

# MEANINGFUL EXERCISE



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes and coaching staff

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Create vulnerability, empathy, and build trust

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Meaningful exercise worksheet and pen each student athlete and coach

## DESCRIPTION

Begin this activity by asking students-athletes and coaches to be vulnerable with each other. Ask student-athletes and coaches to think of a memorable or meaningful event that has happened in their lives- it could be positive or negative. Have each student-athlete and coach write down the event they choose, explaining why/how it happened, what they learned from it, and why it is important to them. After each student-athlete and coach has written down their memorable or meaningful event, have each student-athlete and coach share about their event. Encourage participants to be vulnerable, as it builds trust and relationships among teammates. Ensure that student-athletes and coaches don't share what is said in this exercise outside of the room.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION**



# MEANINGFUL EXERCISE



What is your most memorable or meaningful event?

How or why did this event happen?

What did you learn from this event?

Why is this event important to you?

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# COMPLIMENTS



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes and coaches

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Build student-athlete relationships, create empathy and trust

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens and Compliment Activity Worksheet for each student-athlete and coach

## DESCRIPTION

Begin the activity having all student-athletes and coaches sit in a circle. Hand out the Compliment Activity worksheet and pen to each participant. Have each student-athlete and coach write their name on the worksheet and pass it to their left. Instruct the student-athletes and coaches to write a few sentences on everyone's pieces of paper about things they like about them. Have the student-athletes and coaches refrain from making comments about physical attributes or sports skills but encourage them to make comments about who everyone is as a person (ex. Trustworthiness, confidence, kindness, humor, etc.). Continue to pass each student-athlete and coaches' papers around the circle so each person has a chance to write on all the papers. Once the papers get back to the original owner, the activity is completed, and they may read their own Compliments Activity Worksheet.

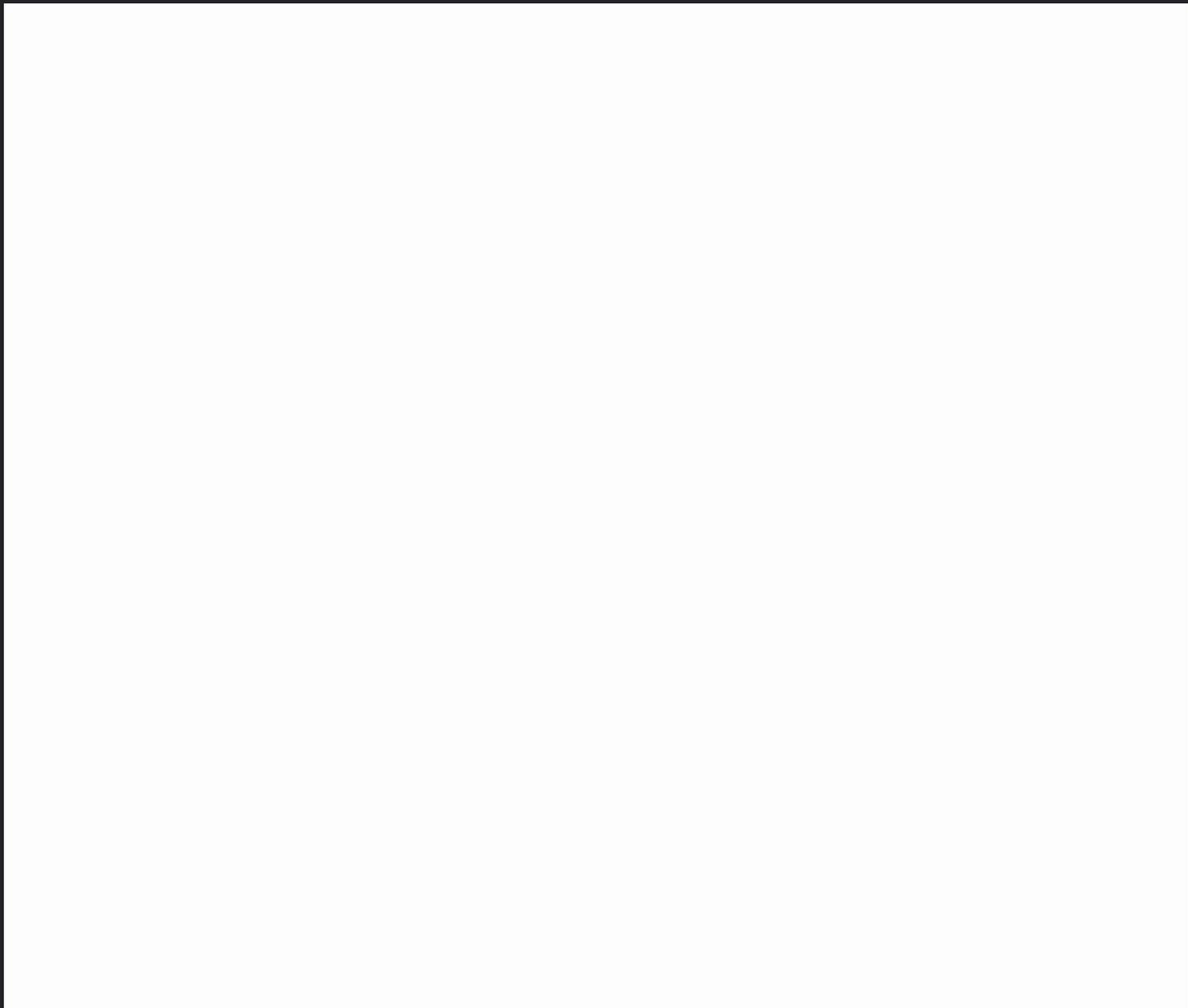
**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION**

