

# Level 2 Wellness

The Level 2 Wellness training is designed for Special Olympics Minnesota coaches who would like to become a Level 2 Wellness coach and/or for volunteers who would like information about Special Olympics Minnesota Health and Wellness programs. This training counts as Level 2 certification and/or recertification for three years from the date this training is completed.

This training will cover Special Olympics Minnesota's Health and Wellness programs, general (but critical) principles of wellness, efficient and effective warmup and cooldown philosophy, and importance of being a role – model for those around you.

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# Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes prepares Special Olympics coaches to use their sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities. This course meets the Special Olympics standards and competencies for coach certification. For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials sometimes forgotten after years of coaching. For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.

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# Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

*The better the coach ...  
the better the experiences ...  
the better the athlete!*



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# Course Overview

*This course will cover specific topics related to:*

**1 - The Athlete**

**3 - Preparing for  
& Coaching During  
Competition**



**2 - Teaching &  
Training**

**4 - Managing the Program**



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# Unit 1 - The Athlete

## *Important Considerations concerning Special Olympics Athletes*

Psychological Issues  
(*Learning*)

Medical  
Issues



Social  
Issues

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# Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations

- **Motivation** – helping athletes maintain interest
  - May have shorter attention span; harder to keep independently “on task”.
  - May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
  - May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement.
- **Perception** – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating
  - May have impairments in sight or hearing.
  - May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task.



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# Unit 1 - Psychological Considerations

- **Comprehension** – helping athletes remember and perform the skill they have learned (*Understanding*)
  - May find it difficult to understand purely verbal explanations of new skills. Often find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations and physical prompts.
  - May have difficulty in understanding complex, multi-part actions or explanations.
  - Often take a longer time between learning one piece of information and the next (learning plateau)
  - Less able to generalize skills learned in one situation to a different situation.
- **Memory**
  - May need frequent repetition and reminders in order to remember concept or skill

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# Unit 1 - Psychological Challenges

Each psychological item has it's challenge and action:

Psychological Item	Challenge	Action
Perception	Easily distracted by noise	Control surroundings
Motivation	History of neglect & negative reinforcement, feeling of failure	Focus on positive, appropriate reinforcement, catch the athlete doing well
Memory	Difficulty applying skills in different environments	Practice in different settings
Comprehension	Difficulty learning through verbal explanation only	Add demonstrations and/or physical manipulation

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# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

- **Down Syndrome**

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called atlanto-axial instability, which is a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.
- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in aquatics, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat lift and soccer.

- **Medications**

- Understand the physical side effects of an athlete's medication
- Very important to know the medications athletes are taking



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# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

## Seizures

- Incidence tends to be higher with Special Olympics athletes
- Athlete safety to minimize the adverse effects of a seizure



## Physical Disabilities

- Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in or the methods of teaching a coach must use. Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance.
- Muscle strength may be needed for particular sports and some athletes may not have the strength for those sports. This is often due to lack of use rather than a permanent disability.

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# Unit 1 - Medical Considerations

- Autism
  - 20% of athletes exhibit one or more of the autism spectrum disorders
  - Over arousal
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
  - These athletes consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
  - Tend to have poor verbal comprehension skills, despite being comfortable and chatty around people. These athletes will also tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgment in distinguishing right from wrong.



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# Unit 1 – Medical Consideration for Each Action

Action	See the challenge that correlates with the appropriate action.
1 Down Syndrome	Ensure the athlete is screened for atlanto-axial instability
2 Seizures	Be prepared to protect the athlete and minimize adverse affects
3 Autism spectrum disorders	Control and/or block self-stimulatory behavior and set up a behavior support plan
4 Attention deficit/hyperactivity	Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed
5 Fetal alcohol syndrome	Provide concrete performance tasks

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# Unit 1 - Social Considerations

- Social Skills
  - May lack basic social/adaptive skills due to a lack of opportunity or training
  - Lacking communication and positive interaction with others
- Recreation at Home
  - Lack of physical activity
  - Lack of encouragement
- Economic Status
  - May lack financial means
  - May not have access to independent transportation



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# Unit 1 - Social considerations

All of the following social consideration(s) may impact an athlete's participation in Special Olympics:

- Inappropriate responses to social situations
- Physical inactivity being modeled
- Lack of endurance
- Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and the strengths and weaknesses they bring with them to a Special Olympics program. By doing so we can begin to develop a training and competition program that they will benefit from and enjoy.

