

Destructive Attitudes in Sports



Addressing Destructive Attitudes in Sports, Games and Competition

Sports are such a great teacher. I think of everything they've taught me: camaraderie, humility, how to resolve differences.

Kobe Bryant

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Overview

This workshop was designed by Chris Clarke as part of a class at Wycliffe College (University of Toronto) in partnership with Global Learning Partners. To contact Chris regarding the use of this design or if you have any questions please use his email: dudachris@gmail.com

For more information about Global Learning Partners please visit the website: www.globallearningpartners.com

This workshop was designed on the framework and principles of *The Eight Steps of Design*. It was designed to fill an eighty minute seminar slot at a DIY Christian, Social Justice, Arts and Theology festival called Cahoots. For more information on Cahoots please visit the site: www.cahootsfest.ca

Included here are some excerpts from the original eight steps of design. For the full version of the eight steps consult the **facilitator's notes** or contact Chris at the email provided above.

The People

Cahoots is a Christian DIY festival with a focus on justice and theology. Most of the people attending will be left leaning Christians but the content needs to be safe for a range of faiths and political beliefs.

This workshop will be held in a time slot alongside other workshops and in order to draw people the need must be clearly depicted, along with a hint at the solutions, in the workshop description (See the first paragraph in 'The Situation'). Numbers are not certain prior to the workshops opening minutes but the facilitator should prepare for between 5-20 participants.

Those who attend this workshop might be looking for answers to questions like:

- How can I help my church utilize sports for teaching, especially discipleship?
- This implies there is something wrong with sports... What's wrong with sports?
- This implies sports can be used for good... How is that possible?
- How do we make sports safer?

The Situation

Sports as seen in the world today are extremely flawed. The military overtones (Super Bowl flybys), the concussion debate, enraged hockey dads, corporate ownership and the dehumanizing of opposing players all play a part in distorting sports into a

destructive force on this planet. But this isn't the whole story. Sports, games and competition have many qualities worth trying to salvage. Here we will focus on changes we can make in our own lives, and model to those who look up to us, that will help make all of our sports related interactions redemptive to all involved.

Changes

- Participants should see the importance of identifying destructive attitudes and reframing them constructively
- Would like to see those who come to the workshop be able to identify destructive attitudes in sports both in themselves and in others
- Would like for those to attend to be able to reframe destructive attitudes into constructive ones

The Time and Timing

The *Cahoots Planning Team* have noticed a dip in energy for the final workshops of the day on Friday and Saturday. As a result they plan to leave Friday from 4-5 (previously used as a workshop slot) open for free time and to have a sports event (soccer or basketball) planned during that time. The facilitator has suggested that gathering athletic types for this workshop from 2:30-4 on Friday in or near the location of the game would make sense because those who attend may choose to join the game shortly after. The workshop will have a slot of 1 hour and 20 minutes to be completed in.

Content & Objectives

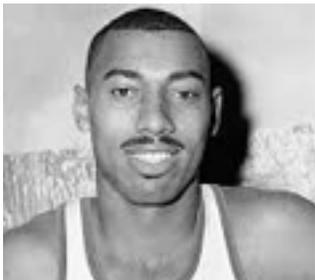
The need for redemption is evident all across the realm of sports and games. From gambling and concussions haunting professional sports to cheating and taunting present in most amateur sports it is obvious we can't address the whole topic here. Instead we are going to focus on what we can change by addressing destructive attitudes which we can amend in ourselves and our programs. Below is a general overview of the content we plan to cover.

- I. Introduction: Constructive Destructive or Both?
 - A. Sports can be constructive or destructive
- II. Connecting Destructive Attitudes and Destructive Potential
- III. Curbing Destructive Potential
 - A. How do we ensure that sports are more constructive than destructive?
- IV. Recognizing Destructive Attitudes In Sports
 - A. In Others
 - B. In Ourselves
- V. Reframing Destructive Attitudes in Sports
 - A. In Others
 - B. In Ourselves
- VI. Conclusion: What's Next?

Addressing Destructive Attitudes In Sports, Games and Competition

Introduction: Constructive, Destructive or Both?