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# COMPLIMENTS



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# TEAM ROUTINES



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes only, explained by coaches

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

To have player expectations clearly outlined, team roles outlined, create structure

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Team Routines worksheet and pens

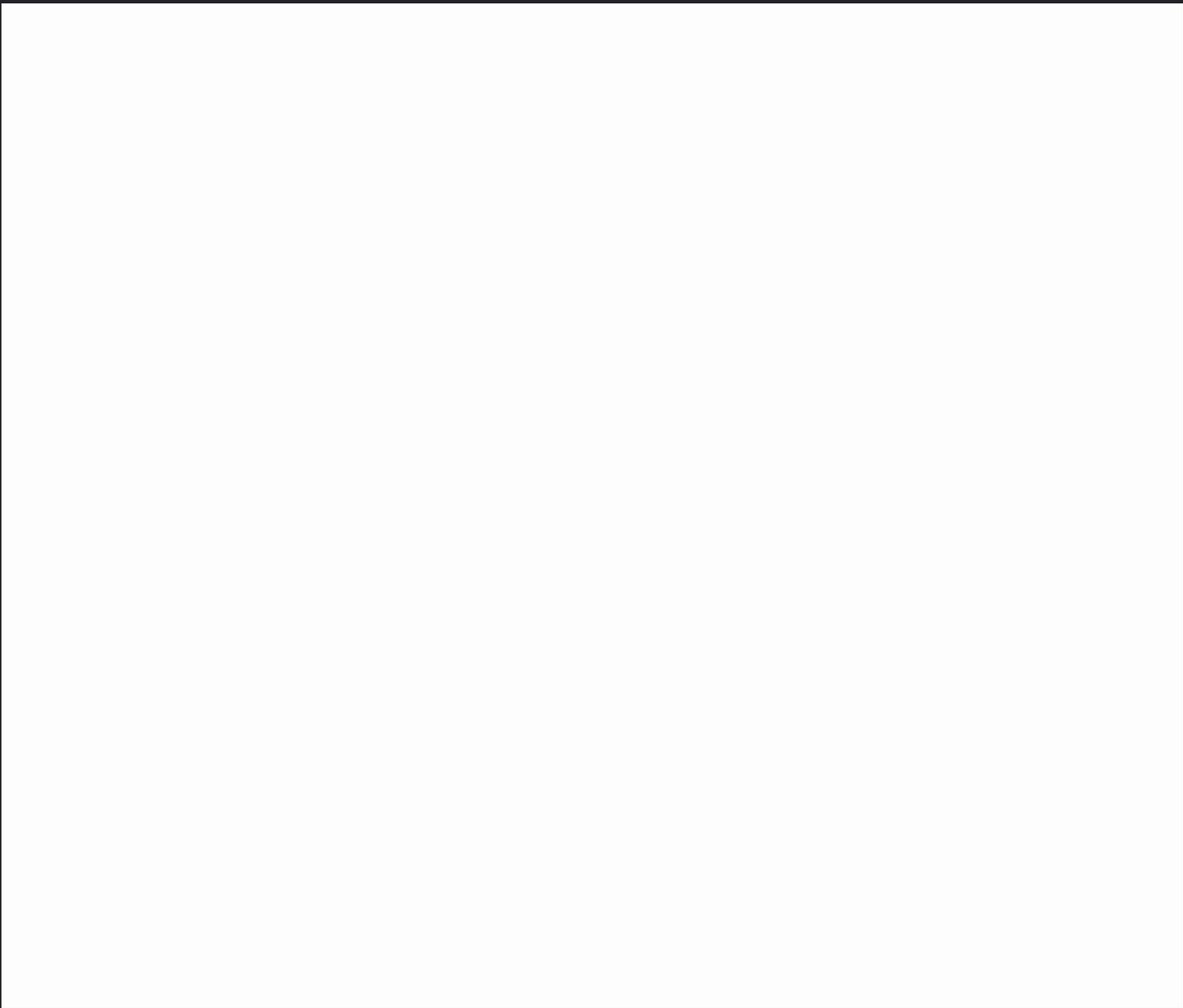
## DESCRIPTION

This exercise is directly for student-athletes. Begin by coaches explaining that student-athletes will have the opportunity to outline team routines that they will abide by during the season. There are no limits to the routines. Some examples of routines that student-athletes may identify are what are said in team huddles, pre-game warmup routine, how student-athletes will stand for the national anthem, bench decorum, locker room decorum, etc. The coaching staff will leave the area. Have student-athletes brainstorm routines and write down which routines they would like to implement for the season. After the student-athletes have exhausted the team routine list, have the coaching staff look over the list to ensure that all the routines are appropriate and achievable.

**STRUCTURE**  
**COMMUNICATION**



# TEAM ROUTINES



STRUCTURE  
COMMUNICATION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECELLSPORTS.COM](http://ECELLSPORTS.COM)

# DEDICATION LETTER



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes only, explained by coaches

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Create vulnerability, focus, gratitude, and discipline

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Dedication Letter worksheet, pen, and envelopes for each student-athlete

## DESCRIPTION

Provide each student-athlete with a Dedication Letter worksheet, pen and envelope. Instruct student-athletes to think about the person/people to whom they will dedicate their season to. Have student-athletes write a letter to each person they are dedicating their season to, explaining what the person means to them and why they are dedicating their season to that person.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION



# DEDICATION LETTER



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

,

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# LETTER FROM PARENTS



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Parents, explained by coaches

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Creates gratitude, trust, and confidence in student-athletes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Letter from Parents/Guardians worksheet and pen for parents/guardians to complete, completed and sealed letters for student-athletes to read

