

Demeaning or Demanding: Understanding Emotionally Abusive Coaching

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What is Emotional Abuse?

Repetitive, non-contact/possibly contact based experience meant to induce fear by exposing the victim to ongoing attacks, meant to belittle or humiliate, and includes an imbalance of power.

Emotionally abusive coaching practices are based in the sustained use of power to control the athlete through fear.

Power, Control, and Fear

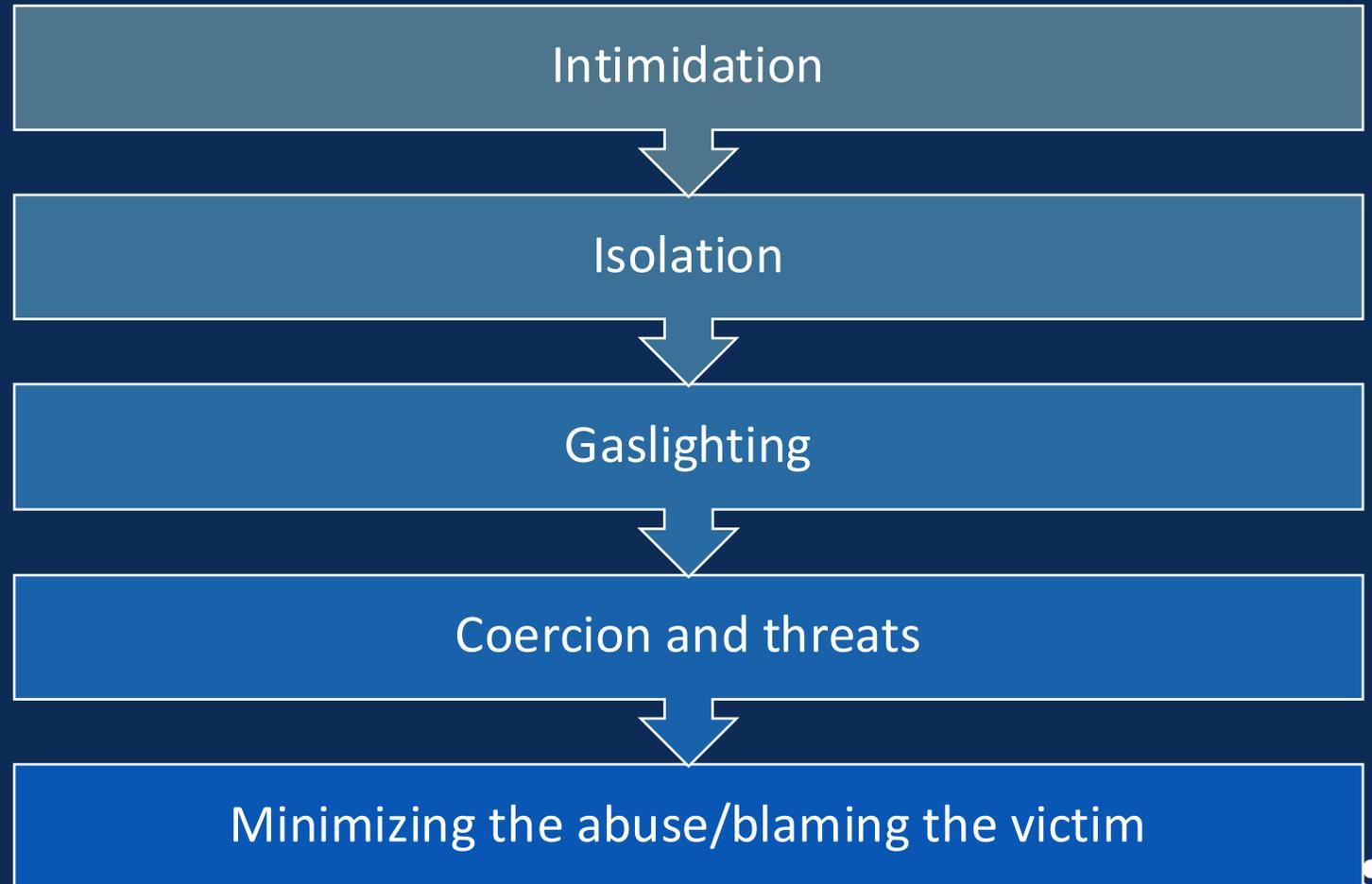


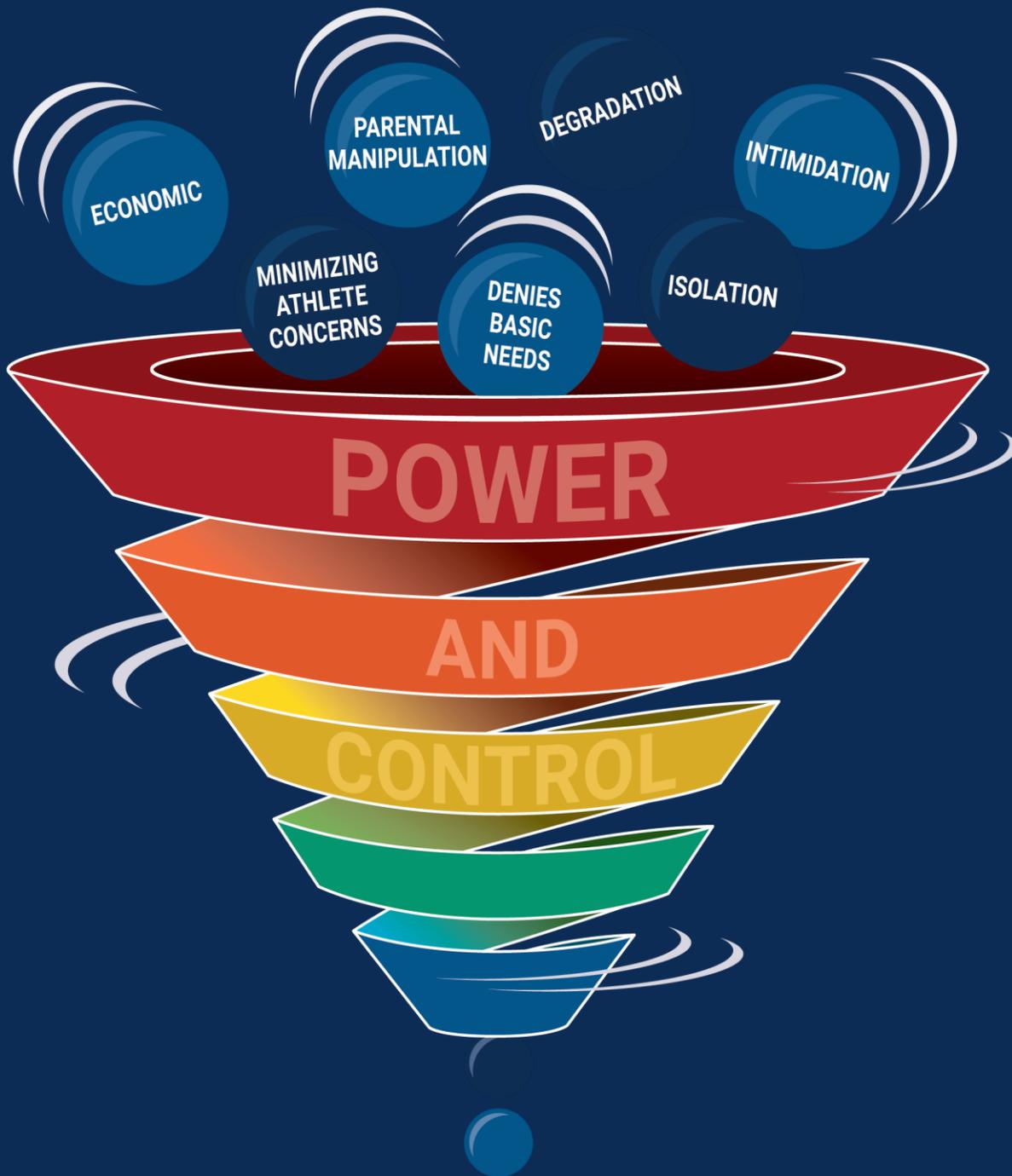
Emotionally Abusive Coaching practices are usually rigid forms of coaching that impacts and breaks down the athlete's self-esteem and sense of trust, through a culture of culture of fear.



Power with the Intent to Control

- Domestic Violence
- Child to Child Bullying
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Workplace Bullying
- Child Abuse





- Fear
- Intimidation
- Degradation
- Isolation
- Parental Manipulation
- Economic
- Neglect of Basic Needs



Intimidation and Degradation

Intimidation

Screaming

Personal Property damaged or destroyed

Personal Space Invaded

Manipulate athlete to not tell parents how they are being treated

Career or team status is often threatened based on unreasonable demands

Monitoring of free time or social media accounts

Using body language to create fear (cornering athlete, hitting wall about the head, throwing items)

Criticism unrelated to a skill or routine such as intelligence or body weight

Degradation

Body shaming

Name calling

Public isolation

Public Humiliation



Neglect of Basic Needs

Neglect of Basic Needs

Injuries Ignored

Medical Care Denied to include mental health care

Water, food, bathroom denied for punishment

Time off to rest body or mind refused

Isolation

Removal from social circle

Isolation from team

Isolation from parents

Free time is controlled and monitored

Practices closed for unspecified amounts of time



Words of Absolute

Never

"You will never..."

Always

"You are always..."

Nobody

"Nobody thinks you..."