Welcome, Poem, Prayer



From Nowhere They Come - Chris Clarke

From nowhere they come to play for a while
They don't bother with money, nor skill, nor style
They play for fun making dreams come true
Like there was nothing better for them to do
Smiles are passed and challenges made
Oh the fun they find in a game
Careless as children running around
They gather round a man throwing balls off a mound
Or they chase a little black disk across a surface of ice
Everyone wants I on the action they all want a slice
Or a pigskin battle the ultimate showdown
4th quarter victory on a converted 4th down
Or shooting balls into nets through rims or through posts
The players live on as undying ghosts
DiMaggio, the Rocket to just name a few
Live on like myths I assure you they do
For love of the game we remember their names
And admire their photos in the great halls of fame
They played not for money not for a prize
Can't you see the love of sport in their eyes
Cause somehow the pressures of life lightened a bit
When shooting a puck or when trying to hit
Heaven on Earth on a sports field
Such passionate players their joy is revealed
There is no place that they'd rather be
Cause nowhere else do they feel so free
That's why sports fields are one of a few things on Earth
We'll also find in Heaven we'll convince God of their worth.

Almost everyone has had both positive and negative experiences with sport, games and competition. Recalling these examples from our lives and sharing them with others will help us to begin thinking critically about the topic, understand other people's experiences, help others understand our own experiences and accept the basic assumption on which this workshop rests (that sports can be constructive or destructive).

Task #1: Your Own Story Part I

Find a partner. With that partner share a story from your own experience (not necessarily about you) about when sports, games or competition was a constructive force.

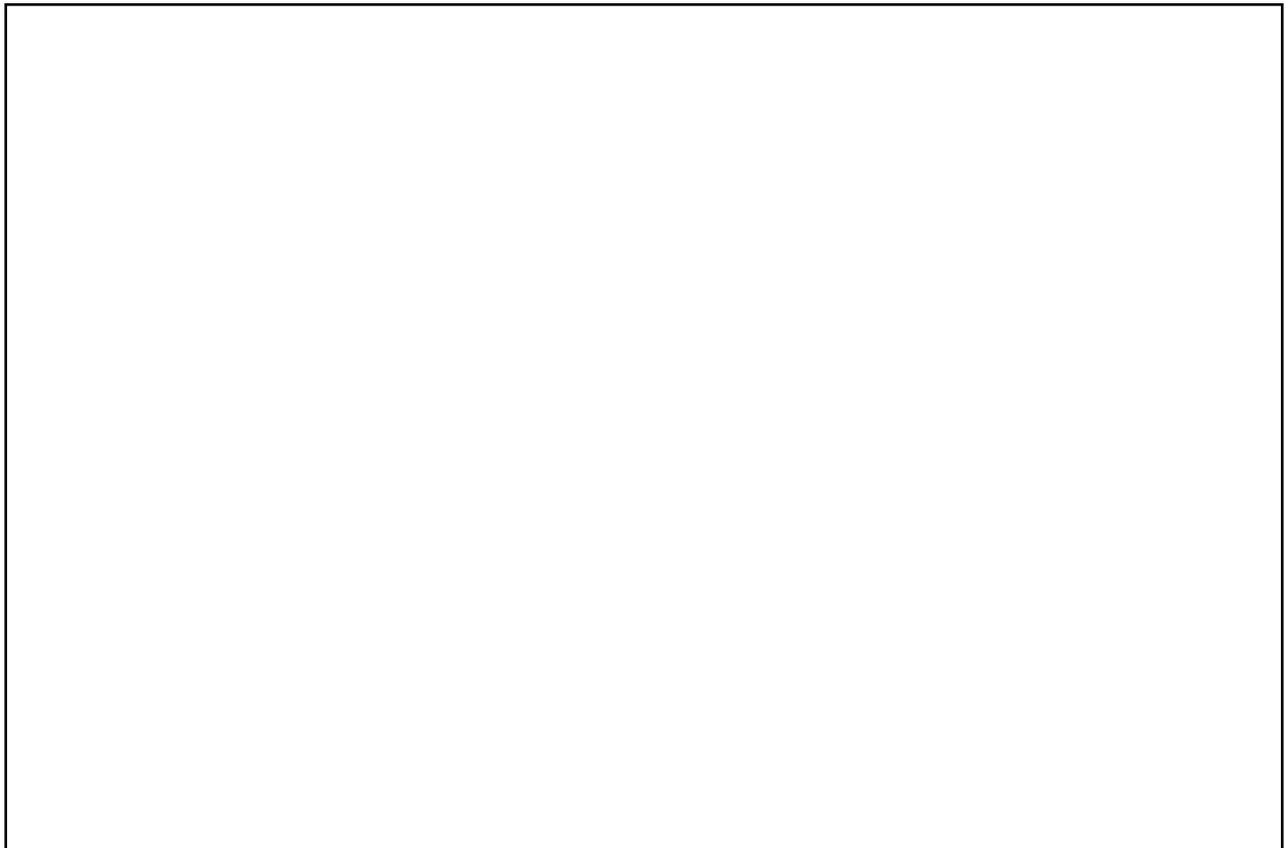
Doodle a freeze frame from your story below.