## DESCRIPTION

Without the student-athletes knowing, have the parent(s) or guardian(s) of each student athlete write them a letter. The letter can only contain positive comments, such as how proud they are of their student athlete, how they are excited to watch them play this season, how thankful they are that the student-athlete has had the experience playing the sport. Parents should use this letter to encourage their student-athletes through appreciation and gratitude. At the team retreat or a different designated time, have all the completed letters by parents/guardians in hand. With no explanation, hand out each student-athletes letter. Have the entire team open the letter at the same time and read it. Debrief afterward and ask the questions: how did reading this letter make you feel? How did this letter give you the confidence to play more freely? What do you appreciate about your parents or guardians? Encourage student-athletes to refer back to this letter in the future when they feel down or discouraged, as it is a great example of encouragement and creates confidence.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION**



# LETTER FROM PARENTS



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

,

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# HERO, HIGHLIGHT, HARDSHIP



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes and coaching staff

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Create vulnerability, trust, and gratitude

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Catching Kayla Video (access through Ecsell Learning), Hero, Highlight, Hardship worksheets, and pens/pencils

## DESCRIPTION

Explain to your student-athletes that you will watch a video about Kayla Montgomery, called Catching Kayla. Have the student-athletes watch with a lens of empathy. After the video has concluded, ask student-athletes about their thoughts on the video: how did it make them feel? How did Kayla being vulnerable about her disease impact the relationship with her coach? After debriefing with a few questions, hand out the Hero, Highlight, Hardship worksheets. Have student-athletes think about who in their life is one of their Heroes and why, one of their life's highlights and why, and a Hardship in life they have experienced and what they've learned about themselves through this Hardship. Given the time limitations, each of the student-athletes will tell the group all three, but you will only share one (Hero, Highlight, or Hardship) in depth. By the time we learn about one of each student-athletes Heroes, Highlights, or Hardships, the team will know everyone on a much deeper level. This is the genesis of how Ultimate Trust builds and develops within a team. Please only reveal what you're comfortable sharing and we will remind you again that what shared stays with the team. Feel free to speak from the heart or write things down if that will help you share your story.