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# Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete



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# Unit 2 - Teaching & Training the Athlete

There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes. Because of some of the things previously identified concerning comprehension and memory, there is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity, stability, and comfort.

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# Unit 2 - Organizing a Training Session

Component and Details	Layout of Drill or Activity
Warm-Up & Stretching	Specific to the sport, repetitive and involve athletes in leading activity
Skills Instruction	Break skills into smaller tasks, involve many athletes at a time and practice skills related to event situations
Competition Experience	Scrimmage, simulate event/game situations and work towards what the competition will look like
Cool-Down, Stretch, & Reward	Playing a game related to that sport and ending each training with a cool down activity and stretch

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# Unit 2 - Training Sequence



Competition

Application

Skill

Task

The key is to break down skills into small tasks or steps; tasks are then put together to form skills. Use drills and activities that involve many athletes at all times. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event. Break skills down into small steps.

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# Unit 2 - Training Sequence

## What's the challenge and how to fix it?

Training Sequence Element	Challenge	Action
Application	Acquire ability to repeatedly demonstrate sport competencies in different situations & environments	Provide gamelike drills or situations
Skills	Acquire ability to perform series of sport competencies effectively and necessary to perform a sport	Work on essential sport competencies to perform the sport
Competition	Acquire ability to put essential sport competencies into practice	Provide scrimmage opportunities in practice
Tasks	Acquire ability to perform essential sport competencies	Break essential sport competencies down into individual parts

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# Unit 2 - Communication

Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior; there are several key words that begin with a “C”, which address what a coach should say.

- Clear
- Concrete
- Concise
- Consistent
- Command-oriented



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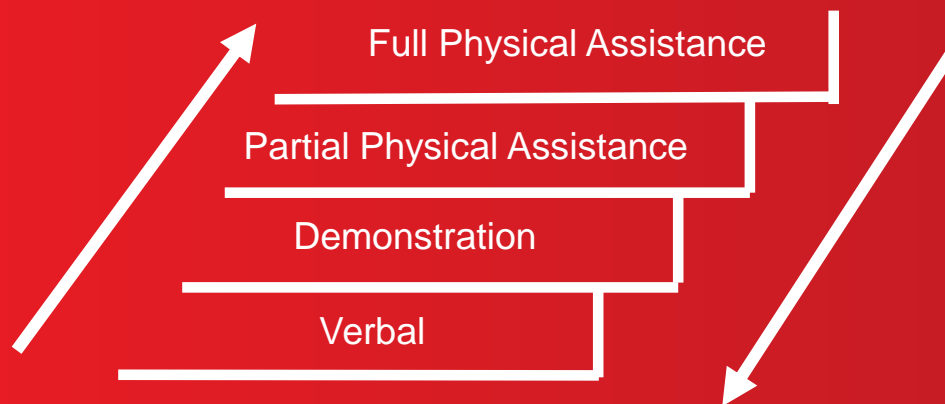
# Unit 2 - Communication

Communication Criteria	Description	Sport Example
Concise	Use a few key words that cue a desired action	"Go to the free throw line" Showing an athlete where to stand on defense
Consistent	Use the same word or phrase for the same action	Coach constantly say "Breathe" – teaching an athlete when to take a breath in aquatics
Clear	Use easy to understand words that have one meaning	"Swing the bat" teaching how/when to swing.
Command-Oriented	Use words that elicit or reinforce a desired action	"On your mark. Set. Go." Using this phrase for starts in athletics.
Concrete	Connect words to something defined or tangible	"Jump forward" when coaching an athlete in the long jump.

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# Unit 2 - Levels of Assistance



Each athlete needs to be met where he or she is and with what each individual is ready to do. It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.

