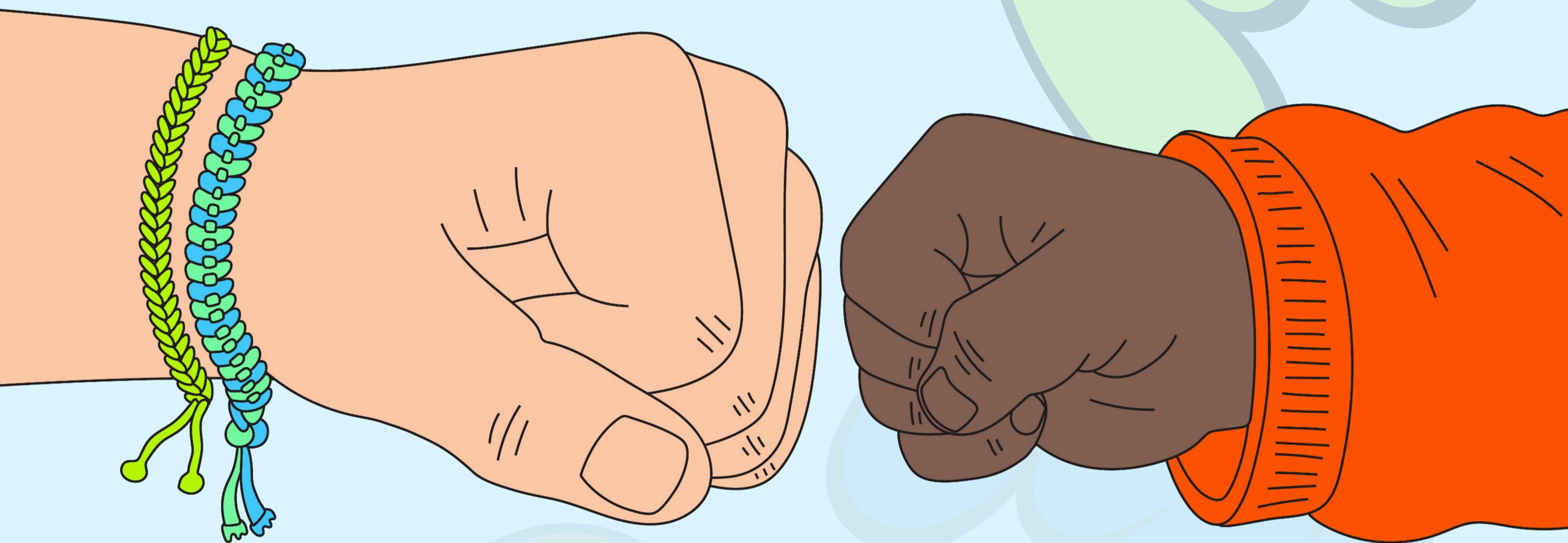


**YOU ALREADY SIGNED UP TO BE A COACH.
NOW YOU CAN BE AN**



YOUTH SPORTS ARE POWERFUL

All kids face pressure and adversity—from school stress to social expectations to the ups and downs of competition, growing up today isn't easy. As a Most Valuable Coach (MVC), you can use Healing-Centered Coaching to create sport environments that counter stress and build confidence, connection, and resilience.

