

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Mastering the 5 Cornerstones of Athletic Improvement

By David Benzel

The Growing Champions for Life philosophy was built from the idea that the youth sports experience is most effective in meeting its true objectives when coaches, parents, and administrators create the most positive learning environment possible for today's youth.

I liken youth sports to life's "sandbox" when it comes to youth development- it's a laboratory for learning what works in life. With so much pressure being placed on young athletes these days to win at all costs, it's not hard for sports parents, coaches and athletes to lose focus and neglect to take advantage of the learning opportunities within the rich laboratory of youth athletics. Lessons in self-control, humility and character have the potential to help child athletes discover their guiding principles and apply those lessons to live a values-driven life.

To guide athletes along the journey, we created five cornerstones for athletic improvement that address fundamental issues of sport AND life. Mastering these five skill sets yields improved performance in sports, AND personal maturity for making good decisions in life.



Live by Your
Values



Be Coachable



Stick to It



Manage Your
Thoughts



Stay on Your
Path

This month we'll tackle the first cornerstone, "**Live by Your Values**", and then move on to each of the others in subsequent months.

Cornerstone #1 – Live By Your Values

What do you pull out of your pocket when you're lost in the woods? Assuming you don't have a GPS device, a compass would be most useful for making a decision about the next step in your journey. For that same reason, every athlete needs a moral compass for moving forward in a direction that is consistent with who they are. Your core values are a set of guiding principles, or beliefs, that are so central to who you are that it would feel unnatural – or even false – to behave in a way that is inconsistent with them.

The strength and authenticity of the Five Cornerstones is that they require self-discovery and self-direction. Your answers to three questions will guide you through the process of launching Cornerstone #1. Each question purposefully urges you “to wonder.”

- A. I wonder how I can become crystal clear about my core values and beliefs.
- B. I wonder how I can resist the temptation to compromise my values in spite of peer pressure, self-doubt, and my fears.
- C. I wonder how I can build my character muscles and behave in a way that is consistent with my values.

As you “wonder” about these questions the real you will answer each one in a genuine way. Give the process as much time as it takes and allow yourself permission to refine and adjust your answers over several days, until it feels just right. Being clear about your answers is transformational. You will be equipped to handle any situation, setback, triumph, or challenge that shows up in your world.

Once the questions are answered you're ready to start living by your values day by day. This consists of four steps:

1. Imagine your ideal behaviors in various situations of life
2. Confidently know who you are, based on your core beliefs
3. Develop principle-centered character qualities
4. Make decisions every day that are directed by your values, not by your needs or fears

Start the process today...no need to wait! Land on the first cornerstone with faith in the good things that are sure to come from Living by Your Values.

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic:

<http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com/coachdavid>

David Benzel is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](#), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience. David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"* www.growingchampionsforlife.com