- The lower the ability athlete, the more assistance may be required
- Verbal should always be accompanied by demonstration
- Partial physical assistance may be needed to help the athlete get positioned properly
- When all else fails, take the athlete through the complete motion



# Unit 2 - Level of Instruction or Assistance

Level of Instruction or Assistance	Description	Sport Example
Full Physical Assistance	Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill	Volleyball: coach makes an adjustment to the athlete's arm swing by moving the athlete's arm through the entire spiking movement
Verbal	Tell the athlete what to do	Footwork: "run forward to the line; then return, running backward"
Demonstration	Show the athlete the proper technique	Soccer: one athlete shoots on goal while another watches
Partial Physical Assistance	Place the athlete's hands in the proper position	Golf: coach physically adjusts the athlete's hands on the golf club with the correct grip

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# Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior

The goal is for coaches to meet each athlete where he/she is and treat him/her accordingly. However, a coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

When an athlete exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior, the inappropriate behavior may not be defiance, acting out or silliness. These behaviors may simply be a reflection or part of the person and/or what is operating in the moment.

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# Unit 2 - Managing Athlete Behavior

Athlete Behavior Characteristics	Strategies to Improve Learning
Swimmer has a short attention span	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Dwell on a stroke or activity for short periods of time; provide numerous activities focusing on same task</li><li>2. Provide different opportunities for repetition and review, which is the key to gaining new skill.</li><li>3. Work one-on-one to gain full attention.</li></ol>
Basketball athlete yells if he/she misses a shot	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Emphasize the other aspects of the game besides shooting</li><li>2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop</li><li>3. Begin to shoot at a hoop but in a non-game setting with a one-on-one coach</li></ol>
Bowler doesn't wait their turn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is</li><li>2. Have the bowler wait with a coach behind the bowling area until their turn is up</li><li>3. Emphasize the order and that the bowler will always follow the same individual</li></ol>

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# Unit 3 - Preparing & Coaching for Competition

- A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.
- A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition (including meeting new people, participating in the festivities of Opening Ceremonies and other social events, the excitement of traveling to new places and staying away from home, etc.). None of these things, however, should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete's competition experience.

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# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

## ▪ Registration

- Provide accurate entry and team roster information, qualifying times, and skills assessment scores.
- Help the Competition Committee prepare a successful competition for your athletes by meeting their registration deadlines.

## ▪ Official competition rules

- A good Competition Committee will instruct its officials/referees to enforce the Official Special Olympics Rules. Make sure you know them.
- Teach your athletes the rules and, during training, phase out your verbal reminders about rules. At competition, coaches may have little or no opportunity to assist athletes when they are not following the rules. (A coach cannot be on the track with them!)



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# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

- **Supervision**

- Discuss the challenges associated with participating in competition away from home, and why adequate, non-coaching support personnel are needed.
  - Transportation
  - Lodging (need for same-sex supervision)
  - Social activities
  - Coaches meetings (who will supervise athletes during these?)
  - Multiple events to supervise, awards ceremonies, etc.
- Design a supervision worksheet with the essential elements covered.



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# Unit 3 - Preparing for Competition

## Travel and overnight

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors.
- Write up a simple checklist of items to bring and distribute to athletes and parents
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood. Coaches may have to assist with handling medications. Have all medical forms and information readily available at all times.
- Work out the most effective rooming arrangements, taking into account athlete choice, behavioral and personality clashes, etc.

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# Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

## Guidelines for success:

Teach responsibility & independence

- Assist athletes in dressing appropriately, understanding what is happening at the competition site, maintaining a focused attitude and appropriate behavior.

Arrive early

- Allow time for putting on uniforms, warm-up and stretching routine and focusing on the competition.

Encourage maximum effort in divisioning & competition

- Applying the “honest-effort” rule from the Special Olympics Rule book

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# Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

## Guidelines for success:

Let athletes compete without direct supervision

- Not running down the side of the track shouting instructions, allowing the competition officials to conduct the competition and allowing athletes to make mistakes and helping them learn from their mistakes.

Make any official protests calmly

- If you think there is a valid reason to protest the outcome, do so in a calm manner, following the competition guidelines and not involving athletes in disputes with officials.

Help athletes learn from winning & losing

- Deal graciously and realistically with winning and losing. Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from the experience.

