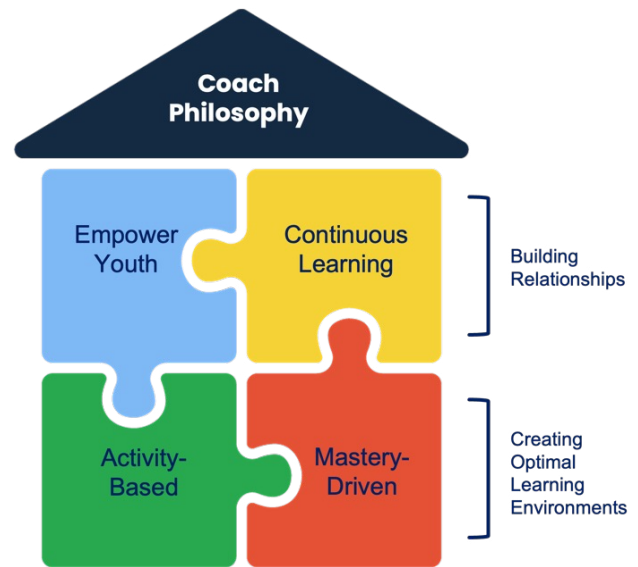


Working with First Tee Teens: Common issues that impact teens & how coaches can be a support mechanism and build game changers.

When First Tee Coaches seamlessly integrate the game of golf with a character-building life skills curriculum, they create active learning experiences that build inner strength, self-confidence, and resilience that kids can carry to everything they do. Building relationships is a key facet of the First Tee Coach philosophy that empowers youth and provides opportunities for continuous learning. Understanding common issues that impact specific age groups, particularly teens, is one way that coaches can be a support mechanism for these youth and build game changers.



Common Issues Impacting Teens



1. Need for Community & Belonging

More than ever, teens are looking for connection and a sense of belonging and to be accepted for who they are. The satisfaction teens experience when they feel as if they belong in a group contributes to feelings of security and success. When their need to belong is met in a healthy place, they will be less likely to look for it in unhealthy places.

How Can First Tee Coaches help?

First Tee offers participants a place to belong as well as an opportunity to collaborate with peers and be a part of something. The Program's emphasis on acceptance of diverse perspectives, showing kindness, consideration, and care for others and their surroundings, as well as an awareness for how our attitudes impact others helps to create a positive community where teens feel welcomed and supported.

Idea: Incorporate team building activities into traditional classes

Coaches can support teens by ensuring their classes are welcoming environments for all, building relationships with each of the teen participants, as they get to know them and help them find their place. By incorporating team building activities into your classes, you can make sure teen participants are encouraging their peers by setting up an environment that is conducive to encouragement and fosters community and collaboration.



2. Time Management Stress

Teens are busy and are often pulled in many directions as they strive to balance school, athletics, as well as extracurricular clubs and activities, and for some, employment. They are learning to manage expectations and workloads at home, school, and elsewhere independently while also being expected to make positive choices. The pressure can create immense stress and a need to balance their time well.

How Can First Tee Coaches help?

First Tee's key commitments of Pursuing Goals and Growing through Challenge help participants to set goals and work towards them, while learning from both achievements and setbacks. Strategies and lessons also help participants develop resilience, discover their inner strength, and dig deep when things get tough with the added support of guidance and mentorship from coaches and fellow classmates, but sometimes teens just need a place to come and "be" where nothing additional is asked of them or expected from them.

Idea: Schedule social activities for teens

Teens will choose programs that interest them, and Coaches at First Tee can create a stress-free environment where teens can come to relax and be themselves, while having fun, without fear of failure. Scheduling social activities for teens both in and out of classes can actually provide support and help to alleviate their stress.



3. Issues with Body-Image, Self-Esteem, & Confidence

Teen often spend time evaluating themselves in comparison with others, such as friends, teammates, and even online influencers. As a result, teens can struggle with maintaining a positive body-image, self-esteem, and confidence in their abilities and who they are. Self-worth, or lack thereof, can be tied to performance, or even factors outside of their control.

