thoughts and feelings have to translate into actions.

Do not stop at simply thinking about your goals and dreams. Let them sink into your heart and take action. Listen to the lessons of people you respect, let it travel 18 inches and take root in your heart, then turn those elements into action.

Athlete's Exercise:

Head: What's a dream you have? *Heart:* Why do you want to achieve that dream? Why is it important to you?

Your dreams are achievable, but it does you no good to just hope, want, tweet, snap, or post about your dreams if you don't pair real life actions with it. *Action:* Are you doing something today that brings you a step closer to your dream?

Head: What are your personal and/or team values you live by? *Heart:* What is the connection between your values and your dreams? How will living out your values help you achieve your dreams?

Action: Are you acting in alignment with your values? If so, how? If not, why not? How can you improve in this area?

Name another area of your life where you can use the Head to Heart to Action method to achieve success and explain how you can do so.



ONE THING: FOR ATHLETES

Define success for yourself. What's your goal? Think big! What would you like to accomplish this season? Is it a faster PR? A heavier bench press? More bases stolen?

Once your goal is defined, work backwards. What will it take to reach your goal? Make several short-term goals to reach your long-term goals. Success comes in short steps.

To become better at stealing bases, what must come first? Speed. Become quicker by making the most of suicides (yes, they're awful). Or practice running the 90-foot from bag to bag. Or work your fast-twitch muscles through explosive workouts.

But what comes before speed? Practice. This means showing up to practice every day—whether you feel like it or not.

The same goes for doing homework. To steal more bases, you have to stay on the baseball team. You can't steal bases if you're not on the team, and you'll be kicked off if you can't keep your grades up. So, what does this mean? Make good grades. How do you make good grades? Consistently finish the homework and study.

Struggling to focus on tonight's math homework? Your friends hitting you up on Snapchat repeatedly and you can't concentrate? Then the first goal is to shut off your phone and tackle problem number 12. Ask yourself, when you're about to zone off and check Snapchat: "What's the one thing I can do right now that will help me successful in 5 minutes?"

Then do it.

How do you steal more bases than you did last season? Here's how: 1) Finish tonight's homework. 2) Finish tomorrow's homework. 3) Keep the grades up. 4) Show up to practice. 5) Slowly become faster by making the most of the running exercises 6) Steal the bases.

Success is made possible because it's sequential, not immediate.

Athlete's Exercise:

Take two sheets of paper and fold one of them down the middle (top to bottom).

On the first sheet of paper, write a goal you want to achieve in the next 3-6 weeks. Then, write the necessary steps you need to take to accomplish your goal.

On the right side of the second (folded) sheet of paper, prioritize your list from your #1 priority to your last.

Now, write your #1 on the left side and cross it out on the right. Now look at your priorities as that #1 is your sole focus and #2-10 are the enemies of completing #1. They are distractions and you need to focus in on #1 until it's done.

Once you've completed #1, move down your list...check off #1 and move #2 over to the left side. Now #3-10 are the enemies.

Continue this process until you've completed your task list and achieved your goal.



PURPOSED PAIN: FOR ATHLETES

"Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever."

-Lance Armstrong

Pain isn't fair, and it doesn't make a lot of sense.

The sooner you can wrap your head around that reality, the sooner you will be able to take your pain and do something constructive with it.

Your goals don't care how unfair your start line was or whether you did or didn't experience pain in your life. But you can't just give up on those goals because you've suffered heartache. Or, technically you can, but then what sort of life would you be living?

It does not matter how unfair things are. Your goals don't care what pain you've experienced. Success doesn't care where you started from. In the words of Brian Kight, "It doesn't matter, get better."

Complaining about the past and your pain isn't helpful, either. It keeps you focused on the things that you cannot change. Never forget: you finish where you focus. Pain focuses on the past, but your future awaits. Are you going to be someone who uses their past and pain as stepping stools on your way to success?

The longer your journey, the stronger you'll be. It's just like the weight room—the more you hurt in the weight room, the farther you'll be able to throw, stronger you'll be able to tackle, and faster you'll be able to run.

