

Athletes: Is It OK?



You've heard your parents and coaches talk about abuse and misconduct, but what does that mean? Below are some situations to help you determine if something that happens to you or a teammate is ok, or if you should tell another adult.

- **My coach or another adult at my club gives me gifts that I like a ton and takes me to really fun things a lot, like concerts or games. He or she told me not to tell anyone about these things – and told me that if I tell anyone, he or she will stop giving me things. Is this normal?**
 - *Probably not. People who want to hurt athletes by abusing them sexually often use gifts, like sport equipment or tickets to an event, as a way to gain the athlete's trust and to find ways to spend time alone with them without other adults or teammates. If this person is telling you not to tell anyone else about the gifts, you should tell your parent(s) or another trusted adult.*

- **My coach (or another adult) makes me feel funny the way that touch me, but I don't really understand why. Is this bad?**
 - *You should never feel funny about the way someone is touching you. If it doesn't feel right, talk to you parent(s) or another trusted adult about what the adult is doing that makes you feel funny. They can help you understand if what is going on is ok.*

- **My coach says that he/she is the only coach that can help me become a great athlete. Is this true?**
 - *No. There are plenty of well-qualified coaches out there who can work with you to be a great athlete. You don't need to work with a particular coach to succeed.*

- **My coach tells me that he/she is the only one who can get me an athletic scholarship and that if I tell anyone what we do, or if I don't do what he/she wants me to, I won't get the scholarship. Is this true?**
 - *No. There are lots of coaches out there who can help you find an athletic scholarship if your skills are consistent with collegiate competition.*

- **Sometimes my coach or another adult sends me weird texts. He or she asks me whether I'm having sex with my boyfriend or girlfriend, or other things about sex. Is this normal?**
 - *No. There is no reason for an adult to ask you about your sex life. Depending on the content of the texts, this could be misconduct. Show these messages to a parent or another trusted adult.*

- **An adult at my club makes a lot of comments about the way I look – mostly that I’m really sexy and beautiful and that he/she would like to see me naked. He/she told me that he/she can say this kind of stuff because he/she isn’t touching me. Is this true?**
 - *No. Adults should never make sexual comments to or about you. This is a type of sexual misconduct. You should tell your parent(s) or trusted adult.*

- **One of the adults at my club says that if I tell anyone about the sexual stuff we do, he/she will tell my parents that I’ve been drinking alcohol or taking drugs. My parents might believe him/her and they will ground me. What should I do?**
 - *If an adult uses the threat of drugs, alcohol or other behavior as a way to make you keep a secret, you should tell someone about the sexual abuse. Stopping the sexual abuse is the most important thing!*

- **I know volleyball is really hard work and it’s my coach’s job to push me to perform better than I think I can. But is it ok for him/her to keep calling me names (like “fat cow”) or throw things at me, even if they don’t hit me?**
 - *To help you perform better, comments and directions are most useful if they address your skills and performance. Calling you a “fat cow” or throwing things at you doesn’t critique your performance, it attacks you as a person. Tell someone if an adult makes you feel threatened in any way or you fear for your safety.*

- **My teammate just had a concussion and he/she doesn’t want to go back into the game. My coach told my teammate that he/she has to play or he/she will get kicked off the team. Is that ok?**
 - *Unfortunately, sometimes you will get hurt or injured while playing volleyball. It can still be a safe place for you to play as long as someone isn’t trying to hurt you. Coaches should never make you or your teammates play if you are injured, especially if you let the coach know that you do not want to go in. If you feel your coach is asking you to do something beyond what is healthy for you, you should stop.*

- **My coach doesn’t let us drink any water during practice, even when it’s 100 degrees out and we’ve been practicing for three hours. Is that ok?**
 - *Withholding, recommending against or denying adequate water can be considered physically harmful. If this happens, let a trusted adult know as soon as you can.*

Courtesy of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) SafeSport Program