

#WeRideTogether

WE ALL PLAY A ROLE IN STOPPING ABUSE



Swimming

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize inappropriate conduct in coach-athlete relationships, both online and in-person
- Identify warning signs of sexual abuse or misconduct, like favoritism, gift-giving, inappropriate communication, and unwanted touching
- Learn how to intervene as an active bystander when witnessing concerning behaviors
- Understand different intervention strategies
- Empower athletes to speak up when a boundary has been crossed or they feel uncomfortable
- Practice ways athletes can communicate concerns about grooming or inappropriate conduct
- Encourage athletes to look out for one another and speak up if they notice concerning interactions
- Prioritize victim-centered approaches

Learn about the nuances and types of active bystander intervention in sport through real-life scenarios.

THE SITUATION

Sarah, 17, is the captain of the local club swim team. Jenny, 15, just moved to town and joined the team. Matt, in his late 20s, is the assistant coach who recently transferred to the club.

The club requires all athletes and coaches to sign a code of conduct including a communications policy to participate. After a couple of weeks of practice, Matt started liking Jenny's photos on Instagram and leaving flirty comments. One was of Jenny in her swimsuit, "Looking good!" he said. Most recently, he commented, "That swim cap is cute on you." and "🔥😍". He also has sent her a friend request with a message "I bet the boys are all over you, hard to concentrate on swimming with a cutie like you on the team!"

Sarah follows Jenny on Instagram. She notices Matt's comments and feels uneasy. She thinks his comments are weird and out of line. No other coaches follow team members on Instagram and say those types of things.

Sarah gets an unsettling feeling in her stomach and wonders if Matt is making more comments to Jenny privately online and/or offline. Sarah decides she wants to do something to support Jenny.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODIFICATIONS

Matt, the coach, additionally makes racially insensitive comments about Jenny.

INTERVENTION CHOICES

Direct: "Reframe It"

Sarah talks to Matt before swim practice.

Sarah: Hey, Matt, I know you are new to our team, I just wanted to remind you that athletes and coaches are not allowed to be friends on social media.

Matt: Oh ya, I guess I just thought it was a good way to connect and not that big of a deal.

Sarah: We have a code of conduct that you and we all have signed, saying that we will just communicate via group text. Can you do this from now on, please?

Matt: Ok, sure.



Indirect: "Follow Up"

Sarah talks to Jenny privately after swim practice.

Sarah: Hey Jenny, can I talk to you about something? I noticed Matt has been commenting on your pics online a lot. Does any of that make you uncomfortable?

Jenny: Yeah, it does, honestly. I wish he wouldn't comment on my appearance. It just feels weird.

Sarah: That's totally inappropriate. As a coach, he shouldn't be saying that stuff. I can go with you to report this to the swim club if you want. You don't have to put up with him crossing boundaries like that.

Jenny: Thanks. I'm relieved I'm not the only one who thought it was strange. I'll think about reporting it.

Sarah: Of course. And let me know if you need anything. We have to look out for each other.



What other bystanders could have said or done:

If a parent or coach sees this behavior on social media they could also reinforce the communication best practices laid out in a code of conduct.



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Characters

Matt: Coach

Jenny: Swimming Athlete

Sarah: Active Bystander Athlete

Setting

Online
Interaction

SARAH'S INTERNAL REFLECTION

Body Signs

Sarah felt uneasy. She felt sick to her stomach and had the intuitive knowing that something was not quite right.

Safety Concerns

Sarah made sure to confront Matt in a public area. She also didn't specifically call out Jenny's name to Matt.

Identity Dynamics

Sarah relied on her position of seniority on the team and referred to the behavioral norms set in the code of conduct.

Other Options / Next Steps

If Matt continues with inappropriate communication, Sarah can talk to a trusted adult. She can also consider following up with Jenny again and reporting the behavior.

TRAUMA-INFORMED ELEMENTS

- Prioritizing Safety
- Empowerment
- No re-traumatizing or making the situation worse

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Equestrian

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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THE SITUATION

Chloe and John, both age 16, are riders competing at a horse show with their trainer, Susan. John competed first and did well. Chloe was up next. Susan and John are watching from the side of the ring together.

