



# What if Yelling Seems to Work?

*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.*

**“I coach a high school lacrosse team in the midwest. Our entire staff adheres to the PCA mission, however this year our players seem only to respond when we raise our voices at them regarding their effort. It does not feel good to yell at them, but they seem to relax and make more mistakes when we only focus on the positives. What should we do to keep their effort high and their focus strong?”**

## PCA Response by Eric Eisendrath, PCA Lead Trainer–Northeast

I suggest you focus on what you and your fellow coaches are saying, rather than on the volume of your voices.

A persuasive argument against yelling is that the content of the comments often lack any value: “You’re playing like a bunch of kids! What the ‘bleep’ are you guys doing?!” etc...have almost no coaching value. However, the forceful (and/or loud) “You need to communicate better on defense,” or “It’s Ok to make mistakes, but it’s not OK to not put out maximum effort...” can be effective, because the comments specify what players should correct.

No two teams are the same, and not all players respond to the same approach. It sounds like the make-up of this team is different than others you have coached. Perhaps they just need a METAPHORIC “kick in the pants” to get going.

Still, make sure that you make it clear to your players that you value and respect them. The old adage, “kids don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care” is very true. Use PCA’s recommended 5:1 ratio of praise to correction to reinforce with your players how much you care. With that bedrock foundation in place, you can yell occasionally (as long as it is not a put-down), and not risk “losing” them.

“We are better than this!” can be a motivating comment, even if delivered at peak volume. It shows that you believe in their ability to perform at a higher level, and it shows passion -- two characteristics that seem to be missing internally in this group. Once you see any improvement, even incremental, point it out...perhaps as forcefully as you delivered your criticism. That way, your players should be able to hear your comments in the spirit in which you intended.

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