If you are going to sit and wallow in your pain, then you do not yet see the whole picture. If you are going to blame your pain for the bad parts of you, then you have to give it credit for making you the worthy person you are today.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. Fold a piece of paper in half. On the left side, name three pains in your life. On the right side, list three ways to purpose each pain.
 - a. For example: Pain: Failing chemistry class
 - i. Connect with a tutor and put in a few extra hours of studying per week.
 - ii. Build a study group with students who you aspire to be like.
 - iii. Talk to your teacher about earning extra credit or consulting additional study resources.
2. How would you define yourself in two sentences if no one else would read it? How about if you were showing it to someone else?
3. How would others define you in two sentences?
4. Describe the differences between how you would describe yourself versus how you believe others would describe you. Where do you think the difference comes from?
5. If you defined yourself by your pain, why do you believe this event or circumstance defines you?

WEEK 13 OWN IT FOR ATHLETES



OWN IT: FOR ATHLETES

There are two types of mistakes: effort mistakes and coachable mistakes.

Effort mistakes come from things like not putting your all into practice and preparation, not studying enough for the mid-term, or general procrastinating. Effort mistakes occur when you do not put in your best effort or do not give your all to the goal.

Effort mistakes are unacceptable. I repeat: effort mistakes are unacceptable. If you're not making your mistakes at 1000 mph, you're doing it wrong. That doesn't mean you should be reckless with your decisions. After all, not thinking something through can also be an effort mistake.

If you are giving it your all and trying your best, your efforts are not to blame for the mistake, which means you can learn from it. That's a coachable mistake. Coachable mistakes come from being "in process", and are a powerful tool in your development.

You are learning all the time. Think about learning a subject like Chemistry. You start out kind of knowing what chemicals like oxygen and CO₂ are from your personal experience of breathing, but now you're being asked to learn about the chemical composition at a microscopic level. No one expects you to memorize and retain all the information presented in the textbook without a lot of studying, application of the knowledge, and—that's right—mistakes.

You're going to give a wrong answer in front of the class. You're going to miss a few questions on the homework assignment. Something will go wrong with an experiment.

But every time you make one of those mistakes, you gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge that you got wrong the first time. You shouldn't be ashamed of making coachable mistakes. Those mistakes are some of the best learning tools available to you, if you accept them and learn from them.

Athlete's Exercise:

Think about a recent mistake you made. It can be something that happened on the field or court or in the classroom. Keep it in mind as you answer these questions:

1. Was it an effort mistake or a coachable mistake? Explain why.
2. Did you own the mistake? When it happened, did you take responsibility for the mistake or did you pass it off on someone or something else?
3. Did you take the events personally? Was your self-talk, "I AM a mistake" or "I MADE a mistake"? How can you separate your personal identity from the mistake?
4. What caused this mistake? Don't settle for the first or most obvious answer, and don't just make excuses. Dig deep to the root cause.
5. Did you handle the mistake as well as you could have? If the answer is no, write out what you can do next time to make the next mistake your best mistake.



WHY NOT?: FOR ATHLETES

Think about your favorite restaurant. What do you like about it? The quality of the food? The friendliness of the waitstaff? The classy or unique décor?

What if the next time you ate there, your order was badly cooked or completely wrong? What if the waiter was rude? What if the table you were seated at was dirty? It may remain your favorite place to eat, but it would certainly lose points.

At a restaurant—or really any other business—customers expect excellence. Every time. And why not? After all, they're paying for a certain level of service and quality. Those who don't meet expectations don't stay in business long.

Anytime you are a customer, you expect excellence. You expect it from strangers, so why not expect the same excellence from yourself in everything that you do?

You should consistently do your best and strive for excellence in everything you do, from the smallest chore to the biggest game nights. That means no procrastinating on making the bed or doing homework. Demand the best of yourself when you take out the trash, bench press, and spend time with your family.

What exactly does that mean? Well, let's use those last three examples:

- Taking out the trash: Make sure nothing has dripped from the bag onto the floor on your way out. If there is something messy on the trash lid, go the extra inch and wipe it clean. Pay attention to details.
- Bench press: Focus on what you're doing. Be honest about how much weight you can take. Give it your all.
- Spending time with family: Don't be on your phone while watching a movie, playing a board game, or having dinner. Be a positive example for your siblings and friends. Be present.

