

## **Pursuing Victory with Honor and Character\***

Sports help to develop a healthy, fit person but cheerleading also provides a great opportunity to emphasize life skills that will enhance the caliber of a person. This, in turn, will bring a happier well-balanced attitude and a more positive, productive and giving person and stronger leader.

Here are tools to give you ways to address behavior problems and student underachievement. At your practice sessions, take 30 minutes every week to develop one of these character traits that are important to cheerleaders: Responsibility, Respect, Compassion, Sportsmanship, Integrity and Honor.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

*“I’ve worked too hard and too long to let anything stand in the way of my goals. I will not let my teammates down, and I will not let myself down.”*

– Mia Hamm, U.S. women’s soccer star

#### Instructions

1. Read the quote aloud to the cheerleaders.
2. Brainstorm responsibilities that they must fulfill to make themselves and the team successful.
3. Have the cheerleaders identify short- and long-term individual responsibilities.
4. Discuss support systems that can help them manage and fulfill their responsibilities.

#### Possible Answers to Questions

1. Suggested responsibilities for the cheerleader to fulfill: Maintain proper nutrition, hydration, and rest; attend practices and events on time; have a good attitude; meet all academic requirements including attending class, completing assignments, and maintaining a good GPA; perform well as team member to the best of your ability; and continually work to improve your personal best.
2. Short-term individual responsibilities:
  - Get adequate sleep and allow sufficient time for your body to rest.
  - Attend practice regularly.
  - Address injuries.
  - Study and maintain academic standards.
3. Long-term individual responsibilities:
  - Understand your role as a team player and live up to it.
  - Set goals for growth and development as a player and student and reflect on them regularly.
  - Evaluate and monitor your effectiveness as a role model and leader.
  - Develop plans and strategies to positively impact your community.

### Possible Extension Questions

1. Ask the cheerleaders to reflect on a time when someone they know didn't fulfill his or her responsibilities. How did it make them feel?
2. Divide the group into pairs. Have each pair talk about a time when their partner fulfilled his or her responsibilities and how it positively affected the team.
3. Using the examples given in the previous discussions, develop goals and responsibilities for the team and strategies to help the cheerleaders fulfill them and strengthen the success of the team.
4. Write the team responsibilities and goals on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard. Have every team member sign it and display it in a prominent place. Encourage the cheerleaders to reflect on their responsibilities and to encourage each other when they exhibit responsible behavior. Relate the team's successes to individual players' behavior.

## **RESPECT**

*When you show disrespect toward someone, what does it get you? Absolutely nothing. It is a foolish waste of your time and effort.*

*On the other hand, when you show respect toward others, you in turn become more respected. Do other people "deserve" your respect? Not always. But respect is not some kind of award that is yours to grant. Rather, it is a means of communication and understanding. Invest in the strength of your own respect. You can certainly respect others without having to agree with the things they say or do. In fact, respectful disagreement can be a powerful catalyst for growth and achievement.*

*Think with respect, speak with respect, and act with respect toward others. It will surely make you more respected. -- Ralph Marston*

### Instructions

1. Read the quote aloud to the cheerleaders.
2. Brainstorm ways to show respect to each other.
3. Have them list how respect will develop a stronger and more successful team.

## **COMPASSION**

To become more aware that compassion involves understanding and engaging in another person's life, students view images of people and creatively interpret what they see.