How Can First Tee Coaches help?

One of First Tee's Key Commitments is Building Positive Self-Identity, which actively helps participants find their self-confidence, discover what they are capable of, and feel comfortable with who they are. As they build these skills at First Tee, both on and off the course, they will experience positive mentorship and coaching, and supportive classmates who share a common goal and enjoyment and appreciation for the game of golf.

Idea: Utilize character activities to create open dialogue

Coaches can help counter any feelings of inferiority and inadequacy by encouraging teen participants and helping them see their positive self-worth. Utilizing the character activities within the First Tee Program curriculum is a great way to create opportunities for teen participants to gain confidence, use good judgment, experience success, and build strength and endurance, while encouraging healthy habits. In this way, teen participants learn to appreciate what they are capable of, physically and mentally, and see themselves positively.



4. Lack of mentors

Mentors offer a range of critical help, guidance, and motivation to teens at a crucial time in their lives when they are often looking for independence. Studies show that positive changes are often seen in teens that have adult mentors, including improved grades and academic performance, reduced school absences, as well as a reduction in risky behaviors and substance use and abuse.

How Can First Tee Coaches help?

First Tee provides a network of supportive peers and coaches who can serve as positive role models and mentors, and considers our trained coaches to be the biggest asset to our program. Coaches can build relationships with teen participants, helping them feel heard, respected, and valued.

Idea: Ask questions. Listen for the answers. Lead with empathy in tough conversations.

If a teen feels that you are interested in them, respect them, and understand what is happening in their lives, they will be much more willing to hear from you and receive mentorship and guidance and include you in their Go-To Team. Ask questions, listen for the answers, and always lead with empathy in tough conversations.



5. Lack of a Sense of Control

Teens want to have control over their choices and have a hand in making decisions, especially decisions that impact them. Agency, the sense of control that you feel in your life, is one of the most important indicators of success and happiness, and teens are often learning how to manage their own lives, set personal goals, and make good decisions.

How Can First Tee Coaches help?

Offering teens the ability to choose tasks or methods from an approved range of options allows them to feel as if they are in control of a situation. Being empowered to set their own goals and choose their path will help teens feel more committed to and involved in the Program.

Idea: Meet teens where they are and use the Four Guidelines for Setting Reachable Goals to help them create a game plan for success.

Coaches can create multiple opportunities for both goal setting and engagement in class, inviting teens to offer their insights and show what they know. Providing teens with the tools and support to set goals, as well as giving teens permission to be the expert or demonstrate their skills is a great way to engage their interest and invite their participation at a deeper level.

Coach To-Dos

Building game changers requires building relationships between the Coach and the participant. Impacting and inspiring teens begins with understanding the unique challenges they are facing at this important and ever changing time in their lives. As has often been said, kids don't care what you know until they know you care. Showing you care begins with finding authentic opportunities to connect.

14+ Coach Guide Tips

Coaches are encouraged to provide developmentally and age-appropriate support for age 14+ participants by:

- Placing an emphasis on personal development wherever possible
- Providing guidance, suggestions, and alternatives rather than detailed instructions
- Engaging in frequent use of discussion method around topics
- Making sure participants are encouraging their peers and setting up an environment that is conducive to encouragement
- Empowering participants by having more advanced players help coach their peers
- Putting participants into real-life problem-solving situations to allow them to fully discover ideas, make decisions, and evaluate outcomes
- Countering any feelings of inferiority and inadequacy by encouraging participants and helping them see their positive self-worth
- Allowing time for participants to explore and express their own philosophies
- Including activities and information regarding life planning

Additional Resources for Working with Teens

Positive Coaching Alliance

Helping Youth Be More Open About Their Mental Health

Reference: <https://seizetheawkward.org/>

1. [The Coaches' Guide to Supporting High School Athlete Mental Health](#)
2. [11 Tips For The First-Time Coach](#)