Task #2: Your Own Story Part II

Find a new partner—preferably someone you don't know outside of Cahoots. With that partner share a story from your own experience (not necessarily about you) about when sports, games or competition was a destructive force.

Pulling from you and your partner's stories use the space below to create a word cloud:



Sports have helped many of us in our development. They have also caused many of us pain and discouragement. In light of this we should be looking for ways to maximize the constructive potential and minimize the destructive potential of sports, games and competition.

Story #1: Blair got a bruise on his shin playing soccer when Ricky slid roughly into him to try and take the ball. Ricky had previously been hurt by Blair and was out for revenge even though the original incident was unintentional. The ref and both coaches saw the tension between them escalating but no one intervened or subbed either star player out of the game. Blair will be ok but things could have been worse and tension between he and Blair is unchecked.

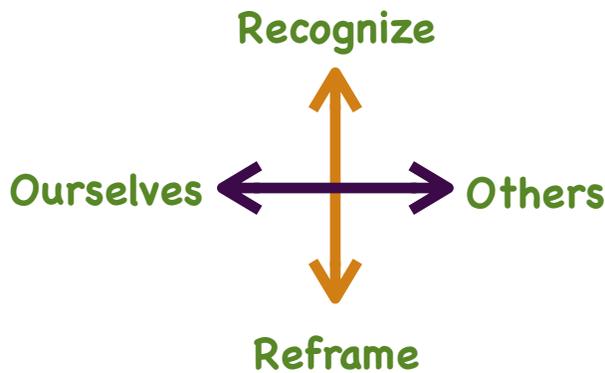
Story #2: Henrietta is devastated that she lost in the swim finals. Intensifying the problem is the fact that the winner is taunting her and the other finalists as a result of her victory. Adults, including the winner's coach and parents, have witnessed her actions and their effects on the other competitors but have not interceded on their behalf.

Story #3: Steve is new to Monday night pick-up hockey. This ice time is usually very casual and good natured and includes many 55+ participants. Unfortunately Steve has a rivalry with Ken outside of this ice time and they are clashing head to head. In the intensity of a rush up ice Steve takes a slap shot (not allowed on this ice time) and the puck strikes the ankle of a senior player causing injury. The players had noticed the intensity climbing but didn't call anyone out because they were each team's best player.

Part II: Curbing Destructive Potential

As we've just seen, destructive attitudes in sports increase the destructive potential of sports. The obvious response to this realization is to take steps towards reducing the prevalence of destructive attitudes in sports. This will require us to learn two interrelated skills each practiced at two levels:

1. Learn to recognize destructive attitudes in sports.
2. Learn to reframe them.



Learning to recognize destructive attitudes will help us to direct our efforts towards reframing. Meanwhile our efforts to reframe destructive attitudes will help us to recognize those attitudes more quickly and easily.

Both the recognition and reframing skill will operate on two distinct levels: In ourselves and in others. Recognizing and reframing destructive attitudes in ourselves will help us to recognize and reframe these attitudes in others and vice versa. Further: by modelling constructive attitudes towards sports we will set positive examples and win the authority to speak to others regarding destructive attitudes.

