EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

INTEGRITY

SHARINGOALS

THE SYSTEMIC COACHING MANUAL
FOR FOOTBALL COACHES
AROUND THE WORLD

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1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Scientific research

Integrity is the alignment of our intentions, words, and actions in order that who we are and who we are perceived to may be in complete alignment. Integrity is the condition in which authenticity is prioritized over ulterior motives.

Responsibility is the awareness and stewardship of someone, or something entrusted to your care.

These are the working definitions used throughout this curriculum rather than definitions taken from a single study. Integrity in particular has been defined in many competing ways across the research literature, and no single conceptualisation has been agreed upon (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007), while responsibility is used to describe everything from personal accountability to the stewardship of what has been entrusted to a person‘s care (Davis et al., 1997). The sections below set out the scientific constructs this curriculum draws on and how each one relates to the working definitions above.

1.1.1. Definition

Integrity is commonly understood as the alignment between values, intentions, words, and actions. Simons (2002) defines behavioural integrity as “the perceived pattern of alignment between an actor’s words and deeds.” Within football environments, integrity may therefore be understood as consistency between what players and coaches communicate, believe, and demonstrate through their behaviours and decisions.

Barnard, Schurink, and De Beer (2008) conceptualize integrity as a multifaceted construct grounded in moral awareness, internalized values, self-regulation, honesty, responsibility, fairness, and behavioural consistency. Their framework emphasises that integrity involves ongoing alignment between personal principles and external actions across different situations and relationships.

Integrity is closely connected to authenticity, accountability, trustworthiness, and ethical decision-making. In football, integrity may influence training behaviours, communication, leadership, tactical discipline, relationships, and commitment to collective standards. Integrity can therefore be understood both as an individual competence and as a relational competence that contributes to trust, cohesion, and performance within teams.

Responsibility refers to the awareness, ownership, and management of one’s roles, behaviours, decisions, and obligations toward oneself and others. Within football environments, responsibility includes accountability for effort, preparation, behaviour, communication, learning, tactical roles, and contribution to collective objectives.

Responsibility and integrity are closely interconnected. As players receive greater levels of responsibility, they are often required to make more complex decisions, regulate their behaviour more consistently, and demonstrate stronger alignment between values, decisions, and actions. In football, responsibility and integrity may therefore contribute to self-regulation, reliability, leadership, accountability, trust, and long-term personal and athletic development.

Integrity may be expressed at multiple levels within football environments, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, team, and broader social contexts. These levels can be reflected in behaviours ranging from daily training habits and emotional regulation to communication, teamwork, respect, leadership, and commitment to collective standards. Developing responsibility and integrity within football therefore requires intentional coaching environments that reinforce accountability, reflection, consistency, and ethical behaviour through repeated experiences and social interaction.

1.1.2. Scientific Research and Models

Hellison's Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model (TPSR)

One of the most influential models for understanding responsibility development in sport and physical education is Don Hellison's Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model. Originally developed in the 1970s through work with underserved youth in physical activity environments, TPSR aims to intentionally develop personal and social responsibility through sport participation (Hellison, 2011). The model has since become one of the most widely used responsibility-based frameworks in physical education and youth sport development.

The TPSR model is based on the idea that responsibility can be intentionally taught and progressively developed through structured experiences, reflection, relationships, and opportunities for decision-making. Rather than viewing responsibility as a fixed personality trait, TPSR understands responsibility as a competence that develops gradually through social interaction, guided autonomy, and meaningful participation in group environments.

Hellison organises responsibility development into five progressive and cumulative levels: respect for the rights and feelings of others, effort and participation, self-direction, helping others and leadership, and transfer outside the sport environment (Hellison, 2011). The model therefore moves from basic self-control and participation toward leadership, social responsibility, and the application of learned competences beyond sport.

The TPSR model strongly aligns with football environments because responsibility in football extends beyond individual behaviour and includes commitment to team standards, role accountability, cooperation, communication, leadership, and contribution to collective objectives. Players are constantly required to regulate emotions, fulfil tactical responsibilities, support teammates, and make decisions that influence the group. TPSR provides a developmental framework for understanding how these behaviours may be intentionally nurtured through coaching and training design.

An important component of the TPSR model is transfer. Hellison emphasises that responsibility developed within sport should positively influence behaviours outside the sport environment, including school, relationships, family life, and work environments.

At the same time, experiences and competences developed outside football may also influence how players behave, cooperate, and perform within football environments. This interconnectedness between life domains strongly aligns with the Sharing Goals philosophy that competences are distinguishable for intentional development but interconnected in human behaviour and performance.

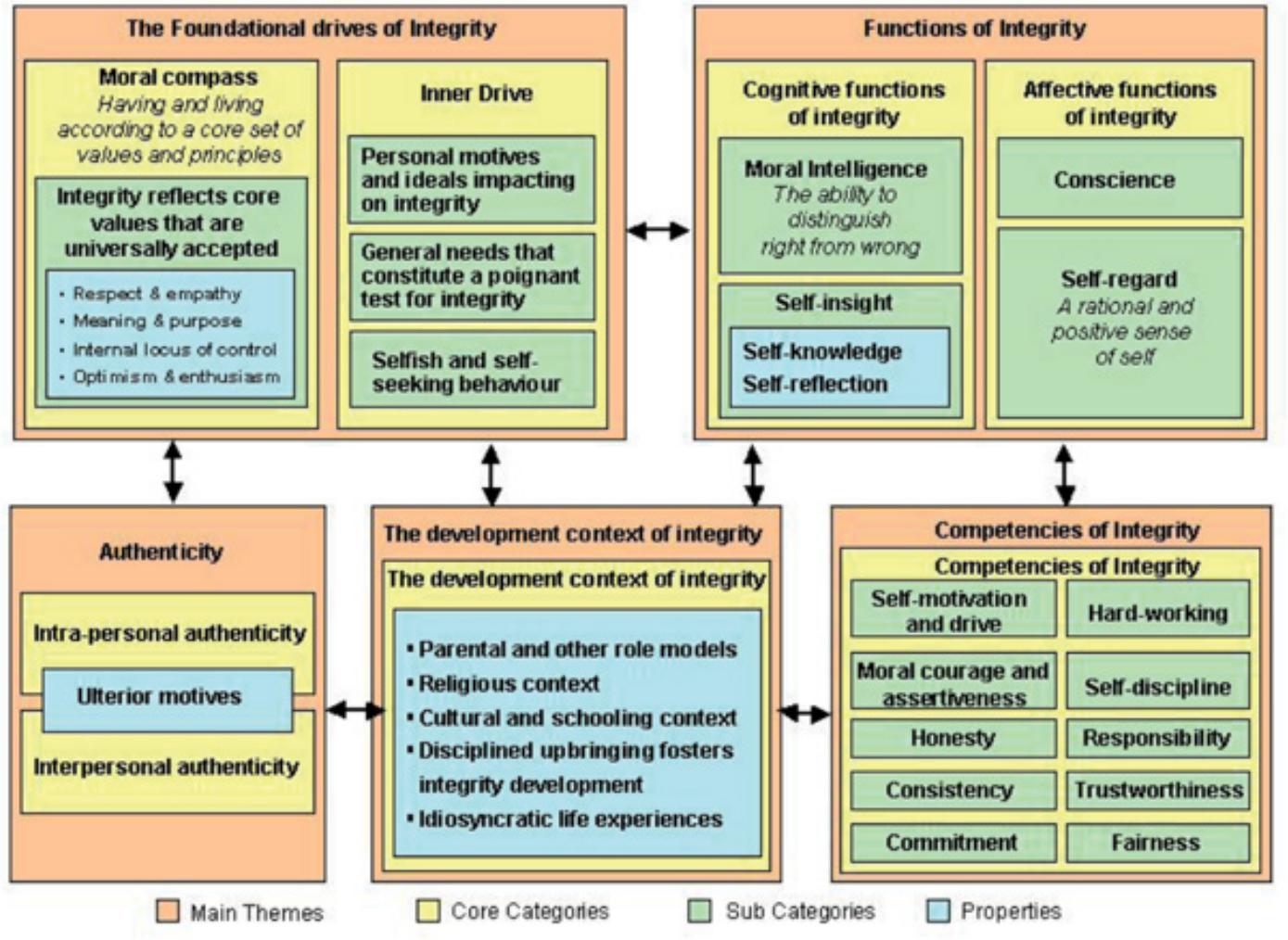
Barnard et al.'s Conceptual Framework of Integrity

Barnard, Schurink, and De Beer (2008) proposed a conceptual framework of integrity based on qualitative research with business leaders recognised for high levels of integrity. Their framework conceptualizes integrity as a multifaceted and dynamic construct grounded in moral foundations, internal values, cognitive processes, emotional regulation, and integrity-related behaviours. Rather than defining integrity as a single behaviour, the model views integrity as a complex interaction between internal principles and external actions.