*"A cheerleader slipped and fell while cheering on the sideline and a group of fans laughed and yelled rude comments to her. Knowing that she was hurt and felt clumsy, the team captain pulled her aside and told her that she was important to the team because of her exuberance and spirit and said, "Your energy inspires us all to be loud and more enthusiastic". The girl went out to be named by the school as "Most Spirited" at the end-of-the year awards banquet."*

### Materials

\* Photo(s) cut from magazines (remove all headlines, captions, and associated articles describing the scene)

### Instructions

1. Read the story aloud to cheerleaders.
2. Ask them what they think would have happened if the team laughed and made fun of the cheerleader.
3. What did the behavior of the captain give to the cheerleader that fell?
  4. Choose one or more photos that provoke an emotional response. They should feature at least one person. Choose images in which the emotions of the person are not overt (screaming, crying, laughing, etc.) and their mood or situation is ambiguous.
  5. Say: There is an old saying: "A picture is worth a thousand words." We're going to look at a picture and describe it. But before we do, we need to ask how to feel compassion for another person and why it's important. Solicit and list answers. Point out that part of caring involves empathy — seeing another's perspective and feeling what he or she is going through. Say: Our purpose is to look at the people in the photo with compassionate eyes. Imagine their lives, thoughts, dreams, fears. Invent a story for them. To do so, you have to care about them.
6. Divide into groups and distribute the photo(s). Encourage them to pretend that they are the figure in the photo(s) or the photographer. Invite them to think about what the person/photographer sees, hears, tastes, smells, touches, and feels in the captured moment; why the person is happy, scared, bored, or sad; where he/she has come from and where he/she is headed; and why the photographer cared enough to take a picture. Share the stories. Suggest that taking the time to figure out a person's feelings is the essence of empathy and compassion, which are key elements of caring. Ask them to explain why.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP**

*“At the state championship, the judging panel decided to change the scores of team A which moved them from first place to second in the final standings. After the trophies were given out, and the coaches received their scoresheets, the coach from team A noticed that some of his scores had been erased and changed. He complained to the judges but was told that they all agreed on the changes. He told his cheer squad that they were robbed of first place. Two weeks later a group of cheerleaders showed up at the state conference banquet and returned the second place trophy because they said that they were robbed of winning the championship. They also distributed negative flyers detailing that the organization was unfair and corrupt. ”*

### Instructions

1. Read the story aloud.
  2. How did this behavior reflect on the coach and team? The school?
  3. Ask each student-athlete to reflect on a time when an opponent behaved ungraciously (taunted after winning or were angry and rude after losing). Have them describe what they felt.
- Lesson – Showing graciousness in defeat teaches you how to appreciate success, helps you understand how to overcome negative situations, makes you resilient, and develops your ability to relate to others.

## **INTEGRITY**

*In 2007, New England Patriots Coach Bill Belichick was found illegally videotaping another team's defensive plays. Belichick had led his team to 3 Super Bowl championships, 3 conference titles, and 5 division crowns, but his reputation was seriously damaged after being caught cheating. He was personally fined \$500,000, and the Patriots were docked \$250,000 and forced to forfeit a first-round pick in the following year's draft.*

### Instructions

1. Read the story
2. Discuss integrity (being true to your best self) and how it requires courage and unselfishness. Say: One of the key elements of trustworthiness is living a life of integrity — being true to yourself so people know they can trust you. What could be simpler, right? But, of course, it isn't that easy. Integrity requires courage to do the right thing and to be true to your best self. It's one of the toughest requirements of an ethical life because courage requires us to face down what we fear most. Fear is powerful. When faced with conflict and paying a price we might not want to pay, it's easier to compromise our values, go with the flow, and not stand up for someone or something that's right.
3. Discuss what Belichick's legacy will be.
4. Ask them what they want their legacy to be at the end of their career or season. What will be the team's legacy?

## **HONOR**

*"No one person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave."* – Calvin Coolidge, 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States

### Instructions

1. Read the quote aloud to cheerleaders.
2. Reflect on the past seasons. Ask each cheerleader to give an example of a contribution he or she made that was worthy of honor.
3. Ask them to define the qualities of a True Champion. How can the team develop those qualities over the coming season?

### Objectives

- Understand that how they perform is more important than what they receive
- Understand that the focus of the team is the process of pursuing achievement with honor.
- Key Message is true champions place more value on what can be learned and developed in the process and are honored for their contributions.