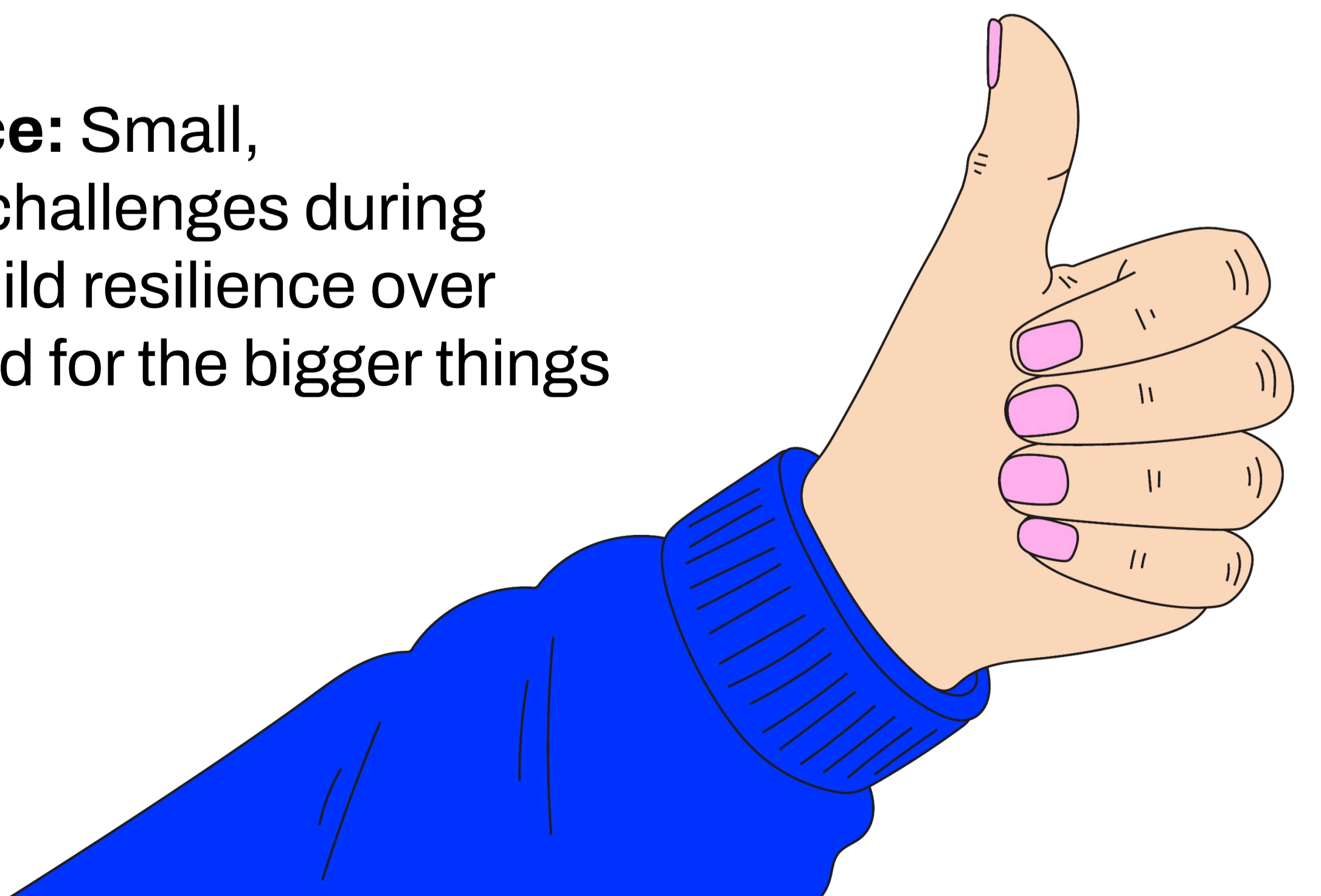
This booklet is designed to “coach” you in Healing-Centered Coaching. So you can help kids be their best, on and off the field, for years to come.



MVC FUNDAMENTALS

Kids do best when they feel safe, move their bodies, and have the chance to grow. Sports have the unique ability to create an environment with:

- **Positive Relationships:** Supportive and predictable relationships with coaches and teammates help kids feel safe, take risks and try new things.
- **Repetitive Movement:** Patterned, repetitive, rhythmic movement reminds your brain of having all your needs met. (It actually connects back to Mom's heartbeat in the womb.) This makes kids feel regulated so they can think rather than just react.
- **Opportunities to Build Resilience:** Small, manageable doses of stress, like challenges during practices and games, help kids build resilience over time. This helps them feel prepared for the bigger things that come up in life.



7 TIPS FOR MVCs



How do you create the right environment and put Healing-Centered Coaching into action? We're glad you asked.

1

BALANCE THE POWER:

Connect with kids by getting on their eye level. Ask what you could do differently. And say sorry if you mess up. It's NBD, MVC!

2

HELP KIDS FEEL VALUED:

Learn every player's name, call out great effort, and high five with abandon.

3

LET THEM LEAD:

Create roles like game day captain, practice DJ, etc. Or let them lead a practice or drill.

4

ASK QUESTIONS:

Ask your players questions about themselves to get to know them better. And invite them to ask questions too.

5

BE PREDICTABLE:

Start and end practice at the same place and in the same way. And create rituals and traditions like team cheers.