According to Barnard et al. (2008), integrity is built upon a moral foundation that guides decision-making and behaviour. This foundation includes universally accepted values, a moral compass, internalized principles, and an orientation toward honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, and meaningful action. Integrity therefore involves more than rule-following; it reflects a consistent alignment between values, intentions, words, and actions.

The framework also emphasises the importance of internal drive and self-regulation. Integrity requires individuals to intentionally manage competing desires, motivations, emotions, pressures, and contextual influences while remaining aligned with their principles and values. This perspective aligns closely with football environments in which athletes are frequently exposed to emotional pressure, social influence, competitive stress, and performance expectations that may challenge integrity and responsibility.

Barnard et al. further describe integrity as a dynamic process influenced by cognitive and affective processes. Individuals continuously interpret situations, evaluate consequences, regulate emotions, and make decisions that either strengthen or weaken integrity over time. Integrity is therefore not static, but something that must be intentionally maintained and developed through repeated behavioural choices and reflective processes.



Barnard et al.'s Conceptual Framework of Integrity, 2008

Within football, the conceptual framework of integrity helps explain how responsibility, honesty, accountability, consistency, self-discipline, fairness, and respect contribute to both individual development and team environments. Integrity may influence training habits, communication, leadership, tactical reliability, and social behaviour within teams. The framework therefore provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding integrity as both a personal competence and a relational competence that influences performance, cohesion, and long-term development.

1.1.3. Impact on performance

Responsibility and integrity can significantly influence individual player development and performance in football. While these competences are often discussed from a moral or social perspective, research increasingly suggests that responsibility-related traits such as conscientiousness, self-regulation, accountability, and moral identity are associated with higher levels of athletic preparation, learning efficiency, consistency, and performance.

One of the strongest research connections to responsibility in performance environments is the personality trait of conscientiousness. Conscientiousness includes qualities such as discipline, reliability, organisation, persistence, responsibility, and commitment to goals. A recent meta-analysis examining personality traits and athletic performance found conscientiousness to be one of the strongest positive predictors of athletic success across sports contexts (Piepiora et al., 2024). Similarly, research on athlete selection and performance environments has shown that conscientious athletes are more likely to demonstrate effective preparation habits, consistency in effort, training discipline, and self-regulatory behaviour that contribute to long-term performance development (Tedesqui & Young, 2025).

In football, responsibility is strongly connected to self-regulation. Responsible players take ownership of their development, monitor their behaviour and performance, reflect on mistakes, and intentionally adjust their actions in pursuit of improvement. Research on elite youth football players demonstrated that self-regulated learning processes are associated with higher levels of perceived football performance and talent development (Hamoud et al., 2024). Self-regulated athletes tend to engage more effectively in planning, reflection, goal setting, self-monitoring, and adjustment processes that support learning and performance progression.

Research by Kitsantas et al. (2018) further suggests that self-regulation plays a critical role in sports learning and performance development. Athletes who actively reflect on their behaviours, evaluate their progress, and adapt their actions show stronger learning outcomes and more consistent developmental progress. These findings support the idea that responsibility is not simply a moral quality, but also a performance-related competence that influences how effectively players engage in the learning process.

Integrity may also impact performance through honest self-assessment and behavioural consistency. Players who act with integrity are more likely to accurately evaluate their own strengths, weaknesses, mistakes, and developmental needs. This allows for more effective feedback integration, learning adaptation, and long-term improvement. In contrast, athletes who consistently externalize blame, distort feedback, or disengage morally may reduce their own opportunities for growth and correction.

Research on moral identity and self-regulatory efficacy in athletes suggests that athletes with stronger moral identity demonstrate greater behavioural self-regulation and are less likely to engage in moral disengagement strategies (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2025). This is important in football environments because performance development requires accountability, discipline, and the willingness to consistently uphold standards even under pressure.

Integrity may also protect performance environments from behaviours that negatively influence development such as cheating, dishonesty, manipulation, or avoidance of responsibility. Research examining moral identity and cheating behaviour in sport found that athletes with stronger moral identity were less likely to engage in unethical sporting behaviours (Hurst et al., 2022). In high-performance environments, integrity may therefore contribute to more stable, trustworthy, and development-oriented team cultures.

In football specifically, responsibility and integrity can influence performance through tactical reliability, role discipline, consistency of effort, and commitment to collective objectives. If there is a player who prefers the attacking actions of the game, do they carry their load defensively? Does a player choose to do the things that are challenging for them in recognition of what is the greatest good available in the situation? Responsible players are more likely to consistently fulfil their tactical responsibilities, maintain focus, contribute to team structure, and sustain disciplined behaviours that support both individual and collective performance.

The greater the responsibility players are given, the more complex the decision-making and the greater the demand for integrity. Therefore, developing responsibility and integrity within football environments may not only contribute to personal growth, but also to performance consistency, leadership development, self-regulation, and long-term athletic excellence.



1.1.4. Impact on social cohesion

Responsibility and integrity can significantly influence the development and maintenance of social and task cohesion within football teams. Cohesion in sport is commonly understood as the tendency of a group to remain united in pursuit of common objectives and social connection (Carron et al., 2002). While cohesion itself has consistently been associated with improved team performance, responsibility and integrity may contribute to the behavioural foundations that allow cohesion to develop and remain stable over time.

One of the most important mechanisms through which integrity influences cohesion is trust. Trust within teams develops when players consistently align their words, actions, effort, and responsibilities. Players are more likely to trust teammates who reliably fulfil their roles, communicate honestly, and act consistently across situations. Research by Dirks (2000) demonstrated that trust significantly influences team functioning, cooperation, and collective effectiveness. In football environments, integrity strengthens trust because players can depend on each other behaviourally, emotionally, and tactically.

Responsibility also contributes to cohesion through accountability and role reliability. Teams function more effectively when players consistently carry out their responsibilities and contribute toward collective objectives. Responsible players are more likely to maintain effort, fulfil tactical duties, support teammates, and remain committed to team standards even in challenging situations. This consistency reduces uncertainty within the group and strengthens both social and task cohesion.

Communication and team norms also play an important role in cohesion development. Research by Onağ and Tepeci (2014) found that team norms, communication quality, and interpersonal relationships significantly influence team cohesion and team satisfaction. Integrity-based communication — including honesty, clarity, fairness, and respect — may therefore strengthen the quality of relationships within teams and support a stronger collective identity.

Responsibility and integrity may additionally support cohesion by reducing behaviours that damage group functioning. Dishonesty, favouritism, manipulation, discrimination, intimidation, avoidance of responsibility, and misuse of power can weaken trust and destabilize team environments over time. Brad Gieske identifies these behaviours as “violations to integrity,” emphasizing that integrity requires fairness, respect, dignity, and accountability in all interactions.

Research on prosocial and antisocial behaviour in sport similarly suggests that prosocial behaviours strengthen positive social functioning within teams, whereas antisocial behaviours negatively affect team relationships and environments (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009).

Integrity may also support psychological safety within teams. Psychological safety refers to an environment in which individuals feel safe to communicate, make mistakes, contribute ideas, and express themselves without fear of humiliation or rejection. Edmondson (1999) found that psychological safety is critical for effective group functioning, learning, communication, and collaboration. In football environments, integrity-related behaviours such as honesty, fairness, respectful communication, and consistency may help create psychologically safe environments that support stronger social connection and collective learning.

Athlete leadership research further supports the connection between responsibility and cohesion. Fransen et al. (2015) found that high-quality athlete leadership positively influences team confidence, collective functioning, and cohesion. Responsibility is central to leadership because players who take ownership of standards, communication, effort, and support behaviours often positively influence the relational environment of the team.

In football specifically, responsibility and integrity influence cohesion through daily behavioural consistency. Players who respect teammates, support collective goals, communicate honestly, carry out tactical responsibilities, and maintain accountability contribute to stronger social bonds and more stable group environments. Integrity therefore supports not only moral behaviour, but also the relational conditions necessary for effective teamwork, collective resilience, and long-term team development.