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# Unit 3 - Competition-Day Coaching

**The coach can be the key person who makes any competition experience a good one.** Taking time to adequately prepare for competition and plan for on-site supervision and that coaching is time well spent.

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# Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics coach:

## **Is sports and coaching knowledgeable**

- Special Olympics is a sport organization
- Technical knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to effectively help athletes improve their sport skills and truly benefit from Special Olympics.
- Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.

## **Is Special Olympics knowledgeable**

- Special Olympics has a clearly defined mission, philosophy, and rules that have been developed through years of worldwide experience with athletes with intellectual disabilities.
- A better understanding of these will benefit your athletes.

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# Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics coach:

## **Recruits and trains assistant coaches**

- Individualized coach-athlete teaching is key to successful training in Special Olympics.
- Assistant coaches can be recruited to help provide individualized attention.
- Assistant coaches are useful only if they are trained and coordinated at practice.

## **Recruits and trains athletes**

- A coach is also a promoter and recruiter; always tries to expand participation

## **Assists with appropriate sport selection**

- Age appropriate, is the athlete able to participate safely and successfully and does the athlete have a choice of participating in a different sport or event.

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# Unit 4 – The Successful Special Olympics coach:

Offers activities for all abilities

- In order to accommodate a range of abilities

Puts a priority on safety

- This is the coach's number one priority

Conducts high-quality training and competition

- Appropriate training, activities such as training days or camps, helps develop pride in being an athlete and organizes competition opportunities if none exist

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# Unit 4 – The Successful Special Olympics coach:

## Involves families

- Educates families and group-home providers about the benefits of Special Olympics, appropriate nutrition and food choices and training at home.

## Assists with community inclusion

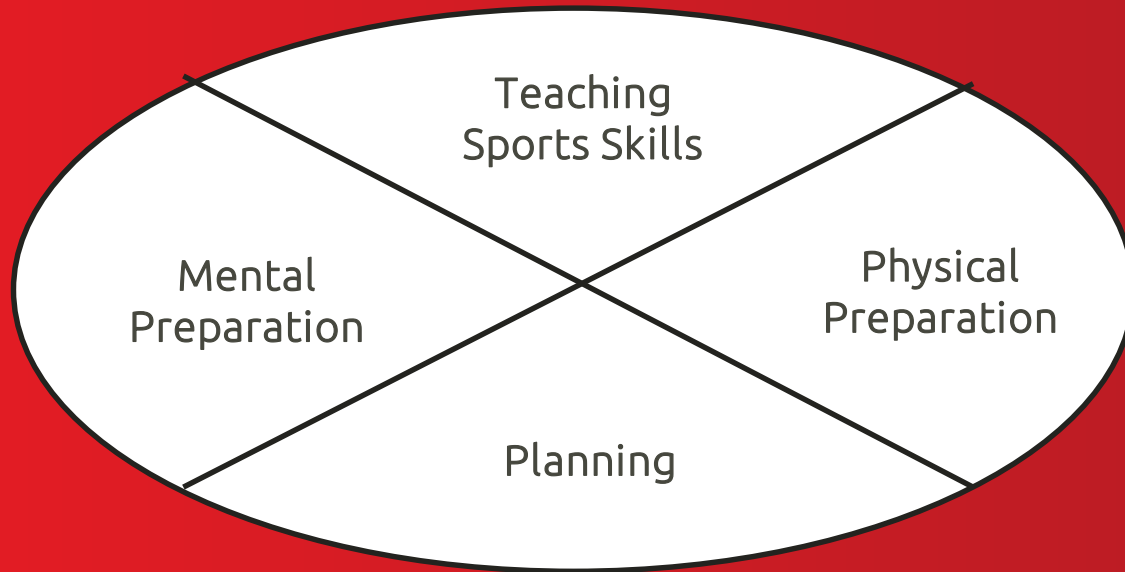
- Improves social and communication skills, opportunities to talk about Special Olympics at civic functions and assistance in joining non-Special Olympics sports opportunities

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# Unit 4 – Area of Focus

Athlete Safety



Coaching Philosophy

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# Unit 4 – Preparation

Assessment



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# Improved Performance & Well-Being

