



# How To Motivate A 10-Year-Old Player

*This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.*

**“On the 9-and-10-year-old baseball team I coach, two players seem like they don’t even want to be there. I encourage them a lot, spend additional time with them, try to motivate them, and have talked with their parents about the issue, but nothing seems to work. I am tired of repeating myself and am tempted to just teach them how to draw a walk, crowd the plate and bunt. I’d rather teach them the full spectrum of the game, but I don’t want the team to continue to suffer. How can I approach this problem and best finish out the season with these two players?”**

## PCA Response by Mike Farley, PCA Trainer–Milwaukee

Unmotivated play is tough to tackle. You might start by making sure that these two do not feed off of each other by putting them in positions separate from each other (even in the batting order).

At 9-10, mom and dad may have placed them in baseball for you to babysit. That’s not fair, but it does happen. Your frustration is because their (parents and children) expectations are not your expectations.

Still, your job is to coach... and to teach. That doesn’t necessarily mean these two little guys will learn how to hit-and-run or turn a double play. It simply means that you need to find a way to help them master what they can master. At PCA, focusing on mastery is crucial in helping all athletes become winners. Inactivity and inattentiveness is not “winning” behavior. So how can you teach a life lesson about participation?

You may need to get back to the most basic of basics... that baseball is fun. Inject more fun into practices, for example, by turning drills into mini-competitions. Teaching these players how to draw a walk, crowd the plate and bunt may be as far as you can move them toward their potential, and if it keeps the game fun and interesting and helps them feel a success that keeps them coming back for more baseball, so be it.

You might also use the “buddy system,” pairing players to cheer each other during practices and games and “catch each other” doing things right, so that emotional tanks are fuller and even the two players in question stay more attuned and engaged.

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## How To Motivate A 10-Year-Old Player, continued

Whatever you do, don't give up on these players out of frustration. Regardless of the players you have, your job is to continue to coach and teach through the final at-bat of the season. Making a breakthrough, even a small one, with these players in the time left will provide you and them with great life lessons.

*PCA Trainer Mike Farley is a former pro football player and longtime youth sports coach.*

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