1.1.5. Correlations with private and family life, academic and work career

Responsibility and integrity may significantly influence an individual's functioning beyond sport, including private life, academic development, workplace behaviour, relationships, and long-term professional success. These competences are closely connected to self-regulation, accountability, honesty, reliability, ethical behaviour, and behavioural consistency, all of which contribute to effective functioning in educational, social, and professional environments.

Responsibility is strongly connected to self-management and self-regulation. Individuals who take responsibility for their actions are more likely to plan effectively, regulate their behaviour, reflect on their mistakes, and consistently pursue long-term goals. Research on student self-management demonstrated that self-management positively predicts academic achievement, with self-efficacy playing an important mediating role (Zhao et al., 2024). Similarly, research on personality traits and academic achievement found conscientiousness to positively influence academic performance through increased self-efficacy and behavioural regulation (Wang et al., 2023). Since conscientiousness strongly overlaps with responsibility-related qualities such as discipline, reliability, organisation, and persistence, these findings support the role of responsibility in academic development and achievement.

Integrity may also influence educational outcomes through honesty, accountability, and ethical behaviour. Research examining academic integrity suggests that ethical awareness, accountability, and self-determination contribute to maintaining positive academic behaviour and reducing unethical conduct (Khan, 2024). In academic environments, integrity supports authentic learning, trustworthiness, accurate self-assessment, and respect for rules and shared standards. Dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, and avoidance of responsibility may undermine both learning processes and long-term character development.

In work environments, integrity has been associated with positive work behaviours and reduced negative workplace conduct. Research by Smithikrai et al. (2024) found that individuals' sense of integrity positively predicted acts of integrity, which in turn positively influenced positive work behaviours and reduced negative work behaviours. The study suggests that integrity contributes to honesty, accountability, ethical decision-making, and constructive workplace functioning.

These findings support the idea that responsibility and integrity influence employability, leadership potential, trustworthiness, and professional reliability.

Integrity may also function as a self-regulatory mechanism that guides behaviour according to internalized moral standards. Research on moral identity and unethical workplace behaviour suggests that moral identity influences behavioural decision-making by motivating individuals to act consistently with their ethical self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Individuals with stronger integrity are therefore more likely to maintain ethical behaviour even in situations involving pressure, incentives, or opportunities for unethical gain.

Responsibility and integrity may additionally influence private and family life through consistency, honesty, reliability, and respect in relationships. Trust within relationships often depends on behavioural consistency and accountability. Individuals who consistently align their thoughts, words, and actions are more likely to build trust, maintain healthy relationships, and positively contribute to family and social environments.

In football environments, responsibility and integrity are not limited to behaviour on the field. Integrity requires a completeness and consistency of action that is not altered by who is watching your actions. Players who develop responsibility and integrity in football may therefore transfer these competences into school, work, relationships, and broader life contexts. The development of responsibility and integrity may consequently contribute not only to athletic performance, but also to long-term personal development, employability, leadership capacity, ethical behaviour, and social functioning.

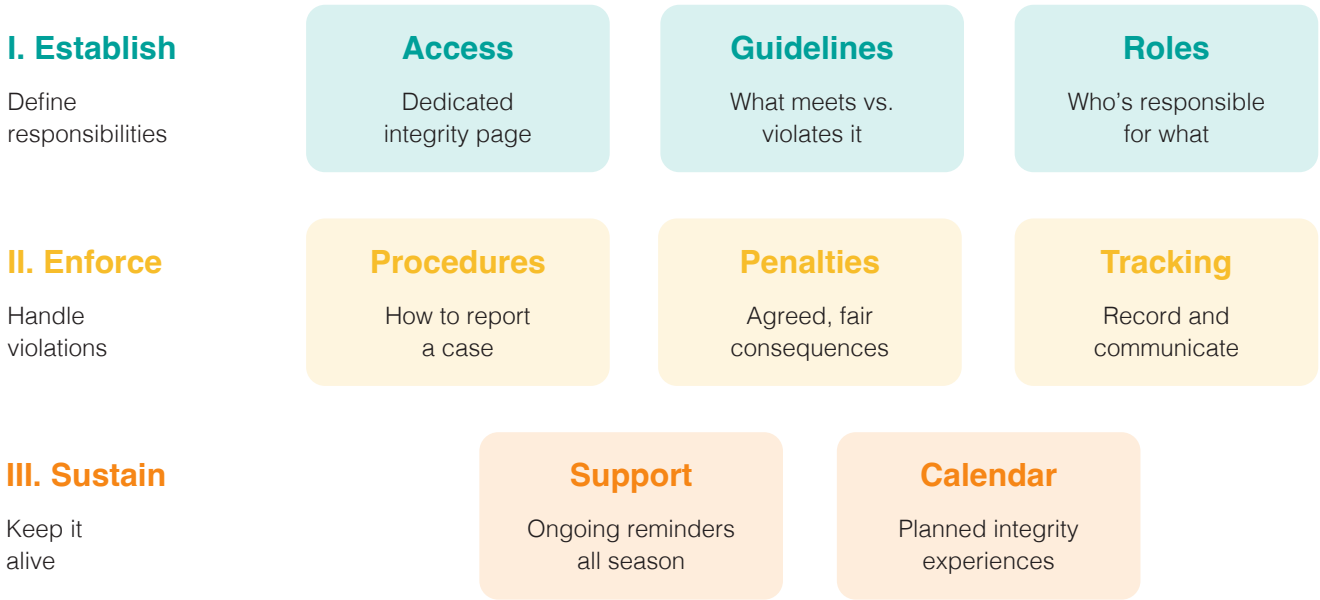
Research on life skill transfer in sport-based youth development suggests that competences developed in sport environments can transfer into other areas of life such as school, relationships, family life, and work environments (Jacobs & Wright, 2017; Gould & Carson, 2008). Responsibility and integrity learned through football may therefore contribute to positive functioning beyond sport through improved self-regulation, accountability, communication, leadership, and ethical behaviour.

1.1.6. Development of responsibility & integrity

Integrity first requires knowledge of oneself, explicitly knowing what values are most important to them and ordering them in their hearts. Integrity of a team requires that each player has knowledge of their responsibilities within the team and that there are agreed-upon, consistent "desires, commitments, principles, values, and wishes" amongst the members of the team. "One must discriminate between first order desires, committing to certain desires and denying other desires" (Frankfort, 1987). Self-conflict occurs in the form of "desires, commitments, principles, values and wishes" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021) that cannot be resolved until one settles with certainty on what they want, therefore achieving a "wholeheartedness" (Frankfort, 1987) and fortifying one's strength of will. Because "desires, commitments, principles, values, and wishes" are constantly changing, achieving the wholeheartedness required for integrity to thrive is a continual, intentional process (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021).

Incorporating Integrity into Pre-Season Meeting

A study of academic integrity by Bretag et. al, in 2011 found that "exemplary policy needs to provide an upfront, consistent message, reiterated throughout the entire policy, which indicates a systemic and sustained commitment to the values of academic integrity and the practices that ensure it." Furthermore, they found that the core elements of integrity policy to be: "access, approach, responsibility, detail, and support" In your next pre-season team meeting, incorporating integrity into the expression and embodiment of your team culture is critical. Here are some important considerations for establishing integrity as a core of your team from the start:



1.2. Window of opportunities

A window of opportunity describes a period in development when a competence, or the components underlying it, develops disproportionately faster than at other times. No such window has been proposed for responsibility and integrity, and the reason matters: unlike attention or executive function, these are not capacities that mature on a biological timetable. They are learned from what is repeatedly modelled and repeatedly required.

Children are constantly exposed to experiences at home, at school and in sport in which integrity is played out within the decisions a responsibility carries — intentionally in some cases, unintentionally in most. What a child sees an adult do when a decision is inconvenient is instruction, whether or not it was meant as instruction.

This places a particular demand on coaches. If the modelling happens anyway, the question is only whether it is deliberate, and intentional modelling of integrity in response to responsibility is likely to be valuable from very young ages through to adulthood. A coach who applies a rule to the most talented player exactly as it is applied to everyone else has taught more in that moment than any discussion of fairness could.

There is evidence that the learning can be structured rather than left to chance. A study of children aged 10 to 12 found growth in integrity character through playing traditional games accompanied by a character education guidebook (Kadek & Nugrahanta, 2023). The activity carried the learning; the guidebook made it explicit.

The second condition is that responsibility has to be given before it can be practised. Children need exposure to opportunities to practise integrity and to hold real responsibility if these competences are to improve, which means a coach who retains every decision removes the material the competence is built from. Responsibility that cannot be withheld from a player is not responsibility.