Notes:

Part III: Recognizing Destructive Attitudes in Sports

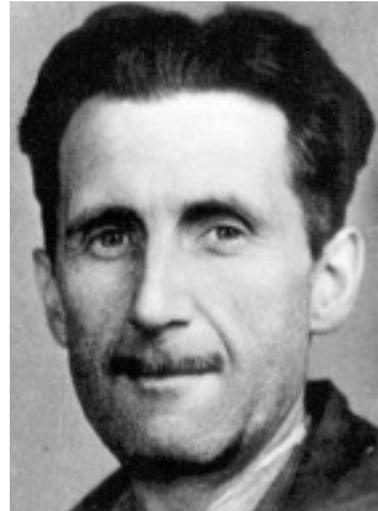
Often destructive attitudes are easily recognizable but this isn't always the case. One thing that can help us recognize the presence of destructive attitudes is the presence of **dehumanization**.

Dehumanization is *any belief, attitude or ideal which results in seeing one human as better, more valuable or more important than another.*

Task #4: Recognizing Destructive Attitudes in Others

On your own or in pairs, grab a marker and go around and **examine** the destructive attitudes identified by the groups in task #3. **Place** a distinct dot, star, "X" or check beside attitudes identified which seem to dehumanize somebody and **prepare** to comment with the group.

Notes, thoughts, doodles et al:

