

Teachable Moments for Tobacco/Substance Abuse

A teachable moment is an opportunity use the [6A's](#) to relate to a youngster a lesson through sport or life. The effective use of teachable moments requires a coach to have the requisite knowledge of the issue at hand and the ability and willingness to discuss the issue with his/her player(s).

Tobacco/Substance Abuse

Requisite knowledge for the coach:

1. The earlier an individual begins to use tobacco, the greater the risk for functional health.
2. Use of tobacco products starts for psychological reasons and makes no contribution to physical development.
3. Children choose to use tobacco and drink for reasons of curiosity, status, and peer pressure. It is natural for children to want to experiment.
4. Choosing a lifestyle different from the majority of one's friends takes courage.
5. Substance abuse by children is sometimes a behavioral manifestation of other serious issues.
6. It is much more important to make decisions based on personal need and direction than to be like everyone else. Helping your athletes develop a positive feeling about him/herself is more important than being "part of the crowd."

Teachable Moment:

1. Several athletes are seen constantly spitting.
2. A child has big league chew or a candy snuff can

Coach talk:

- "Hey, you guys are spitting a lot, do you know why you are spitting?"
- "Do the big leaguers spit a lot? Why do you think they do?"
OR
- "Whatcha' got there? Is that spit tobacco?"
- "Why do you think they put it in this container? Do you think big leaguers use this or real spit tobacco?"
- "Why do people choose to use spit tobacco?"
Example responses: Taste, to be cool, look like big leaguers, the high
- "Why do people choose not to use spit tobacco?"
Example responses: Taste, illegal/get in trouble, cost, cancer
- "You know, some day you are going to have to make that decision, I hope you make the best one. And by the way, getting to the big leagues has nothing to do with spit tobacco."

Responding to “Well do you chew, or did you chew, coach?”

- “The decision to use spit tobacco is a personal one. Based on the pros and cons we talked about, I’ve made my choice. I just wanted to give you the information necessary to make an informed decision. I hope you think about your decision, because I won’t be around when you have to make that choice.”