Early exposure to environments where integrity and responsibility are valued — from home to school to the field — has lasting effects on how both develop. What changes across the stages is not whether the competence can be trained but what is being handed over: care of equipment and agreed routines in the early stages, roles and commitments in the middle ones, and principled decisions under competitive pressure at the end.

Responsibility and integrity therefore warrant deliberate attention at every stage rather than at one, with the emphasis moving from what a coach models to what a player is trusted to decide.



1.3. Correlation with other skills and competencies



Correlation with Emotional Competencies
Self-Control is what integrity needs under pressure, as keeping to the agreed standard means holding back the impulse that would break it. Self-Reflection shows a player where actions and stated values have come apart, which is where responsibility starts. Goal Setting gives responsibility a time span, because committing to a goal means answering for the work towards it every week.

Correlation with Physical Skills
Endurance is built away from the session by players doing the running nobody is watching. Strength depends on recovery and rest, which are responsibilities taken or neglected in private.

Correlation with Technical Abilities
Passing is responsibility towards collective play, as the player gives the ball away in the team's interest rather than keeping it for themselves. First Touch prepared for the next player is a small act of accountability, because it makes a teammate's job easier before anyone asks.

Correlation with Social Competencies
Trust grows from players whose words and actions align, as they become the ones the team can rely on. Empathy & Compassion are where responsibility towards teammates begins, as a player has to notice what others need before taking it on. Leadership without a title is holding a standard when others let it slide.

Correlation with Cognitive Skills
Quick Decision Making is shaped by responsibility, as a player who weighs consequences slows the automatic response just enough. Critical Thinking is needed to choose fair play over advantage, which is a judgement, not a reflex.

Correlation with Tactical Principles
Defensive Unity relies on every player fulfilling their responsibility, as one player stepping out breaks the shape for all. Balance is positional discipline held while the ball is elsewhere. Defensive Cover is responsibility taken for a teammate's mistake, as the covering player closes a gap another left.

1.4. Key learnings

- Responsibility & integrity are interconnected competences that influence behaviour, decision-making, relationships, leadership, and performance within football environments.
- Responsibility involves awareness, ownership, and accountability toward oneself, teammates, roles, decisions, and collective objectives.
- Integrity refers to consistency between values, intentions, words, and actions across different situations and relationships.
- Responsibility & integrity are not fixed personality traits, but competences that can be intentionally developed through repeated experiences, reflection, role modelling, and accountability.
- Coaches play an important role in developing responsibility & integrity through consistent behaviour, clear expectations, reinforcement of team standards, and intentional learning environments.
- Responsibility & integrity contribute to performance through self-regulation, preparation habits, tactical discipline, consistency of effort, honest self-reflection, and commitment to long-term development.
- Responsibility & integrity contribute to cohesion through trust, accountability, fairness, respectful communication, and reliable contribution toward collective objectives.
- Responsibility & integrity developed within football may positively transfer into school, family life, relationships, work environments, and broader social functioning.
- At the same time, experiences and competences developed outside football may influence how players behave, cooperate, and perform within football environments.
- Responsibility & integrity influence all areas of football development, including social competences, emotional competences, tactical principles, physical development, and technical execution.



1.5. From science to practice

Stage 1
7-8 years



Rules, honesty, small responsibilities

At this stage, responsibility & integrity should be taught through simple, visible behaviours. Young players are still learning about rules, fairness, consequences, and the perspectives of others.

Coaches should focus on listening, helping, taking turns, caring for equipment, following rules, and showing respect. Integrity is expressed through honesty, effort, and consistency in everyday actions rather than abstract ethical reasoning. Positive reinforcement, clear boundaries, and repeated routines are essential, as children learn mainly through observation, imitation, and experience.

Stage 2
9-10 years



Fair play, shared tasks, keeping your word

At this stage, players develop a stronger understanding of shared responsibility and teamwork. Responsibility & integrity can be linked to cooperation, fairness, accountability, and contribution.

Coaches should encourage small responsibilities such as organising equipment, helping teammates or leading warm-ups. Players begin to understand that integrity means aligning actions with words. Simple reflection, concrete examples, and feedback help reinforce learning. Fair play situations provide valuable opportunities to practise respect for rules, teammates, opponents, and referees.

Stage 3
11-12 years



Owning mistakes, trust, team contribution

At this stage, players become more aware of team dynamics and their role within the group. Responsibility & integrity should be linked to trust, communication, accountability, and commitment. Players can increasingly reflect on mistakes and understand how their behaviour affects the team.

Coaches should provide opportunities for shared decision-making, leadership, and self-reflection while reinforcing clear expectations. Integrity includes taking responsibility, communicating honestly, showing fair play, and contributing positively to team culture.

Stage 4
13-14 years



Integrity under pressure, ownership, team standards

During adolescence, responsibility & integrity become more complex due to growing autonomy, emotions, and peer influence.

Coaches should encourage reflection on values, decisions, fairness, and accountability. Responsibility extends beyond rule-following to ownership of preparation, behaviour, communication, and team standards. Integrity can be challenged by social pressure and competition, making psychological safety and consistent coaching especially important. Players should gradually take greater ownership while continuing to receive guidance and support.

Stage 5
15-16 years



Self-direction, reliability, leadership

At this stage, responsibility & integrity should be linked to self-directed development, leadership, discipline, and long-term performance. Players become increasingly capable of managing preparation, recovery, communication, and personal growth independently.

Coaches should provide greater autonomy and leadership opportunities while maintaining clear expectations and accountability. Integrity includes maintaining standards under pressure, acting consistently, and demonstrating reliability toward teammates and team goals. Reflection should focus on habits, values, behaviours, and long-term development within and beyond football.

Stage 6
17–18 years



Stewardship, mentoring, integrity beyond football

Older players can understand responsibility & integrity as key foundations of leadership, relationships, and performance.

Coaches should provide opportunities for ownership of team culture, communication, preparation, and accountability. Responsibility includes personal development and supporting teammates. Integrity means aligning values, decisions, words, and actions across football and everyday life. Coaches should encourage self-evaluation, independent decision-making, mentoring, and leadership by example. Players should recognise that responsibility & integrity are lifelong qualities that shape trust, leadership, and contribution beyond football.

2. COACHES' BEHAVIOUR

2.1. Coaching style

2.1.1. Scientific grounding

Research on behavioural integrity suggests that trust in leadership is strongly influenced by the perceived alignment between a leader's words and actions (Simons, 2002). Behavioural integrity refers to the consistency between communicated values, expectations, and observable behaviour. In coaching environments, players continuously evaluate whether coaches uphold the same standards they expect from others.

When coaches consistently align their thoughts, words, decisions, and actions, they strengthen credibility, trust, accountability, and psychological safety within the team environment. In contrast, inconsistencies between communicated values and actual behaviour may weaken trust, reduce perceived fairness, and negatively influence team culture over time.

Behavioural integrity is particularly important in football because coaches serve as highly visible role models whose behaviours strongly influence team norms, standards, and interpersonal dynamics. Coaches who demonstrate integrity through consistency, honesty, accountability, fairness, and respect may therefore contribute to stronger relational environments and more stable team cultures.

2.1.2. Practical implications

Responsibility and integrity should not only be discussed conceptually, but intentionally reinforced through repeated coaching interactions, environmental design, language, reflection, and behavioural expectations. Players develop responsibility and integrity over time through consistent experiences that connect values, decisions, actions, consequences, and relationships. Coaches therefore play an important role in helping players recognise moments where integrity is either strengthened or compromised within football environments and daily life.

Research on integrity emphasises qualities such as commitment, responsibility, consistency, honesty, self-discipline, trustworthiness, fairness, and moral courage as central components of integrity development (Barnard et al., 2008). Within football environments, these qualities can be intentionally reinforced through coaching cues that repeatedly direct players' attention toward behaviours aligned with responsibility and integrity.

The following coaching cues may help players develop awareness, accountability, consistency, and ethical decision-making within football environments. Coaches should consistently connect these cues to both football situations and broader life experiences in order to strengthen transfer across environments.