Chloe begins and makes a mistake on the first jump of the course. Susan starts to yell, "What are you doing?! Are you thinking at all?!" Everyone around, including parents in the stands, and the ring steward, can hear her. Between shouting more negative remarks at Chloe, who is continuing to have trouble performing, Susan makes derogatory comments about Chloe to the assistant coach and to John directly.

Chloe exited the arena appearing defeated both internally and externally. John too was tense and frazzled, feeling every verbal blow Chloe received. John knew that Susan's remarks were not helpful coaching and negatively impacted Chloe emotionally and her overall performance. John felt very uneasy.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODIFICATIONS

Susan, the coach, includes derogatory remarks on Chloe's body type.

INTERVENTION CHOICES

Indirect: "Distraction"

John could create an unrelated distraction that would interrupt the coach's verbal commentary. For example, he could spill some water or say another person needs the coach's attention promptly.

Indirect: "Follow Up"

John could talk to Chloe after the event. "Hey, Chloe, are you ok? Sue was being over the top back there. I hate it when she yells at us like that. We can do something about this together if you want. We do not have to tolerate this."

What other bystanders could have said or done:

The assistant coach and team parents watching could directly intervene by calling out the harmful behavior. They could give the trainer alternatives regarding how to coach athletes in a more caring and supportive manner. "Hey Susan, could you give her some helpful tips instead of yelling, thanks!"

Event facilitators could also give feedback and consequences to Susan on how verbally abusive behaviors towards athletes is not accepted or tolerated.

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Characters

Susan: Trainer

Chloe: Junior Rider

John: Active Bystander,
Junior Rider

Setting

Horse Show
Competition

JOHN'S INTERNAL REFLECTION

Body Signs

John physically felt put off by Susan's tone and language and knew that her communication was not constructive.

Safety Concerns

Creating a distraction that appeared accidental would lead to little possible recourse. John's intervention would be public so witnesses would be present.

Identity Dynamics

John could have considered directly intervening with the coach by saying, "Hey you are being really hard on Chloe." This however could have led to John being yelled at or more yelling for both him and Chloe in private later.

Other Options / Next Steps

John could share the impact of what he experienced with another coach, trainer, or trusted adult. John could campaign for the team to agree upon a code of conduct with their coaches describing the boundaries between tough coaching and verbal abuse.

TRAUMA-INFORMED ELEMENTS

- Prioritizing Safety
- Empowerment
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THE SITUATION

Dance practice finishes and the dancers are packing up to leave. Jada and Kim, both 13, are the last two in the studio with their instructor. This is Kim's second season with the instructor, Don. Jada just started a couple of weeks ago. As the girls are putting on their coats, Don goes over to Kim. Jada got a funny feeling and decided to take her time leaving to wait for Kim.

Don standing very close to Kim, says "Kim, I think you and I need some one-on-one time..." Jada, who was pretending to play on her phone, looks up and catches Kim's eyes full of concern and notices Kim's body stiffen. Don inches closer to Kim, and continues speaking, "Your performance is truly outstanding. I'd like us to meet privately tomorrow to discuss how we can elevate your dance even more." Jada felt clammy and uncomfortable. Awaiting her response, Don places his hand on Kim's lower back not realizing Jada was still in the studio watching.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODIFICATIONS

Don includes comments to Kim on her family's financial status.

INTERVENTION CHOICES

Direct: "Get away from it"

Jada quickly interjects by walking over to Kim saying "You know what, we have a study group tomorrow. But we can get your insights at our next team practice." Jada grabs Kim's hand and walks with her towards the door.

Indirect: "Document"

Jada turns on the voice recorder on her phone and captures Don's attempts to isolate and touch Kim. Jada shares this with Kim afterwards and they talk to a trusted adult about the interaction and the evidence afterwards.

