

COACHING TIP

Open-ended Questions about the Guidance

- How do you incorporate fun or social aspects into your League's events/activities?
- How could this be an opportunity to engage others?
- How does this fit with your League's membership recruitment goals?
- What's the smallest change that you could make that would have the greatest impact?
- Who else could help lead this?
- What do you think would happen or change if more social components were added?
- What success story can you share with other Leagues?

What the Experts Say

Building Relationships with *Listen First*

"We've all heard the criticism 'he talks too much.' When was the last time you heard someone criticized for listening too much?"

It's no secret that listening is critical in building strong relationships and being successful in coaching. *Listen First* is a simple technique for ensuring that as a coach, not only are you really listening for the critical information but you are doing it immediately at the start of a conversation as a means of establishing trust. *Listen First* allows the coach to gather all of the information on a given situation and ensure that all participants feel understood before brainstorming solutions. With this technique, it is important to avoid the trap of "pretend listening" (i.e., when you spend the time formulating a response rather than listening) as it can serve to have the exact opposite effect on relationships. A coach must not fall into the temptation of spending the time he or she should be listening, coming up with a reply or just waiting for a turn to speak.

According to Stephen M.R. Covey, "To *Listen First* means to really **listen** (to genuinely seek to understand another person's thoughts, feelings, experience, and point of view), but to do it **first** (before you try to diagnose, influence or prescribe)."

A critical part of *Listen First* is reading the ways in which a person's emotions change as he or she begins to feel confident that they are understood. Here are two things to keep in mind:

- 1: Generally, as long as a person is communicating with high emotion, he or she does not yet feel understood.
- 2: A person will usually not ask for advice until he or she feels understood. To offer advice too early will usually only stir up more emotion or cause someone to simply ignore what you say.

Be sure and ask yourself:

- ✓ Have I really listened to this other person?
- ✓ Do I really understand how she or he feels?

If the answer to these questions is no, then it's time to really focus on what the other person is saying, how they are feeling and the emotions that they are projecting onto a situation:

- ✓ Work to understand both the internal and external factors at play.
- ✓ Avoid getting caught up in the illusion that you should have all the answers.
- ✓ Consider the ways you can assure the speaker that you are listening.
- ✓ Set your agenda aside as needed.

REFERENCE:

The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything by Stephen M. R. Covey