Commitment

Commitment refers to dedicating thoughts, words, and actions toward meaningful principles, values, responsibilities, and goals. Commitment within football includes sustained effort, reliability, discipline, and consistency toward the collective standards of the team.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Commit to the standards we agreed on as a team."*
- *"Stay committed even when things become difficult."*
- *"Your effort shows your commitment."*
- *"Do your actions match what you say you want?"*

Responsibility

Responsibility involves awareness and stewardship of oneself, teammates, roles, decisions, and consequences. Responsible players recognise that their actions influence both their own development and the collective functioning of the team.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Take responsibility for your role."*
- *"How can you support the team in this moment?"*
- *"What part of this situation is within your control?"*
- *"Small responsibilities build trust over time."*

Consistency

Consistency refers to maintaining alignment between thoughts, words, and actions across situations. Integrity requires that players uphold values and standards regardless of pressure, visibility, or external reward.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Be the same player when nobody is watching."*
- *"Consistency builds trust."*
- *"Keep your standards in difficult moments."*
- *"Your habits shape who you become."*

Honesty

Honesty requires truthful communication, accurate self-reflection, and accountability. Honest environments support trust, learning, and healthy relationships within teams.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Be honest with yourself and your teammates."*
- *"Tell the truth even when it is uncomfortable."*
- *"Learning starts with honest reflection."*
- *"Own your mistakes so you can grow from them."*

Self-Discipline

Self-discipline involves regulating behaviour, emotions, impulses, and decisions in alignment with long-term goals and values. Players develop integrity when they consistently choose behaviours that support growth and collective success.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Choose what helps you grow."*
- *"Discipline is doing what is needed even when it is difficult."*
- *"Your choices today shape your future."*
- *"Control what you can control."*

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness develops when players consistently align words and actions over time. Teams become stronger when players can depend on each other emotionally, socially, and tactically.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Be someone your teammates can trust."*
- *"Follow through on what you say."*
- *"Trust is built through daily actions."*
- *"Reliable behaviours strengthen the team."*

Fairness and Respect

Integrity requires recognising the dignity and value of others through fair and respectful treatment. Respectful environments strengthen psychological safety, cohesion, and communication within teams.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Treat others with respect."*
- *"Compete hard while respecting others."*
- *"Support teammates, especially in difficult moments."*
- *"Respect is shown through actions."*

Moral Courage

Moral courage refers to maintaining principles and values even when facing pressure, discomfort, fear, or social consequences. Integrity often requires players to make difficult decisions that prioritize long-term values over short-term rewards.

Example coaching cues:

- *"Do what is right even when it is difficult."*
- *"Integrity matters most under pressure."*
- *"Stand by your values."*
- *"Strong character appears in difficult moments."*

Reflection and Self-Awareness

Responsibility and integrity develop through reflection on thoughts, decisions, actions, and consequences. Coaches can intentionally create opportunities for players to reflect on how their behaviours influence themselves and others.

Example reflection prompts:

- *"Did my actions align with my values today?"*
- *"How did my behaviour influence the team?"*
- *"What responsibility did I handle well today?"*
- *"Where can I improve my integrity tomorrow?"*

Through consistent use of coaching cues, reflection, accountability, and role modelling, coaches may help players gradually develop responsibility and integrity as both football competences and life competences. Over time, repeated exposure to environments emphasizing accountability, honesty, consistency, respect, and stewardship may strengthen both individual development and collective team culture.

2.2. Choice of words

Stage 1
7-8 years



At this stage, language should be simple, concrete, encouraging, and immediately connected to visible behaviours. Young players understand responsibility & integrity best through short phrases that reinforce honesty, fairness, effort, sharing, listening, and helping others. Coaches should consistently connect words to actions and avoid overly abstract explanations.

Example tone:

- *"Tell the truth."*
  (direct behavioural instruction)
- *"Help your teammate."*
  (prosocial cue)
- *"Try your best."*
  (effort over outcome)
- *"Be fair."*
  (simple moral rule)

Stage 2
9-10 years



Coaches can use language that connects individual behaviours to the wellbeing of teammates and the group. Choice of words should reinforce accountability, trustworthiness, fair play, and consistency while still remaining concrete and understandable. Coaches should frequently explain why responsible behaviours matter within football and daily life situations.

Example tone:

- *"Your teammates need to trust you." (link to peer trust)*
- *"Responsible players help the whole group." (role modelling)*
- *"Fair play matters."*
  (norm statement)
- *"Take responsibility for your actions." (take ownership)*

Stage 3
11-12 years



Coaches can begin using language that encourages self-reflection, accountability, communication, and commitment toward collective objectives. Players are increasingly capable of understanding how integrity influences relationships, team culture, and performance. Coaches should reinforce honest communication and consistency between words and actions.

Example tone:

- *"Own your mistake."*
  (accountability without blame)
- *"Reliable players strengthen the group." (reliability as contribution)*
- *"Show respect even in difficult moments."*
  (respect as a constant)

Stage 4
13-14 years



Coaches should therefore use language that encourages reflection, emotional regulation, accountability, and ethical decision-making under pressure. Discussions can become more complex and include values, consistency, leadership, responsibility toward teammates, and fair play during emotionally challenging situations.

Example tone:

- *"Can your teammates rely on you?" (reliability self-check)*
- *"Stay consistent under pressure." (regulation under load)*
- *"Take responsibility instead of blaming." (redirecting attribution)*
- *"How do your actions influence trust?" (trust as an outcome of behaviour)*

Stage 5
15-16 years



Coaches should use language that emphasises ownership, discipline, reliability, standards, and accountability within both football and life contexts. Responsibility & integrity can now be connected more directly to performance, leadership credibility, preparation habits, and contribution to collective objectives.

Example tone:

- *"Your habits reflect your standards."*
  (habits as evidence of values)
- *"Leadership begins with personal responsibility."*
  (self before others)
- *"Consistency builds credibility." (credibility through consistency)*
- *"Are your actions aligned with your goals?"*
  (goal-behaviour alignment)

Stage 6
17–18 years



Coaches can use more complex and reflective language connected to identity, stewardship, values, accountability, and long-term development. Players should increasingly be encouraged to evaluate their own behaviours, influence younger teammates positively, and recognise how integrity shapes trust and leadership within all areas of life.

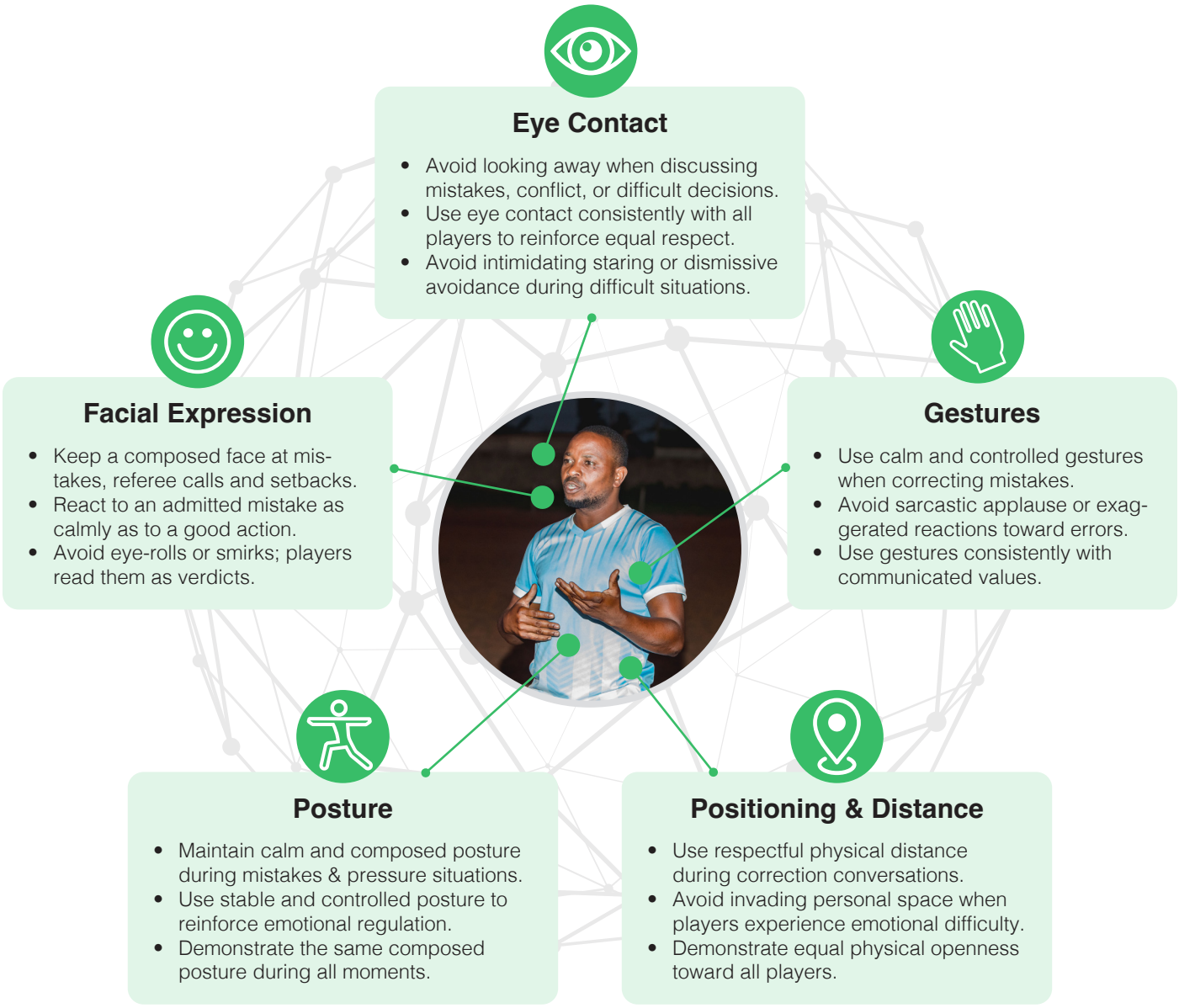
Example tone:

- *"Your behaviour influences the environment around you." (influence beyond self)*
- *"Integrity requires consistency between values and actions." (defining principle)*
- *"What standards do you want to represent?" (personal standard-setting)*
- *"Responsibility includes how you influence others." (stewardship framing)*

2.3. Body language

Players continuously observe whether coaches' visible behaviours align with the standards and values they communicate verbally. Within responsibility & integrity development, body language is especially important during moments involving mistakes, accountability, fairness, conflict, pressure, and ethical decision-making. Coaches may unintentionally reinforce or weaken integrity standards through posture, eye contact, gestures, emotional reactions, and physical presence within the environment.

Body language should therefore consistently support honesty, accountability, respect, fairness, and composure. Coaches should remain aware that players often interpret nonverbal reactions as indicators of what is truly accepted, tolerated, rewarded, or discouraged within the team culture.



3. TRAINING

THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

of integrity from foundation to maturity:



7-8 years

1. Look after the equipment of the session, and put it away without being asked.
2. Keep to the routines the group agreed at the start.
3. Say what actually happened when nobody else saw it.



9-10 years

1. Carry out the role you were given for its full duration.
2. Stay committed to a new role after rotating into it.
3. Accept a decision that goes against you and play the next action.



11-12 years

1. Prepare independently for training and matches, without being supervised.
2. Complete the agreed work between sessions, and say what you did.
3. Arrive at the agreed time, ready to start.



13-14 years

1. Name a mistake as yours, take the action that corrects it.
2. Meet your school and home responsibilities alongside football.
3. Accept a referee's decision at the moment it costs the team.



15-16 years

1. Keep the habits for long-term performance through the time nobody checks.
2. Help a younger or newer player without being asked to.
3. Keep to a team standard when teammates around you are not keeping it.



17-18 years

1. Choose fair play over winning when the choice changes the result.
2. Keep to your stated values under pressure from teammates or a coach.
3. Name a team value and point to your own recent action that reinforced it.

Training

7-8 years



3.1. Stage 1 (7-8 years)

3.1.1. Stage characteristics

Children aged 7–8 are beginning to understand simple rules, routines and responsibilities. They think concretely and learn most effectively through visible actions and immediate experiences rather than abstract explanations. At this age, they enjoy helping, contributing and imitating adults, especially when expectations are clear and consistent.

Their ability to regulate their own behaviour is still developing, so they benefit from repetition and predictable routines. They are beginning to distinguish between right and wrong and are developing an early understanding of fairness and honesty. These developmental characteristics provide the foundation for introducing simple responsibilities that gradually become reliable habits.

3.1.2. Specific learning objectives

Responsibility and integrity begin with simple everyday behaviours that players experience in every training session. At this age, learning is most effective when responsibility is experienced rather than explained. The following pedagogical objectives therefore focus on small, achievable actions that players can practise consistently and successfully.

The objectives build progressively upon one another. Players first learn to care for shared equipment, then to follow agreed rules and routines, and finally to act honestly, even when honesty may not be immediately recognised. Together, these experiences establish the foundation for responsibility and integrity throughout the following developmental stages.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

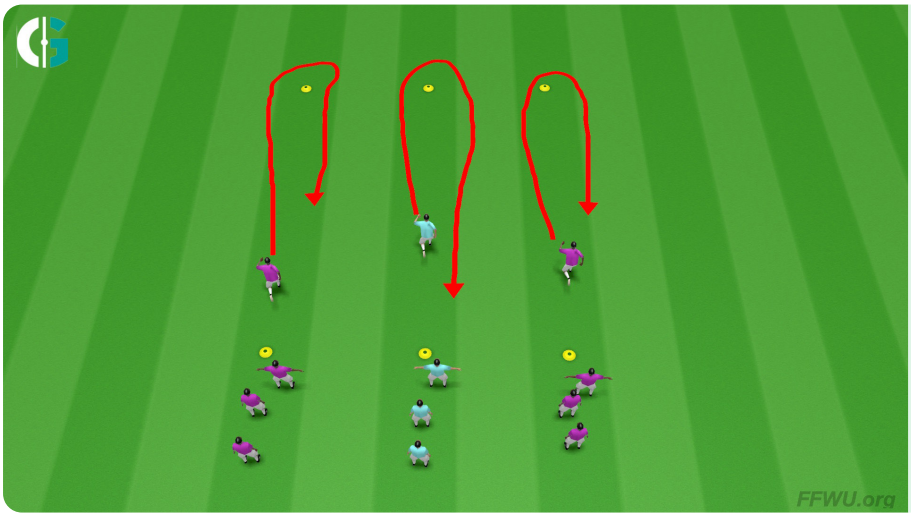
1. Look after the equipment of the session, and put it away without being asked.
2. Keep to the routines the group agreed at the start.
3. Say what actually happened when nobody else saw it.

3.1.3. Coach insight

Responsibility at this age is learned from routines rather than from conversations about it. A seven-year-old who is given the balls to collect and does it without being asked has practised something a discussion could not teach. What makes it stick is that the job is real and that its absence is noticed — a task nobody misses when it is undone teaches nothing at all.

EXERCISE

CLAP RELAY



Players	9+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	15 x 20 m
Equipment	3 balls, 6 cones
Duration	total: 15 min play: 12 min breaks: -
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- Divide the players into teams of three and line each team up behind a starting cone with one ball.
- Set up a dribbling course using several cones.
- The first players start on the coach's signal and dribble around every cone before returning behind the starting cone.
- They clap (hand touch) the next teammate, who only starts after receiving the clap.
- If a player starts too early, they return behind the starting cone and wait for the clap. If a player misses a cone or loses the ball, they correct the mistake before continuing.
- Continue until every player has completed the course 2–4 times.
- At the end of the activity, every player helps return the equipment.

Coaching Tips

1. Observe **responsible behaviours** as carefully as football actions and reinforce them immediately.
2. Allow players to **recognise and correct their own mistakes** before intervening.
3. Praise honesty and following the agreed routines, **even when it means losing the relay**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players collect the cones and balls after the relay without being asked.	○ *Who helped return the equipment after the activity?* ○ *Why is it important that everyone helps?* ○ *Where can you take responsibility for shared equipment?*
2	Players keep to the relay rules the group agreed, including when nobody is watching your cone.	○ *Which rules were most important during the relay?* ○ *What happened when someone did not follow one?* ○ *Which part is easiest to let slip when nobody is looking?*
3	Players say when they missed a cone, even if it costs their team the relay.	○ *Did anyone have to correct a mistake during the relay?* ○ *What did you do when you realised you had broken a rule?* ○ *How does correcting your own mistakes help you?*

Training

9-10 years



3.2. Stage 2 (9-10 years)

3.2.1. Stage characteristics

Children aged 9–10 become increasingly independent and begin to understand that their behaviour affects other people. They are more capable of following routines consistently, accepting small responsibilities and contributing to shared tasks within a group. Their growing cognitive development enables them to understand cause-and-effect relationships and recognise why rules and responsibilities benefit everyone.

Players at this stage are also becoming more aware of fairness, accountability and the importance of doing their part within a team. They enjoy taking on simple roles and responsibilities and are increasingly capable of reflecting on their own behaviour when guided by the coach. These developmental characteristics provide the foundation for expanding responsibility from individual habits towards shared responsibilities within the team.

3.2.2. Specific learning objectives

Responsibility and integrity now extend beyond individual routines towards contributing to the team. Players continue to develop responsibility through consistent actions while gradually understanding how fulfilling their role influences teammates and the overall training environment.