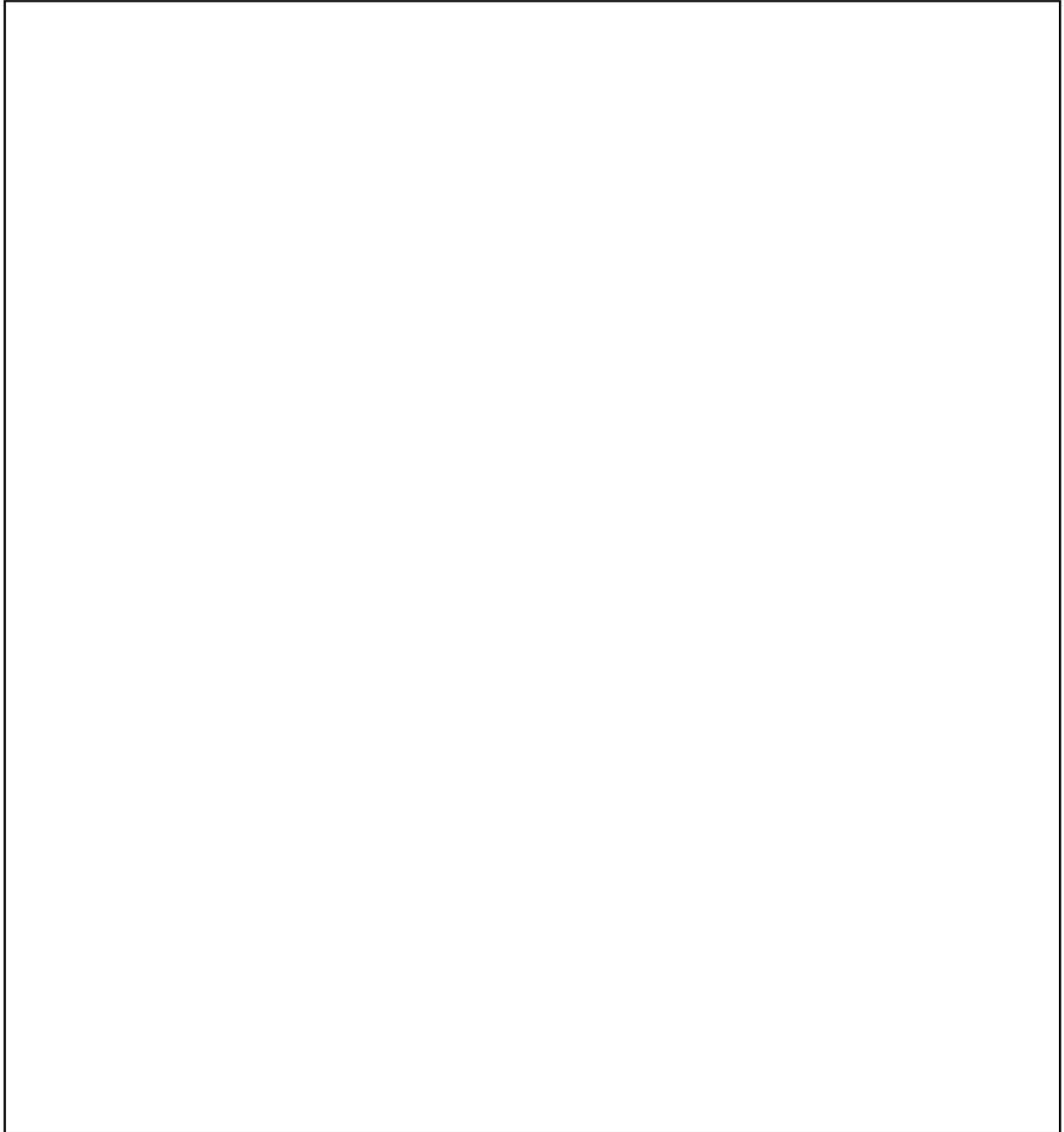


Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. In other words, it is war minus the shooting.

-George Orwell

Task #5: Recognizing Destructive Attitudes in Ourselves

Using the space below draw a picture, write a poem (or write in stream of consciousness) or prepare to act a brief sketch about a moment *your own* destructive attitude in sports and competition caused—or potentially could have—caused harm.



Part IV: Learning to Reframe Destructive Attitudes in Sports

Having learned how to recognize destructive attitudes in sports we need to develop the ability to reframe destructive attitudes into constructive ones. To arrive at a healthy attitude the context must be considered. As an example consider different contexts based on the level of play:

Different sporting events operate under different levels of competition and risk and an attitude appropriate at one might not be appropriate at another:

Adjustments of Sports Attitudes and Acceptable Behaviours			
Level of Sport	Recreational	Organized	Professional
Hockey Example	Pick up game age 20-60	Triple A age 11-12	NHL
Appropriate Attitude Towards Winning & Safety	We are here to compete but not at the expense of safety.	Winning is nice but we must be respectful of others health and safety.	Winning is important but obvious recklessness and intent to injure are not acceptable.
Alterations to game	-no slap-shots -no checking	-full safety gear regardless of effect on performance	-should the NHL change anything to make the game safer?

Task #6: Reframing Destructive Attitudes in Others

Pick a destructive attitude identified in task #3 with the group or from your own story in task #2. Take time to **articulate** a constructive attitude someone could have employed which may have prevented or reduced the harm caused in this situation.

Destructive Attitude:

Constructive Attitude:

Change is often difficult, but as fallen humans each of us has areas of weakness that we would be wise to address. One excellent tool for helping to change the way we act is to envision ourselves acting in improved ways.

Task #7: Reframing Destructive Attitudes in Ourselves

-Using the space below draw a picture, write a poem (or write in stream of consciousness) or prepare to act a brief sketch illustrating how a constructive attitude in sports would have resulted in less destructive potential in the moment or situation you described in task #8.

-When you are finished discuss how this illustrates the change you wish to see in yourself in the future.



One man practicing
sportsmanship is far
better than a hundred
teaching it.
Coach Knute Rockne
American Football Hall of Fame

Conclusion

We've looked at how destructive attitudes in sports, games and competition can lead to increased destructive potential. Because we've seen that sports, games and competition are often a constructive force we've looked at how to address destructive attitudes in sports both in ourselves and in others.

How does this change your view of sports and games?

What will you be trying to change in the way that you play?

What can you do to get involved and improve the way that sports and games are played in your community?

Task #8: What's next?

With your partner discuss your responses to tasks #5 and #7 comparing and contrasting the two. Also discuss where, when and how you will have the chance to model constructive attitudes in sports and to mentor others towards eliminating destructive attitudes in sports. Conclude by taking a few minutes to pray together.

Where/When:

How:

What I will do:

I wish I had played team sports. I think every kid should. Teamwork builds character—teaches people about leadership and cooperation.

Mo Rocca
American humorist, actor and journalist



Appendix: Facilitator and Workshop Feedback