

How to do a GREAT Role Play

Excerpted from the Play Two Win Play Book

Life games – Communication is the primary activity

The more you study the games of life, like business, leadership or romance, the more you realize that communication is the primary activity of the game. Playing these games is mostly about talking to other people.

Communicating well has MANY underlying factors like being present, really listening, sharing authentically.

So a BIG part of coaching life games is helping your player become a skilled communicator through practice. In most life games there are MANY distinct conversations that you can identify, observe and then practice.

Each unique type of conversation is a different skill

The best way to practice communication skills is by role playing

Role playing is by far the most underutilized coaching skill

The key to a good role play is to hone in on a very specific conversational skill for the game.

OR

A very specific conversation situation in the game coming up.

Examples of different conversation (Skills):

- Making a request for support
- Ask for a referral
- Make an offer for your service
- Give negative feedback in a positive way

Examples of specific situations:

- I need to tell my boss that my project is going to be a week late.
- I want to call Bill from the Chamber of Commerce and suggest that I give a talk about coaching at our next meeting

The need to observe your player

In order to help someone do something better, you have to observe them doing it so that you can identify what they are doing well and what they are NOT doing so well.

You have to experience them “in the game”.

Practice by role playing conversations

Since it is not likely that you will be able to follow your player around during the day and observe them talking to people, you have to find another way to observe them in action.

The best way to do this is to role play situations with them. To role play means that you, the coach, adopt the role of someone that your player will talk to. Then you can observe how they play while you are in the role.

IMPORTANT: your player is not adopting a role, they are being themselves!

Guide to GREAT role playing

Role playing is an art and one of the skills of the coaching craft. So guess what, it is something that you can practice – Hey coaches need to practice too!

The intended results of the role playing activity:

- a) Your player has an experience with you that is as close to the real thing as possible
- b) You get to observe them in action so that you can help them improve
- c) You provide a safe space for your player get repetition, to experiment and take risks
- d) Your player feels more confident and at ease in the conversation that you practiced AND also becomes aware of where more practice is needed.

Select one conversation that your player most needs to practice. It could be a key recurring activity or it could be a unique challenging situation. Do a role play of this conversation

Follow the steps for a role play:

There are a few basic steps:

1) Identify the specific conversation to practice

Ask: Of all of the conversations you have as a part of your game, which would be the best for us to practice today?

Listen. If they are not sure, you should know your player and their game enough by now to make a suggestion. Remember, they will likely resist the opportunity to practice. You will need to encourage them.

Identify a specific conversation to practice.

2) Know the intended result

ASK: What is the result that you want to create in this conversation?

3) Know your role

Ask: please give me a brief (30 second) character sketch of the role I will be playing.

This may be a specific person or a composite of the typical person

4) Get into the role

Get into the conversation. Let yourself be the character. Have fun with it.

Note: You do not have to mimic voices – for example if you are playing the role of the opposite sex.

5) Call time out

Let your player know if you are coming out of character to make a suggestion.

6) Repeat

Be prepared to go through a specific part of the conversation several times.

7) Add a twist

Based on how well you think the player is doing, you can vary how you play the role to create easier or more challenging situations.

8) Debrief

ASK: What did you learn from doing this practice conversation?

ASK: Are there any other conversations we should plan to practice another time?

What to do during and after a role play

During a role play you are creating situations for your player to practice. Typically it is a good idea to “play it straight” the first time or two to get an observation of your players’ current ability. Then you can try the role play again and create more challenging situations when your player is ready.

After a role play it is important to debrief what has happened. Be sure to champion them for what they did well and then point out areas for improvement and continued practice.