The following pedagogical objectives introduce role responsibility, commitment and shared accountability. Players first learn to fulfil a clearly defined football role, then to remain committed after rotating into a new role, and finally to recognise how consistently fulfilling their responsibilities helps the entire team.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

1. Carry out the role you were given for its full duration.
2. Stay committed to a new role after rotating into it.
3. Accept a decision that goes against you and play the next action.

3.2.3. Coach insight

The test of a role at this stage is whether a player keeps it when the ball is somewhere else. Players will hold a responsibility while it is interesting and abandon it the moment the game moves away, which is not defiance but the ordinary limit of the age. Rotating roles matters more than assigning them well, because every player needs the experience of being relied on.

EXERCISE

DIAMOND ROLES



Players	10+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	25 x 20 m
Equipment	1 ball, 20 cones, 4 bibs, 2 goals
Duration	total: 22 min play: 4 x 4 min breaks: 1 min
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- Divide the players into two teams and organise a 4v4 game plus goalkeepers.
- Play 4x 4-minute games.
- At the end of each game, players rotate clockwise into the next position until every player has experienced all four roles.
- Each team plays in a diamond shape with one attacker, two wide players and one defender.
- Before the game, explain the responsibilities of each position. The attacker tries to finish every attack and remains the most upfront player.
- The left and right wing support every attack and recover immediately when possession is lost.
- The defender wins the ball as early as possible and remains the last defender between the opponents and the goal.

Coaching Tips

1. Explain each football role **clearly before the activity** and check that every player understands their responsibilities before play begins.
2. Observe whether players remain **committed to their role until the rotation** rather than following the ball.
3. Recognise players who **consistently fulfil their responsibilities**, even when they are not directly involved with the ball.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players carry out their diamond role for the full four minutes, including when the ball is elsewhere.	○ *What was your responsibility in this position?* ○ *How well did you fulfil your responsibilities?* ○ *What could you do better next time you play this position?*
2	Players stay committed to the role they rotate into, even the one they did not want.	○ *Which position did you enjoy most? Why?* ○ *Did you stay committed to your new role until the end?* ○ *What happened when everyone fulfilled their duties?*
3	Players accept a decision that goes against them and play the next action.	○ *Was there a decision in the game you disagreed with?* ○ *What did you do in the seconds after it?* ○ *How did your reaction affect the next passage of play?*

Training

11-12 years



3.3. Stage 3 (11-12 years)

3.3.1. Stage characteristics

Players aged 11–12 become increasingly independent and begin taking greater ownership of their football development. They are capable of preparing for training without constant support from adults, organising their equipment, managing their time and completing tasks independently. As their ability to think ahead develops, they increasingly recognise the connection between preparation, effort and performance.

At this stage, responsibility gradually extends beyond the training environment. Players become capable of taking ownership of their own development through independent practice, home challenges and personal preparation. They also begin to understand that being reliable and punctual demonstrates respect for teammates, coaches and the team.

3.3.2. Specific learning objectives

As players become more independent, responsibility increasingly extends beyond team training. They begin to prepare for sessions on their own, complete independent practice between training sessions and manage their time more effectively.

These experiences help players understand that their development is not determined only by the coach or the team, but also by the choices they make outside organised football.

In the reflection phase, we want the children to be able to:

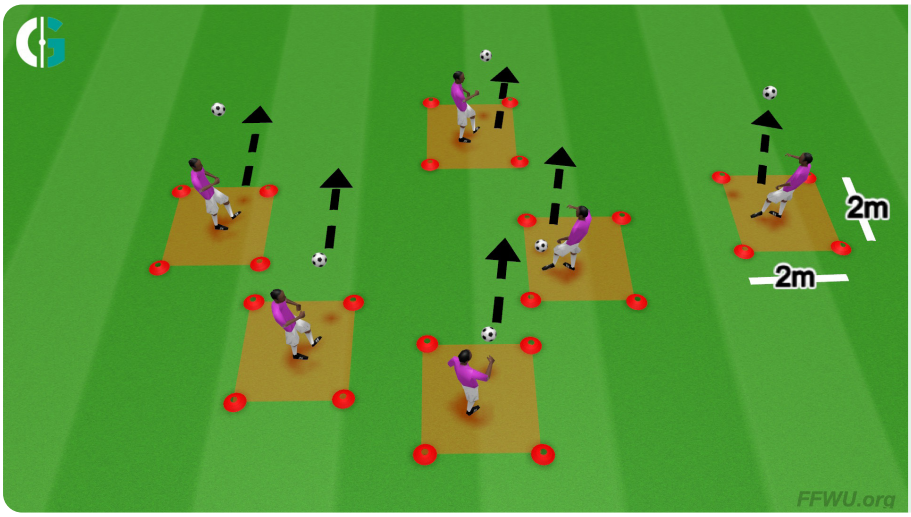
1. Prepare independently for training and matches, without being supervised.
2. Complete the agreed work between sessions, and say what you did.
3. Arrive at the agreed time, ready to start.

3.3.3. Coach insight

This is the stage at which responsibility can move outside the session. A player who prepares alone between sessions is doing something no coach can supervise, and that is exactly what makes it worth asking for. Give responsibility away faster than feels comfortable; a task a coach could still do is one a player has not really been given.

EXERCISE

JUGGLING CHALLENGE



Players	10+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	2 x 2 m
Equipment	1 ball per player, 4 cones per player
Duration	total: 13 min play:10 min breaks: -
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- At the end of the previous training session, players receive the challenge to take a football home and practise juggling for 10 minutes every day until the next training session.
- At the beginning of the next training session, players independently collect one ball and four cones before entering the training area. Each player builds a 2 × 2 metre juggling station.
- The activity starts immediately when training begins. Players have 10 minutes to complete 10 juggling attempts and record their highest score. They aim to beat the personal best they achieved while practising at home before continuing into the football training session.

Coaching Tips

1. Encourage players to **prepare their own equipment and juggling station** independently before the activity begins.
2. Reinforce that players **compete first against their own personal best** before comparing scores with others.
3. Recognise players who **demonstrate responsibility through their preparation, commitment and effort** as much as their juggling performance.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players bring the ball back and set up their own juggling station without being told.	○ *Did you prepare your juggling station independently?* ○ *Did you have everything ready before the start?* ○ *Why is preparing independently important for you?*
2	Players practise the ten minutes at home each day, and say what they did.	○ *Did you practise juggling for 10 minutes each day?* ○ *Did you reach the same score as when practising at home?* ○ *Why or why not? Which day was hardest to do it?*
3	Players arrive at the session ready to start the challenge.	○ *Were you ready to begin when the activity started?* ○ *How did arriving on time help you prepare yourself?* ○ *Why is arriving on time a way of showing responsibility?*

Training

13-14 years



3.4. Stage 4 (13-14 Years)

3.4.1. Stage characteristics

During early adolescence, players become increasingly capable of reflecting on their own behaviour and understanding the consequences of their decisions. They begin to develop a stronger sense of personal identity and are more willing to accept responsibility for their actions. At the same time, social influences become increasingly important, making this a valuable stage for helping players make responsible decisions under changing circumstances.

Players are now able to connect responsibility with long-term development rather than immediate outcomes. They begin to understand that learning from mistakes, balancing football with school and respecting referees are all part of becoming a responsible football player.

3.4.2. Specific learning objectives

As players mature, responsibility extends beyond completing tasks towards making responsible decisions in different football situations. They learn to respond constructively to mistakes and feedback, balance their football commitments with school responsibilities and consistently demonstrate respect towards referees.

These experiences help players understand that responsibility is reflected in their everyday behaviour, both on and off the field.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

1. Name a mistake as yours, take the action that corrects it.
2. Meet your school and home responsibilities alongside football.
3. Accept a referee's decision at the moment it costs the team.

3.4.3. Coach insight

What a player does after a mistake is more revealing than the mistake. At this stage the instinct is to distribute the blame — to the pass, the pitch, the referee — because an error in front of peers costs more than it did a year ago. A group that treats the correction as ordinary makes owning the mistake affordable.

EXERCISE

MISTAKES HAPPEN



Players	16+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	50 x 40 m
Equipment	1 ball, 8 bibs, 8 cones, 2 goals
Duration	total: 49 min play: 4 x 10 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- Divide players into two teams and play four 10-minute games.
- During the first two games, observe how players respond to their own mistakes and to coaching feedback.
- Encourage players to correct mistakes and immediately apply the coach‘s feedback.
- During the third game, the coach acts as the referee and intentionally makes several incorrect decisions against one team.
- During the fourth game, the coach makes similarly incorrect decisions against the other team.
- Observe how players respond to the referee‘s mistakes and whether they continue to respect the decisions and focus on the game.
- Finish the activity with a group reflection.