If you're not striving for excellence, why not?

Athlete's Exercise:

1. Name your least favorite chore. List 3 ways you can do that chore better than you currently do it. Give it a try today.
2. Do you give your all in practice every day? Explain how you could do better or how you are already doing your best.
3. Do you procrastinate about doing homework? Is your version of studying skimming the photo captions in the textbook? List 3 ways you can improve your homework and study habits this week.



OVERNIGHT SUCCESS: FOR ATHLETES

When you hear the phrase overnight success, what do you picture?

A YouTuber who turned into a sensation with one video? A fourth-string player who miraculously saved a game with his hidden talent?

It's easy to see those things, and go "they are so lucky" or "I wish I had that kind of talent." But that idea completely misses the point. The truth is, those "overnight" success stories aren't the product of just one night. They are built on a thousand nights of effort and determination.

Pretend that overnight success as popularly imagined was real. Somebody with a bit of talent comes out of nowhere with the next big thing. But what happens after the public gets tired of that one thing? For example, say it's a YouTube video that gets super popular overnight, and everybody knows who this YouTuber is. What if they only had that one video?

Well, they could make another one, right? It's possible, but if they don't have the background of all the effort built over time that goes into real, lasting success, the chances of their next video being as big as the one that launched them into the public view is pretty slim. That's called a one-hit wonder, and that is not real, lasting success.

Sure, "overnight" success might come from the next thing someone did. But that "next thing" was only as explosive as it was because they spent a lot of time building up to it. They stacked the wood a bit at a time until they had a bonfire that just needed that last match to light up the night and keep lighting it up.

You might say "I wish I had that," but the truth is you do. You have the ability to build something that starts small and grows until the whole world can see it.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. Success comes from small steps that lead to big outcomes. What are some small steps you can take today to hit your biggest goal?
2. Think of a successful person that you admire, no matter what field they're in. What steps do you think they had to take to get there? How could you do something similar?
3. Remember a time when you accomplished a goal that took a lot of time and effort. How did you feel once you accomplished it? Would it have meant as much if it hadn't taken as much work?
4. Do you have a 5-year plan? That might seem like a long time, but some goals take that long. The really big ones take longer. Can you plot out, even in the most general terms, where you want to be in 5 years? What's it going to take to get there?



FOCUS FORWARD: FOR ATHLETES

Do you pick a target and persevere to reach it, no matter what? Do you stick with it even when you're bored or sore or tired? Can you keep the end in sight and ignore distractions like social media and Netflix?

If you answered "Yes" to all of those questions, there's a good chance that you have a healthy dose of grit. Grit is the number one deciding factor in whether or not you will achieve your goals.

Grit is refusing to give or accept excuses for why you aren't succeeding. It's taking responsibility for your own progress and owning up to any mistakes you've made.

Grit is keeping the goal in sight and not being distracted by what's going on behind you or to the sides. It's letting whatever doesn't help you move forward fall to the wayside.

Grit is making a mistake, learning what you can from it, and letting the rest slide off your back. It's recognizing that you can get mad, but if that anger keeps you from pushing forward, you've got to let it go.

Grit is the ability to keep pushing, even if you feel like your legs are on fire and the finish line feels like it's miles away. It's saying "Nothing is going to hold me back" and backing those words up with actions to match.

It's easy to say "I won't let anything stop me." It's much harder to actually stand by those words when life is trying to rub your nose in the dirt.

Grit isn't about what you say. It's about what you do.

The number one indicator of success is whether or not you possess grit, but how do you know if you have it? Work through the questions below to learn more about your own level of grit.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. Think of a time when you had to use grit and determination to get through something, and you succeeded. How did you feel?
2. Now think of a time when you had to use grit and determination to get through something, but you failed anyway. How did you feel then? Did you just give up? Or did you pick yourself up and carry on?
3. Grit is a mindset. It's believing that even if you fail, you can get back up and make sure that next time is different. But there are certain mindsets that can hold you back. What's one self-defeating mindset you can work on changing to up your grit level?
4. Visit the more resources page to take the survey to find out where you land on the Grit Scale. Were you surprised by your results? Did you agree or disagree with them? Why?