- TRAINING → the key
- COMPETITION → the means
- OUTCOMES → skill, confidence, courage, & joy
- GOAL → better preparation for life
- RESULTS → lifelong skills, acceptance & increased independence



*Let's Get After It and Get It Done!*

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# Level 2 Wellness

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# Sports and Fitness

- Intertwined – SOMN is a Health, Fitness and Sport organization
- Fitness is Sport, and Sport is Fitness – no separation
- We must train participants as such
  - Encourage strength and conditioning outside of practice
  - Emphasize healthy nutrition (food is fuel)
  - Recovery after training is critical
    - Sleep, Water, Food, Stress

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# What is Wellness?

- Wellness is the quality or state of being in good health
  - Fitness and health combined!
  - Fitness is the ability to perform a task, health is optimal functioning of the organs
- Physical (body), social (spirit) and emotional (mind) fitness and health have to be developed to be 'Well'

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# Habits and Sustainability

- Lifestyle change is what makes a lasting difference
  - Consistency is crucial for lifestyle change
  - Habits build consistency and make change sustainable
- Small changes are easier to stick with than large ones – pick 'doable' challenges and build on success
- Change one thing (food, exercise, sleep, etc.) at a time to work on

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# Why set goals?

- Goals ensure we stay on track long-term, and can demonstrate short-term success
- Helps individual focus and organize resources (time and money)
  - If a decision doesn't support the goal, then why make that decision? Helps to clarify what's important.
- Must be meaningful to individual
- Goals must be specific!

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# How to set goals

- **Specific**
  - Has to be tailored to person, not broad
  - Who, What, Where, Why, How, When?
- **Measureable**
  - Easily measured, somehow quantitative
  - Can progress be tracked?
  - How will we know when the goal is accomplished?
- **Achievable**
  - If not achievable, what's the point?
  - Make sure goal is not out of reach, but also NOT BELOW what is possible
  - Better to shoot high, but can adjust as needed. \*make new parameters
- **Relevant**
  - Does this goal meet your needs? Consistent with other goals? Something person wants to work on?
  - Make sure it fits with both immediate and long term plans
- **Time Based/bound**
  - Should have a time limit. Designed to help with time management
  - Sense of urgency – can be started now, not in a few weeks
  - Clock is ticking mentality

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# Intro to the Four Pillars

- **Emotional** – Self Esteem, Mindfulness
- **Nutritional** – Food and Drink
- **Physical** – Body and Fitness
- **Social** – Meaningful interaction with community
  - Plenty of crossover, and these all influence each other
  - Nothing exists in a vacuum

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# Nutritional Principles

- *Eat protein and good fats in plenty*
- *Eat all the veggies and control sugar intake*
- *Develop a positive relationship with food (fuel to help body)*
- *Match quantity to goals*
- *Experiment with yourself to see what works*

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# Emotional Principles

- *Self-Image is critical - Mind and Body*
- *Recognize and control Ego*
- *Be mindful of movement and your environment/world*
- *Express Gratitude freely and honestly*
- *Connect meaningfully*

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# Physical Principles

- *Water - drink enough, or more than enough*
- *Movement - Move well, Move often, move with Intention*
- *Eat like a responsible adult (including veggies)*
- *Sleep enough to feel rested*
- *Manage Stress – rely on support network and self - care*

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# Social Principles

- *Connect meaningfully with community*
- *Understand and navigate social situations*
- *Interconnectedness is crucial*
- *Help other beings*
- *Be open and look outward*

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# Be a Role Model

- You are a leader – model the behavior you wish to see, and embody the principles you teach
- Understand people may look to you for guidance and advice
- Support your team however possible, and be sure to “walk the talk”

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# Why is Wellness Personal?

- Everyone has had different experiences with nutrition, fitness, self-esteem, sports, etc.
- Blanket statements aren't effective, for this reason – some thing that worked for you may not work for someone else
- Principles and guidelines, along with creating an opportunity for change, are excellent ways to support each other
- Don't try and force change – it has to come from discipline and decision making from the individual

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# What is a Warmup?

