

INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

February 2023



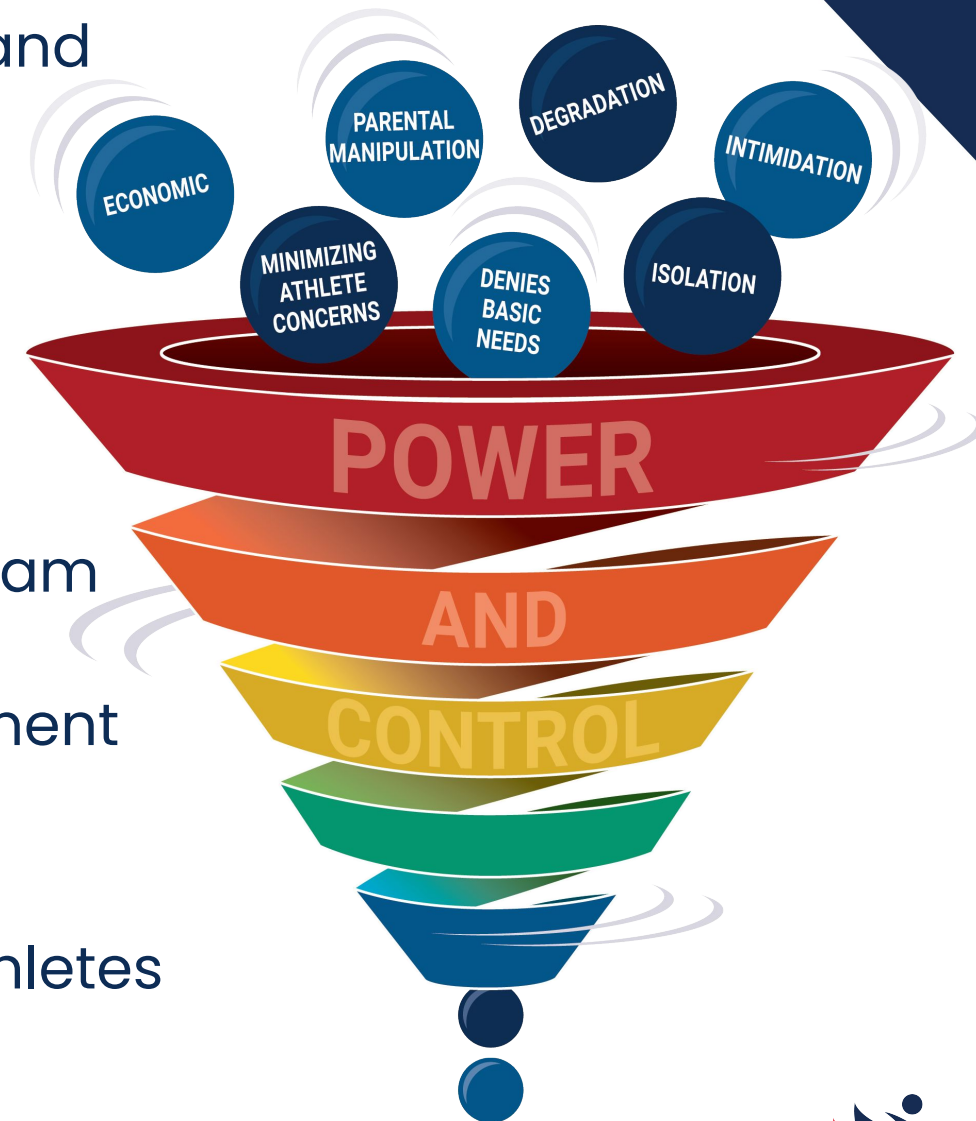
FOSTERING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- Athletes have the **right to train and compete safely**
- Gymnastics professionals should **foster an environment that prevents inappropriate behaviors** that can lead to misconduct and abuse.
- Existing **power imbalance** between a coach and gymnast results in an environment where abuse can more easily occur
- USA Gymnastics has defined **3 primary forms** of abuse and misconduct
 - Sexual,
 - Physical
 - Emotional
- This presentation will provide an overview of each form and examples of inappropriate behaviors that may lead to abuse.
- Understanding such behaviors will help prevent abuse and provide athletes a safe and healthier environment.



POWER IMBALANCE & CONTROL

- Coaches must recognize they possess a strong and unequal power over their athletes.
- Misuse of power can lead to sexual, physical or emotional abuse.
- Examples of power misuse are:
 - Deciding who will or will not be a part of the team based on favoritism
 - Discouraging medical or mental health treatment
 - Requiring excessive exercise for purposes of punishment
 - Creating a culture of fear that discourages athletes from voicing concerns about their health and safety



EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT & ABUSE

Emotional misconduct is a form of abuse where tactics of intimidation, humiliation, and verbal abuse are used to gain control of another person.

Some examples:

- Pattern of name calling and repeated personal attacks that start with “you are”:
 - *“You are the worst athlete I’ve ever coached!” or “You are useless.”*
- Statements that attack gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, or body weight
- Striking walls or throwing objects to create an atmosphere of fear
- Isolation from teammates, social circle, or family
- Encouragement of secrets
- Making the athlete feel that they are at fault
 - *“It’s your fault because you don’t want to win enough.”*

NOTE: Emotional misconduct often also contains elements of physical misconduct such as restricting water or when forcing conditioning for no training purpose.



PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT & ABUSE

Physical misconduct includes any action or behavior that causes or reasonably threatens to cause physical harm to another person.

Some examples:

- Hitting, pushing or striking of any kind
- Choking, shoving or any action that places hands on the athlete for the intent to frighten or harm
- Forcing an athlete to hold a painful stance that serves no purpose of training
- Withholding hydration, nutrition, food or sleep
- Conditioning against the medical advice of a doctor
- Forcing an athlete to train when exhibiting physical reactions of sickness or injury



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT & ABUSE

Sexual misconduct is a type of misconduct that uses power, control, and/or intimidation to harm another for the purpose of sexual gratification or violence.

This includes but is not limited to, any sexual contact with a minor or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature.

Some examples:

- Touching, slapping, or otherwise contacting the buttocks or genitals
- Excessively touching or hugging
- Making unsolicited sexual advances and propositions
- Using sexually degrading words
- Telling inappropriate/sexually related jokes
- Retaliating against an athlete who refuses sexual advances
- Offering rewards in the exchange for sexual favors
- Giving inappropriate gifts for purposes of grooming

NOTE: Sexual abuse of a minor by someone known to the child, is often preceded by grooming behaviors. Grooming occurs when someone intentionally engages in a series of behaviors to gain a family or child's trust in order to sexually abuse a child.



METHODS TO SUPPORT ATHLETES

Care and Concern	Support	Listen	Encourage	Empower
Express care and concern for your athlete's physical and mental health.	Support your athletes wants and needs for outside of the sport activities such as family time, school, etc.	Listen to your athlete's feedback and confirm what you heard.	Encourage your athletes to use their voice in matters that impact them and include them in decision making.	Empower your athletes by informing them of their rights to be in a safe and supportive environment.

For additional resources or to learn more about USA Gymnastics' approach to abuse prevention, please visit usagym.org/safesport.





THANK YOU!