CLARK KENT: FOR ATHLETES

The way you behave shifts based on who you are with. Your friends might know you as the comedian while your parents see you as the shy one. Your coach might know you as an offensive powerhouse while the girl or guy you're crushing on sees you as an awkward classmate.

You spend a lot of time grooming your appearance and behavior based on what you think the people around you want you to be. You wear different masks for different situations because you care how other people perceive you. Even being the person who "doesn't care what others think" is a mask.

Your self-image is so wrapped up in your outer image that it's easy to forget that it isn't who you really are. Your reputation is not your real character. Just as Superman isn't really Clark Kent, you aren't really the class clown, or the nerd, or the powerhouse. The real you is more personal and complex.

Who you really are determines how you will react in tough situations. Think about it in terms of your sport. Everybody wants to be known as "the team no one wants to play." But your character is what it takes to actually make that a reality.

When you have to choose between staying up late or having the energy to make an early morning practice, do you have the discipline to make the choice that benefits your goals? When you start struggling in class mid-season and you have to pick up the grades or sit on the bench, do you have the motivation to re-prioritize and get things done?

Motivation and discipline are strong character traits. These traits and others like them have the potential to affect your reputation, but how you exhibit those traits when no one is looking is the mark of who you really are.

Athlete's Exercise:

1. How would your friends describe you? Your parents? Your teammates? What about your actions causes these different descriptions?
2. How would you describe yourself the way you are when no one else is around (your character)? Would it bother you if other people saw you that way, too? Why?
3. Do you care more about your reputation or your character? How do your actions reflect the answer you just gave?
4. What does it mean to you to have a strong character? List 5 traits you associate with a strong character.
5. For the 5 traits you listed, write down one example of how you exhibited that trait to others in the past week. Then, write down one example of an action that exhibited that trait but only you were aware of it. If there are any you couldn't think of, come up with an action you can take this week to exhibit that trait.



GUARANTEED STRUGGLE: FOR ATHLETES

You will encounter people in your life who never seem to struggle at anything. Maybe they're just naturally good at school or good at throwing accurately. To the outside observer, it looks like they don't have any worries because everything comes to them easily.

Their struggles might not be obvious, but you can bet they exist. Maybe that person struggles with self-esteem issues or social anxiety. Maybe they struggle with a difficult parent situation. No matter how charmed somebody's life may look to you, know that they are dealing with their own tough situations, too.

Sometimes it might feel like you are the only person who ever has, or ever will, struggle with your particular issue. But that's not true. When you feel alone in your struggle, it can be hard to imagine other people facing the issues that you do, so let's put some real numbers to situations that you or people you know may be facing.

- 40% of kids in America are being raised by a single mother. Think about a basketball team, there are 5 guys or girls on the court at a time; according to that statistic, 2 of those players would be raised by just their mom.
- At least 12.5% of teens ages 12-17 will suffer a major depressive episode in a year. That means if you look at a group of 8 friends at school, at least 1 of them would be struggling with major depression. That doesn't even include less severe depression or other emotional struggles.
- In 2015, 28% of high school seniors had reading skills below their grade level. If you had a soccer team of seniors on the field, approximately 3 of those 11 players would struggle with reading.

The struggle to overcome obstacles is what makes you strong. There is no shame in it. And you are not alone.

● Athlete's Exercise:

1. What is something you are struggling with currently?
2. Have you talked about it with a friend, parent, or trusted adult? Why or why not?
3. Think about a struggle a friend or teammate is experiencing or has experienced recently. How would you feel if you were in that situation? Jot down a few ways you can help them or show your support while they go through this period.
4. Describe how you typically react to struggle in your life. Do you embrace it? Do you run away from it? How could you respond to the situation more constructively or use it for your benefit?
5. Think of someone you admire for the way they handle tough times. What do they do that makes their response to struggle admirable? What is 1 concrete action item you can take from your observations to use when you encounter struggle?