Coaching Tips

1. Encourage players to **respond positively to mistakes** and immediately apply coaching feedback.
2. Make the incorrect referee decisions **realistic and consistent** throughout each game.
3. Use the reflection to **connect responsibility in football with responsibility in everyday life**, including balancing football and school.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players name their mistake in the game, correct it, and stay as involved afterwards.	○ *How did you respond after making a mistake?* ○ *How did you apply the coach’s feedback?* ○ *Did your involvement drop after the mistake?*
2	Players meet their school and home responsibilities alongside these four games.	○ *How did you balance your football and school responsibilities this week?* ○ *What helped you stay organised? What had to give way?*
3	Players accept the referee’s decision at the moment it costs their team the game.	○ *How did you respond when you disagreed with a decision?* ○ *How did your response affect your team?* ○ *Which decision was hardest to accept?*

Training

15-16 years



3.5. Stage 5 (15-16 years)

3.5.1. Stage characteristics

Players aged 15–16 are approaching adulthood and are increasingly capable of taking full ownership of their football development. They are able to think beyond their own performance, consider the needs of others and recognise their influence on the team's environment. As they prepare for senior football or other future pathways, they become important role models for younger players.

At this stage, responsibility extends beyond personal habits and decisions towards positively influencing others. Players become capable of proactively supporting teammates, modelling responsible behaviours and contributing to a positive team culture through their everyday actions. These experiences prepare them to become responsible players, teammates and future leaders.

3.5.2. Specific learning objectives

As players approach adulthood, responsibility increasingly involves leading through actions rather than words. They learn to consistently maintain habits that support long-term football performance, proactively support younger or new teammates and contribute to a positive team culture without being asked. These experiences help players understand that responsibility is no longer only about their own development, but also about helping others develop.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

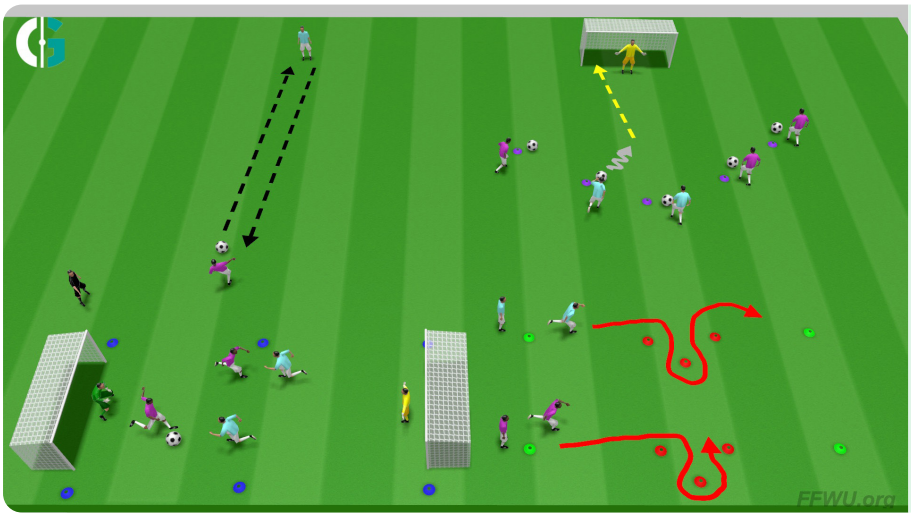
1. Keep the habits for long-term performance through the time nobody checks.
2. Help a younger or newer player without being asked to.
3. Keep to a team standard when teammates around you are not keeping it.

3.5.3. Coach insight

Responsibility widens here from a player's own performance to what happens around them. Players begin to influence younger teammates whether or not they intend to, so the habits they model are being taught to somebody. The useful shift is from asking players to be responsible for themselves to asking them what the team needs and letting them decide.

EXERCISE

ON MY DEVELOPMENT



Players	12+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	flexible
Equipment	all balls, cones and goals available
Duration	total: 52 min play: 3 x 15 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- Players decide on their own learning objective.
- Based on shared objectives, players form small groups to practice together.
- The objectives can be physical, technical, social, emotional, or any area the players choose to develop.
- Players organise and lead their own practice, including structure, activities, and roles within the group.
- Players have 3 x 15 minutes to work on their chosen objective.
- The coach observes and only intervenes if necessary.

Coaching Tips

1. Help players **choose one habit to develop** over the next four weeks.
2. Encourage players to **support teammates with less experience** in self-directed training.
3. Observe ownership and **only intervene when necessary**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players keep the habit they chose going through the four weeks of self-directed training.	○ *Which habit did you choose?* ○ *How consistently did you practise it today?* ○ *How will you continue building this habit?*
2	Players help a player in another group without being asked to.	○ *Who did you support today?* ○ *How did your support help them?* ○ *Why is helping less experienced teammates important?*
3	Players keep to their group's agreed objective when others in the group drift from it.	○ *How did your behaviour help your group?* ○ *What did you do to create a positive learning environment?* ○ *When did you keep to the standard and others did not?*

Training

17-18 years



3.6. Stage 6 (17-18 years)

3.6.1. Stage characteristics

Players aged 17–18 develop a stronger personal identity and become increasingly capable of making independent decisions. At the same time, they experience growing pressure from competition, teammates, coaches, parents and spectators. Their decisions are no longer influenced only by rules but also by their own values and the expectations of others.

As players mature, they become capable of understanding that responsibility is demonstrated most clearly when making difficult choices. They begin to recognise that consistently living their values, reinforcing positive team behaviours and choosing fair play under pressure contribute to both individual and team development.

3.6.2. Specific learning objectives

As players become more independent, responsibility increasingly involves making principled decisions under pressure. They learn to choose fair play over gaining an unfair advantage, remain true to their values despite external influences and actively reinforce the team's shared values through their behaviour.

These experiences help players understand that responsibility is demonstrated most clearly when nobody tells them what to do.

During the reflection phase, the players should be able to:

1. Choose fair play over winning when the choice changes the result.
2. Keep to your stated values under pressure from teammates or a coach.
3. Name a team value and point to your own recent action that reinforced it.

3.6.3. Coach insight

Integrity is only observable when it costs something. A player who admits the ball came off them last with the game level has done something that a rule cannot compel and a discussion cannot produce. Build the situations that make the choice real, and treat the decision as the outcome rather than the result that follows it.

EXERCISE

MOMENTS OF TRUTH



Players	22+
Age	07–08 09–10 11–12 13–14 15–16 17–18
Pitch	full field
Equipment	1 ball, 10 bibs, 8 cones, 2 goals
Duration	total: 63 min play: 5 x 10 min breaks: 2 min
Author	Brad Gieske

Description

- Organise an 11v11 practice game with five 10-minute periods.
- Before the activity, prepare the five Moments of Truth cards below. During each break, invite a player to read one card aloud to all.
- Conclude the activity with a final reflection on how integrity influences individual behaviour and team culture.
- Moments of Truth
  - Your teammate takes a shot. The ball slightly touches you before going into the goal, so it's offside but the goal is given.
  - You lose the ball and commit a small foul while trying to win it back. It is not seen, your team continues with a clear advantage.
  - You go down in the penalty area after little or no contact. A penalty is given, but you know it was not a foul.
  - Your team receives a throw-in, but you know the ball touched your teammate last before going out of play.
  - The referee awards your team a corner kick, but you know you touched the ball last before it went out of play.

Coaching Tips

1. Encourage honest discussion **without judging** players' answers.
2. Ask players to explain **what they would do and why** they chose their response.
3. Connect the discussion to the team's **shared value of integrity**.

	Learning Objectives	Reflection Questions
1	Players choose fair play over the advantage when the Moment of Truth card is read.	○ *What made this situation difficult to decide?* ○ *Did you feel pressure to win or gain an advantage?* ○ *Which card was hardest to answer honestly?*
2	Players keep to their stated values under pressure from teammates during the period.	○ *Did you act fairly in the situation?* ○ *When did you chose advantage over fairness?* ○ *What would you do next time?*
3	Players name a value the team agreed, and point to their own action in the game that reinforced it.	○ *Did your decision match what you believe is right?* ○ *When was it hardest to act with integrity?* ○ *Which of your own actions today carried the team's value?*

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