6

GIVE FEEDBACK WHEN KIDS CAN HEAR:

Regulate before you commentate. Read your player's cues, save feedback for the sidelines (not in the heat of the match), and let them opt-in when they're ready.

7

NORMALIZE DYSREGULATION:

Instead of isolating kids, help them develop strategies to work out their emotions like taking a walk, throwing a ball, etc. Also be ready to reset yourself, too.



LET'S RUN SOME PLAYS



**Here's what an MVC
would (and wouldn't)
do in these situations.**

WHEN THIS HAPPENS

DON'T MAKE AN OLD SCHOOL MOVE

DO RUN THIS MVC PLAY

When you talk to the team

You expect players to sit/kneel while you stand above them.

Balance the power.

You form (and are part of) a circle so everyone is at the same level.

When a player shows up

You're off to the side, arms crossed, with the other adults.

Help kids feel valued.

You enthusiastically greet them and invite them into the space.

When a player is too far out of their comfort zone

You tell them to "push through."

Let them lead.

You allow them to opt in and out of play.

When a player continues to mess up a skill

You make them run laps.

Ask questions.

You ask them how they're doing and what they feel comfortable with. Start where they are and add challenges when they say they're ready.

When a mistake happens during practice

You respond in the moment. Some days you laugh it off and some days you snap.

Be predictable.

You use a "reset" routine that everyone is familiar with before starting again. If you are unpredictable (we're all human), you own it, apologize and commit to improving.

When you have comments

You micromanage during games, even when players can't hear your advice.

Give feedback when kids can hear.

You encourage the play and use time on the bench or time outs to give instructions. Praise the field, coach the bench.

When a player exhibits challenging behavior

You send them to a time out or kick them out of practice.

Normalize dysregulation.

You take them for a walk, play catch with them, or have them move in a way that helps them calm down.

SCENARIO 1

Your team is at a new field, gym, pool, or track.

ACTION:

You give your players as much information ahead of time as possible. Once you're there, walk the space as a team. Then, to balance the newness, go back to what they're used to—predictable transitions and warm-up routines.

MVC SPOTLIGHT: START STRONG

A high school soccer team starts practice the same way every day with an activity called Vitamins. (Get it? Just like your daily dose.) During Vitamins, the team works on core skills like footwork or “touch” (the ability to control the ball when it comes to you in the air).



SCENARIO 2

You make a substitution and pull a player from the game.

ACTION:

You let the player come to you when they're ready to talk. Then you ask them how they're doing and feeling, rather than diving in with your comments.

MVC SPOTLIGHT: A SMOOTH EXIT

As athletes are subbed out of the game, design their exit with opportunities to regulate and contribute. For example, leave two seats on the bench between the coaches and the rest of the team. When a player comes off the court, they can high five teammates, grab water, and choose to sit in either seat. If they sit next to the coach, they're ready to receive feedback (and praise). The coach kicks off the conversation with a question like "How are we feeling?" or "What do you see out there?"



SCENARIO 3

The other team scores big or there's a controversial call by the referee.

ACTION:

You activate a team or individual reset ritual. Here's an example:

The team (and you) regulates with a quick moment of connection, like circling up with your hands together and yelling a phrase or mantra to help refocus.

MVC SPOTLIGHT: HALFTIME JOKES

During halftime, a high school coach makes sure to meet with her assistant coaches before addressing the whole team. One of the assistant coaches is responsible for telling a joke right away to help make sure the coach is as regulated as possible before chatting with the athletes.



SCENARIO 4

Your team is in a high-stakes situation.

ACTION:

You've done the work beforehand and talked with each athlete about what helps them in moments of stress. Now you implement what you heard.

MVC SPOTLIGHT READY TO SUPPORT:

A track and field coach meets with all incoming athletes to talk about what kind of support they like from their coaches and teams when things don't go their way. Do they like to talk to someone right away? If so, who is that person? Do they prefer that no one speak to them? Do they want positive support in the moment before digging into strategy in the following days or do they want to immediately analyze every aspect of the race? The coach has found that just having these conversations builds trust with the athletes. And it's made post-race interactions significantly more smooth.





POWERED BY



WANT TO LEARN MORE? WE'VE GOT YOU. CHECK OUT

[CHJS - Nothing Heals Like Sport – A Playbook for Coaches](#)