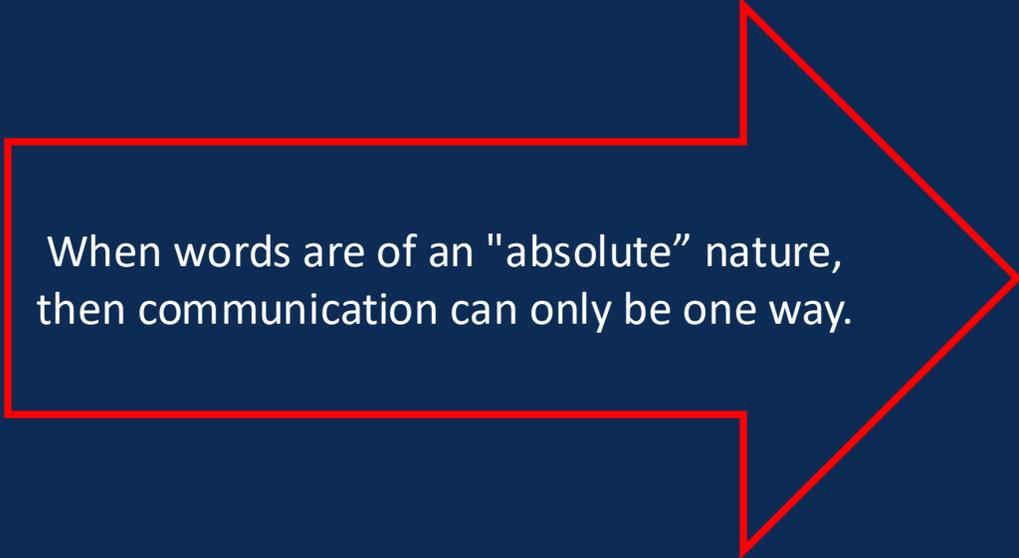
Everyone

"Everyone thinks that you..."

Only

"Only I can..."

Words that are inclusive, all-encompassing, an end in themselves, and cannot be modified in any way.



When words are of an "absolute" nature, then communication can only be one way.



Fear of Speaking Up/Reporting

- Retaliation
- Excessive conditioning
- Removal from team
- Further abuse
- Isolation from peers
- Scorn or bullying from peers



Common Traits of Athletes Who Have Experienced Emotional Abuse

- Identification of the abuse isn't recognized by the athlete or parents until after multiple incidences have occurred.
- Athlete will hide the abuse from friends and family, because of letting people down.
- Athlete will often state they are "walking on eggshells."
- Athlete will often state they deserved it or that it's their fault. They frequently use the phrase, "I should have done better."
- Will lie to authorities when asked if help is needed out of fear for future retribution.
- Love/hate relationship with the coach

*Seek partnerships that are abusive in nature



Demanding, but compassionate coaching shapes the the athlete's self-esteem and confidence as a part of the coaching process, while remaining consistent and demanding excellence.



Demeaning vs. Demanding

Demeaning:

- Disparaging or insulting others in ways that cause them to feel insignificant.
- Not acknowledging value and voice of another person
- Intimidating and threatening

Demanding:

- Requires hard work hard and to meet high standards; calling for intensive effort or attention
- Setting high, standards that you expect the people in your organization to live by
- Willingness to give respectful yet critical feedback



Demeaning Environment

Focus of training is on the outcome and not the process

Failure and error is met with shame and punishment

Goals are often unrealistic and not set with the athlete

Performance is inspired through fear and punishment

Critique is focused is often insulting and discouraging, sometimes devolves in character attacks

Conditioning used as a tool for punishment

Athletes often find excuses to miss practice, cry, shows signs of mental health concerns and don't want to come back

Athletes are always on edge and scared to speak up

Parents are locked out of the process

Boundaries are frequently violated

Performance is never good enough



Demanding Environment

Focus of training is process oriented

Failure and error is expected and accepted as a part of the process

Critique is focused on the performance and remains encouraging, never the character of the person

Performance is inspired by setting goals with the athlete and not for them

Conditioning used as a tool for training, not a tool for punishment

Discipline is consistent and used as a means for behavior change, not performance change

Athletes want to be at practice and challenge themselves to achieve their personal goals

Athletes feel they are respected, loved and feel safe to speak up

Parents are respected as a part of the process

Professional boundaries are maintained

Inspires self-realization



Final Reminder...

As one of the most significant people in their lives, your voice becomes their inner voice.

If the athlete hears a nightly barrage of negative phrases that degrade and insult, it will ultimately lower their already fragile self-esteem. Hurtful words by coaches will ultimately transfer to their inner voice.

When the athlete loses confidence in their sense of self, then the propensity for seeking friends and partners that treat them similarly increases. Take time to construct your feedback in a manner that is constructive, useful and reassuring.



Thank you!

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