

COACH'S TOOLKIT: SUPPORTING PLAYERS THROUGH HARD MOMENTS



WHAT IS DYSREGULATION?



A dysregulated player is not simply "misbehaving." Dysregulation usually reflects:

- Emotional overload (frustration, anxiety, embarrassment)
- Sensory overload (noise, heat, crowding)
- Skill-confidence mismatch (task too hard or fear of failure)
- Fatigue, hunger, or external stressors (school, home)



COACHES AS LEADERS

Coaches play a vital role in shaping not only athletic skills, but also the confidence and emotional development of young players. Lynn Valley Little League deeply appreciates the time, care, and commitment coaches invest each season, and recognizes the dedication it takes to create positive, meaningful experiences for our community's children. This guide is intended to support coaches in navigating challenging moments, including working with dysregulated or overwhelmed players.



REMEMBER!

Your role is not to "fix" behavior—it is to:

- Keep players safe
- Teach skills (including emotional ones)
- Model calm leadership



PRIOR TO INCIDENT

Teach these early in the season so kids are familiar with these techniques. Important: Always allow a path back into participation

RESET TECHNIQUE EXAMPLES

- Breathing: "Smell the flower, blow out the candle (2-3 breaths)"
- Body reset: wall push, plank for 10 seconds, shake arms/legs
- Time-limited break: sit with helmet on knees for 1 minute

DURING PRACTICE OR GAME

A. Stay Calm and Neutral

- Lower your voice; slow your speech
- Avoid public correction or sarcasm
- Your regulation helps the child regulate

B. Remove the Audience

- Quietly move the player to the side or dugout
- Avoid sending them away in anger; frame it as a reset, not a punishment. **Ex: "Let's take a minute together so you can reset."**

C. Give a Simple Choice: Choices restore a sense of control.

- "Do you want to sit for two minutes or help me with cones?"
- "Do you want to bat last this inning or take one practice swing first?"
- "Do you want to take a break in the dugout or go for a short walk?" (for older players)

Avoid open-ended questions in the heat of the moment.



AFTER THE MOMENT



When the player is calm:

A. Name the Behavior, Not the Character

- "You threw your helmet when you struck out."
- Not: "You were acting out."

B. Validate the Feeling Without Excusing the Behavior

- "I get that you were frustrated, but throwing equipment isn't safe."

C. Teach the Replacement Skill

- "Next time you're mad, what can you do instead?"
- Practice the alternative briefly



CONSISTENCY IS KEY!

Dysregulated players benefit from structure.



- Clear routines (warm-up order, rotation schedule)
- Clear expectations stated positively:
 - "We keep our bodies and equipment safe."
- Consistent consequences that are calm and immediate



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Coach's Toolkit: Supporting Players in Hard Moments

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PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Build relationship capital!

- Learn one non-baseball fact about each player
- Notice effort more than outcome

A connected child is easier to coach when dysregulated!

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PARTNER WITH PARENTS

If patterns continue:

- Speak privately, calmly and factually
- Focus on observations, not labels
- Ask what works at school or other sports. Ex: "I've noticed when things don't go as expected, Joe gets overwhelmed. Are there strategies that help him re-set?" Avoid diagnosing or speculating!

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WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not shame or threaten removal from the team
- Do not argue during an emotional episode
- Do not label the child as, "a problem."
- Do not expect adult-level emotional control

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WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT

Involve league leadership if:

- Safety is repeatedly compromised
- Behaviour escalates despite consistent strategies
- You need guidance or formal accommodations

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Your role is not to "fix" behaviour or be an expert in behaviour! It is to:

- Keep players safe
- Teach skills (emotional and physical)
- Model calm leadership



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