- “Warmup” Purpose: To prepare the body and mind for heightened activity
  - Nervous system arousal
  - Mental focus “Head in the game”
  - Athlete self-assessment (How do I feel today?)
  - Connective tissue/joint preparation
  - Get body “systems” ready for work

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# Warmups – 10 Minutes

- Manipulate joints through figure 8s and circles
- Twist spine from standing and seated/kneeling position
- Raise heart – rate with escalating intensity of movement
  - Squats increasing in intensity to low jump squats, etc.
  - High knees increasing height of knees
  - Skipping with increasing foot strike
- Call attention to what the body is doing
  - Moving with *intention* and focus
    - Intention is purposeful, mindful, and with a goal

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# Warmups Continued

- Keys to success:
- Nothing exists in a vacuum – check in with athletes!
  - “How are you feeling today, 1 – 10?”
  - “Where is energy at, 1 – 10?”
    - If low, adapt practice or movement as needed for the individual
- Keep moving for 10 minutes or so, covering neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, ankles

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# Cooldown – 5 minutes

- Should allow some time for team to let their bodies relax after hard training, heart rate decrease, etc.
- Stretching is not critical, but can be beneficial to move bodies through the joint warmup again, while slowing and evening out breathing
- “Undo” the warmup, reduce nervous system arousal levels
- Good time to ask team what their main takeaways from training were
  - reinforce good recovery protocol (food, water, sleep)

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# Emphasize Recovery

- Grossly **underrated** part of fitness – growth comes from healing!
- Proper **nutrition** (Veggies, Protein, Carbs, good Fats)
- Hydration – Fancy way of saying **DRINK MORE WATER**
- Prioritize **Sleep** – allows body to heal, and Nervous system recovery
- **Stress** – manage stress for best performance and recovery
  - Very hard on mind and body to live highly stressed
  - Linked to chronic illness time after time
  - Utilize support network and coping techniques

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# Healthy Athlete Screenings

- [Healthy Athletes](#) – multiple disciplines – free and open to all athletes, even if they're not registered for the event
  - Often offered at State level games. Check website to be sure!
- Fit Feet (podiatry)
- FUNfitness (physical therapy)
- Opening Eyes (vision)
- Health Promotion (nutrition, bone health, smoking cessation, and sun safety)
- Special Smiles (dental)
- Healthy Hearing (audiology)

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# SOfit Unified Wellness

- [SOfit](#) – Eight week wellness program run by delegations like a sport – individuals work on personal goals while learning about **wellness as a group!**
- **Unified Program** – individuals with and without Intellectual Disabilities working together for meaningful and effective health and wellness.
- Main pillars are **Physical, Social, Emotional and Nutritional**
- Groups cover **two lessons** from each pillar over **8 weeks**
- Contact state office for more details or to get started!

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# SOfit SPORT

- SOfit SPORT – a powerful, efficient wellness program designed to be administered at the beginning of sport practice.
- 8 - 12 weeks long.
- Focus on four pillars of wellness – noted in SOfit
- Lessons are tailored to apply to **sport performance** and **recovery**
- Able to be implemented by **any team at any sport**
- Contact State Office to get started!

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# Key Takeaways

- SOMN is Health, Wellness and Sport! Sport is fitness, and fitness is sport
- Emphasize recovery (nutrition, water, sleep, reduce stress)
- Habits create consistency, which creates sustainable lifestyle change
- Set goals and adjust them as needed to keep making progress
- Social, Emotional, Nutritional and Physical components of wellness are all important, and are intertwined
- Emphasize recovery at every practice
- Walk the talk – be a Role Model!
- Wellness is different for everyone, treat it as such
- Warmup and cooldowns are highly underrated, but they must be done correctly
- SOMN provides several excellent programs and resources to emphasize wellness in your delegation!

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# Coach Recognition Item

Each coach that becomes Level 2 certified or recertified is able to order one coach item per calendar year. Information can be found [HERE](#).

Please note that if you have not completed a Level 2 training or recertification course, or you have already received an item for the year, you will not be shipped an item.

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# Level 2 Wellness Quiz

Level 2 certification is not processed until you have completed the Level 2 quiz.

To take the Level 2 Wellness quiz please [click here](#).

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