What other bystanders could have said or done:

Dance team members continue to follow the rule of 3 meaning that a third party can observe all interactions between a coach and an athlete.

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Characters

Jada: Active Bystander,
New Dance Team Member
Kim: Dance Team Member
Don: Dance Instructor

Setting

Dance
Studio After
Practice

JADA'S INTERNAL REFLECTION

Body Signs

Jada was feeling tired and relaxed after dance practice, but now her body is tense, and hyper-aware of her surroundings. Don's request seemed abnormal to Jada she knew Kim wouldn't want to be left alone with him.

Safety Concerns

Jada chooses approaches that do not directly engage Don which could lead him to escalate in the moment.

Identity Dynamics

It can be imagined that Don has already been trying to groom Kim or build trust with her over the past season. Jada, not knowing previous histories, chooses subtle intervention approaches.

Other Options / Next Steps

Jada can provide Kim with resources and education on grooming, power imbalances, and sexual assault. Jada can remind Kim that she is not alone and if the instructor makes her uncomfortable they can proceed together with reporting.

TRAUMA-INFORMED ELEMENTS

- Empowerment
- Respect for Boundaries
- Supportive Community
- Open Communication
- Safety and Well-being

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Football

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THE SITUATION

A high school football team finishes practice and goes back into the locker room. Matt is the new freshman kicker on the team, Mike is a sophomore center, and Jeff is a junior wide receiver.

Matt is still in the shower. Mike and Jeff have already cleaned up and are getting changed. Mike looks over to Jeff and some other teammates that are in the locker room and smirks “I’m going to mess with Matt. Let’s see how he reacts when he can’t find his clothes after his shower.” Other players chuckle as Mike laughs. Mike goes over to Matt’s locker and grabs his clothes.

Some of the other teammates are egging Mike on, laughing, or just looking around to see if anyone is going to say anything. Jeff feels his blood boiling inside of him and feels anxious and nervous. Jeff knows this isn’t funny and wants Mike to stop.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MODIFICATIONS

Including variables such as stature, race, ability, and sexual and gender orientation.

Noticing and understanding how intersectionality and power imbalances play a role in hazing/sexual abuse.

INTERVENTION CHOICES

Direct: "Name it"

Jeff firmly turns to Mike and the others directly saying "Guys, that's not cool. Leave Matt's stuff alone. We don't do this kind of stuff on this team." Mike rolls his eyes and grumbles "Geeze, man" while still fumbling with Matt's clothes. Jeff assertively says again "I said leave his stuff alone. That isn't a prank; it's just mean."

Indirect: "Follow up"

Jeff waits behind in the locker room to help show Matt where his clothes are hidden. Jeff says "Sorry about them, I won't let this happen again." Jeff reports the incident to the coach later reinforcing the zero-tolerance policy for sexual hazing.

What other bystanders could have said or done:

Other teammates could have backed up Jeff and intervened as well as supported Matt and stopped Mike in the act.

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Characters

Matt: New Athlete

Jeff: Active Bystander Athlete

Mike: Athlete

Setting

Locker room after practice

JEFF'S INTERNAL REFLECTION

Body Signs

Jeff feels angry and frustrated that he is observing a teammate being harassed, and that others are not stopping it.

Safety Concerns

Jeff must evaluate his own safety and potential recourse for Matt. Jeff must analyze the risk of Mike becoming aggressive with him and/or retaliating. Jeff knows that the coach's office is in earshot and that other players are around in the locker room providing him with some sense of safety and security. Jeff also trusts that his coach will handle the incident later in a way that will not implicate Jeff or Mike.

Identity Dynamics

Jeff is in a position of seniority on the team and his history on the team holds some power or rank in the locker room, but he is also of smaller stature.

Other Options / Next Steps

The coach can provide education or examples on what falls in line with pranks and camaraderie building, and what crosses the line into hazing and sexual abuse, adding names to these elements as well as enforcing team consequences.

TRAUMA-INFORMED ELEMENTS

- Validation of Feelings
- Community Support
- Prompt Action
- Safety and Well-being