## CONNECTION



# HERO, HIGHLIGHT, HARDSHIP



## HEROS

(Write down on your heroes and why)

## HARDSHIPS

(Write down on your hardships and why)

## HIGHLIGHTS

(Write down on your highlights and why)

## CONNECTION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# SPAGHETTI TOWER



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes, explained by coaches

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Provide a controlled uncomfortable environment that creates growth and cultivates communication

## MATERIALS NEEDED

For each group of 3-4 student athletes, the following is needed: 20 sticks of dry spaghetti, 1 yard of string, 1 yard of tape, 1 marshmallow.

## DESCRIPTION

Divide your team into groups of 3 or 4 student-athletes. Begin by explaining the activity to student athletes: they must create the tallest standing tower of spaghetti that supports the single marshmallow on top before the 20-minute timer runs out. The tallest tower is the champion. Begin the activity as soon as the instructions are delivered to student-athletes. Do not instruct them how to build the tower. After the 20-minute timer is up, evaluate each groups' structure. The tallest structure is the "champion". After determining the champion, conduct a debrief with your team. Ask your team the following questions: How did working with your teammates with minimal instruction go? What did you learn from this activity? How can you apply what you learned into practice and games?

**CHALLENGE**  
**COMMUNICATION**

**CONNECTION**



# FOCUS ON YOU



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes and coaching staff

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

To create empathy, vulnerability, and deepen relationships, used in the forming stage of teams

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Focus on You worksheet and pencil

## DESCRIPTION

Give each of your student-athletes and coaches a Focus on You Worksheet to fill out. Explain that this activity will be done in confidence, feel free to share as much as you'd like, and the team won't share information outside of the room. After completing the worksheet, beginning with the head coach have each team member share their answers and why they answered them this way. By having the head coach share first, it exhibits vulnerability and sets the tone for the activity. By breaking down the perceived authority barriers of "cold, hard to understand, unbreakable, mean", coaches are seen as being human instead. Continue with the entire team sharing their answers to the Focus on You worksheet until everyone has explained their answers.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION**

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)

# FOCUS ON YOU



**Answer each question to the best of your abilities, explaining yourself for each one.**

What is your preferred name? What are your preferred nicknames, if you have any?

What is your greatest strength (This must be an intangible thing, like "trustworthiness" or "responsibility." It cannot be tangible things like "I am a good 3-point shooter.")?

List your hot buttons. (Hot buttons are your hobbies, interests, likes, things you enjoy outside of sport, etc.)

What is your favorite song, and why (Be prepared to play the song for your team and explain what it means to you and why it is important)?

What is your most significant success (Something you are incredibly proud of)?

What do I do best (What I am awesome at in life outside of sport)?

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY  
CONNECTION**

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



**ECSELLSPORTS.COM**

# TEAM HANDBOOK



## WHO IS INVOLVED

Student-athletes and coaching staff

## PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

Create expectations for student-athletes to abide by

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper copies of your Team Handbook, customized by your coaching staff for your own program.

## DESCRIPTION

After the coaches' retreat and after you have completed the Team Handbook workbook with the policies you would like in place for your specific program, print off copies for each student-athlete. At your all program meeting, walk through each page of the Team Handbook together with student-athletes. Explain the policies to abide by while student-athletes are in the program. Answer any questions they may have about the handbook. Have student-athletes print and sign their names on the last page. After the all-program meeting, have student-athletes take the Team Handbook home to review with a parent or guardian. These policies may apply to parents as well, so understanding of the Team Handbook is essential. After a parent or guardian has signed the Team Handbook, have student-athletes return the signed document signifying that both the student-athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) will abide by these policies.

STRUCTURE  
COMMUNICATION

Transforming the Student-Athlete Experience



[ECSELLSPORTS.COM](https://www.ecellsports.com)