

# Coach Power

*Guidelines for recreation leaders  
and coaches of youth*

PLANET  
Youth®

PLANÈTE Jeunesse  
Partner N.B. Partenaire N.-B.

SAINT JOHN



2026

**Planet Youth is a prevention Icelandic model that uses data to enhance protective factors in the environments of children and youth. To learn more, visit [PlanetYouth.org](https://PlanetYouth.org).**

We respectfully acknowledge that New Brunswick is situated on the unceded and unsundered territories of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaw, and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We seek to repair and rebuild meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and honour these lands which hold the hopes of future generations.

## About this booklet

Planet Youth surveys Grade 10 students in Saint John every two years. The data obtained guide us in creating actions for a healthier environment for children and youth.

This booklet shares what we've learned and celebrates the power of coaches and volunteers—offering simple, effective ways to support children and youth through sports and recreation.

43%

Rate their physical health as acceptable or worse



42%

Spend 3 hours or more on social media daily



63%

Think it is good to live in their community

54%

Drink at least one soft drink with caffeine per day



26%

Spend 3 hours or more playing video games daily



31%

Felt calm or relaxed in the last 2 weeks



57%

Rate their mental health as acceptable or worse



30%

Play sports 3 times a week or more

32%

Have enough social life in their community

83%

Participate in out-of-school activity



# Key Highlights

## **Building Community Through Sports and Recreation**

p. 5

Coaches and volunteers play an important role in building a sense of belonging and community. You can increase this by offering “try-it” or “bring a friend” opportunities and by organizing social events and volunteer opportunities.

## **Cellphone Usage and Youth**

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Too much cellphone usage can lead to negative mental health in youth. Coaches and volunteers can help by leading by example and setting clear expectations.

## **Energy Drinks and Sports Drinks**

p. 7

Energy drinks can harm youth, and sports drinks are not often needed. Encourage water as the default drink, limit sports drinks to when they’re truly needed, and set a clear rule of no energy drinks at team activities.

## **Youth and Mental Health**

p. 8

Clear and intentional communication is one of the most powerful tools to create a safe and trusting environment. Validation can be a powerful tool to create a safe and healthy environment.

## **Setting Boundaries**

p. 9

Setting boundaries as a coach or volunteer is critical to creating a safe, respectful, and effective environment. Reflecting on your own boundaries as a coach or volunteer and communicating them is important.

# Building Community Through Sports and Recreation

This was the second Planet Youth survey, and it brought some encouraging news about the involvement of teenagers in extra-curricular activities. A remarkable 83% of teens said they are involved in some form of leisure activity.

Coaches and volunteers play an important role in building a sense of belonging and community. This protective effect helps youth feel connected and supported, which lowers the risk of negative behaviours. Creating healthier environments, this helps youth stay engaged and make positive choices.

## Coach's Corner:

### Host "Try It" or "Bring-a-Friend" events

Offer free, drop-in or "bring-a-friend" sessions so youth can try an activity without signing up.

### Organize team volunteering activities in the community

Plan group activities where the team gives back together, such as helping at local events or community clean-ups.

### Plan simple social activities

Add things like team games, pizza nights, or end-of-season celebrations. These help youth build friendships and feel like they belong.

41%

Do less than 3 hours of physical activity per week

63%

Think it is good to live in their community

Download the toolkit



Quality Coaching Toolkit: Coaching for Performance in Life and in Sport

# Cellphone Usage and Youth

The latest Planet Youth survey showed that many of our young people are spending 3 or more hours a day on social media. That's a lot! Research tells us that too much screen time—especially for girls—can lead to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression.

43%

Spend 3 hours or more playing video games daily

## Coach's Corner:

### Lead by example

Keep your own phone away during practices, games, and team activities. Youth are more likely to follow expectations when adults model the behaviour.

### Set clear expectations early

Let youth and parents know the rules for phone use. For example, ask players to leave phones at home or in bags during team meals, practices, trips, and activities.



26%

Spend 3 hours or more playing video games daily



Learn More



The Dark Side of Smartphones



## Energy Drinks and Sports Drinks

A whopping 54% of youth consume **at least one** soft drink with caffeine per day, and this does not consider all the other products they consume that contain caffeine.

**Electrolyte (sports) drinks are usually not needed** for regular practices or games. They may be helpful only during long, intense activity or in extreme heat.

**Energy drinks should be avoided.** They contain caffeine and stimulants that can cause jitters, poor focus, dehydration, and heart strain during activity.

### Coach's corner:

Encourage water as the default drink, limit sports drinks to when they're truly needed, and set a clear rule of no energy drinks at team activities.

26%

Drink at least one energy drink a day

54%

Drink at least one soft drink with caffeine a day

Learn More



Energy and sports drinks in children and adolescents

# Youth and Mental Health

From our latest data collection, more than half of youth rate their mental health as acceptable or worse. It shows the importance of creating a safe, consistent and predictable environment in all aspects of a youth's life, like in sports and recreation.

## Building Safety and Trust

For coaches and volunteers working with youth, **clear and intentional communication** is one of the most powerful tools to create a safe and trusting environment. When coaches listen actively, speak respectfully, and set clear expectations, young people feel valued and understood.

This sense of safety allows youth to ask questions, express concerns, and take healthy risks in learning and skill development. Consistent communication—both on and off the field—helps reduce confusion and builds confidence, especially for youth who may already feel uncertain or vulnerable.

**69%**  
Felt  
anxious in  
the last  
two weeks

**57%**  
Rate their  
mental  
health as  
acceptable  
or worse



## Coach's Corner

**Validation** can be a powerful tool to create a safe and healthy environment.

It involves showing that a person's feelings, thoughts, or experiences are understandable and important. It does not mean agreeing with the behaviour or not following through with consequences, but more so **connecting with the emotion that leads to a behaviour**.

Instead of saying "why did you do that?" try saying: "It sounds like you are frustrated" or "It seems like this made you mad."

### Take the training



Mental Health in  
Sport

# Setting Boundaries



When coaching, boundaries are the clear limits that define your role and guide how you interact with others. They protect everyone and keep the focus on growth and learning.

Setting boundaries as a coach or volunteer is critical to creating a **safe, respectful, and effective environment** for learning and growth. Clear boundaries establish professional expectations, protect the well-being of young people, and help coaches and volunteers model healthy relationships.

When boundaries are consistent and transparent, youth feel secure, trust increases, and coaching remains focused on development rather than confusion or discomfort.

## Coach's Corner

Things to consider when setting clear boundaries with athletes, parents and other coaches/volunteers:

- What is your role within the team?
- What are your expectations, and how do you handle negative behaviour?
- How and when can you be reached?
- When do you refer concerns beyond coaching to the proper supports?

Watch the video



Empowered  
Coaching in a Safe  
Sport Environment  
– Boundary Setting

Take the training



Safe Sport

# Other Resources

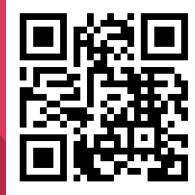
## Coaching Association of Canada

- For further training and education opportunities



## Sport NB

- Non-profit organization promoting and supporting sport across New Brunswick with location specific resources.



## International Coaching Federation

- International Coaching Federation's guide to trauma-informed coaching.



## What does the research say?

- Check out these research articles to learn more about research on coaching!



**Dial 911** for emergencies  
**Dial 988** for mental health crisis line  
**Dial 211 or visit 211.ca** to connect with resources available in  
your community

