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DIALECT Toolkit

for Children 10–12 Years Old

Beyond Goals: A Toolkit for Coaches & Trainers

DIALECT4

Enlarging DIALECT's Communities of Tolerance
Through Football, Focusing on Younger Children

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About This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed as a practical guide for coaches/trainers and facilitators working with children aged 10–12 using the football3 methodology. It adapts the core ideas of football3 to suit younger players, focusing on age-appropriate strategies, simplified language, and playful ways to explore important values like teamwork, fairness, and respect.

Rather than replacing the original football3 materials, this guide acts as a complementary resource. It draws on the foundations established in the:

- **football3 Training Manual**
- **football3 Handbook**
- [DIALECT Toolkit](#)

Coaches/trainers are encouraged to use this manual alongside these resources. For deeper background, theory, and advanced applications of football3, please refer to the full materials, which offer in-depth explanations of the methodology, mediator training, and thematic integration.

[You can find the full documents HERE](#)

In addition, we've included activity examples related to the social topics mentioned above, offering fun and experiential ways to engage kids. These activities are designed to help children actively experience and reflect on these values, making learning not only meaningful but also enjoyable. By using games and interactive exercises, children can connect with the topics on a deeper level while having fun!

Introduction: Building Communities of Belonging Through Football

In recent years, many communities across Europe have experienced social changes and challenges related to growing diversity. These shifts, while enriching, have sometimes been accompanied by social tensions and divisions, particularly among young people. Children and youth may be exposed to negative messages that promote exclusion, intolerance, or even hate, making it all the more important to foster understanding, empathy, and inclusion.

The DIALECT projects have explored how football can be a powerful way to break down the barriers kids are facing. Through interviews, surveys and focus groups with kids, adolescents, parents, community workers, and local leaders in Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Serbia, we learned that football has the power to bring diverse groups together, especially when guided by strong values like fair play, respect, and teamwork.

This toolkit uses that research to provide coaches/trainers with simple, age-appropriate ways to:

- Support inclusion and diversity
- Talk about respect and belonging through the game
- Help children form connections across cultures

In this toolkit, you will explore how the football3 methodology can be used to create inclusive spaces where every child feels seen, valued and part of the team. You will also find practical ways to address topics like racism, exclusion, and stereotyping all through play.

What We Learned: Insights from Our Research

Before developing this manual, we carried out primary research with coaches/trainers, young players, and sports experts to better understand how football3 can be adapted for younger children. These insights shaped the way this manual was written and the types of activities included. Here's a snapshot of the needs identified and the suggestions proposed to better suit the 10–12 age group, listed in random order.

Suggestions for adapting football3 to Children Aged 10–12

- **football3 should be part of a bigger learning process.** football3 should not be seen as a standalone sports activity or “just a game” but it should be connected to broader educational and pedagogical frameworks, helping children learn about values like respect, empathy and inclusion through every part of the activity.
- **Children need more structure and playful learning.** Children in this age group respond well to clear routines and creative visual tools. Methods such as circle time, drawings, role-play, emotion cards are considered effective in helping

children reflect on conflict, empathy and inclusion by making concepts more tangible during the agreement and reflection phases.

- **Discussion is still powerful but needs to be shorter.** Short, engaging discussions work better than long talks. Children's short attention spans in ages 10-12, require pre- and post-game discussions to be brief and playful.
- **Make it fun, not just about winning.** Fun needs to come first so that kids don't lose interest. Activities like storytelling, inventing new rules, using some dice to randomly pick who shares or what topic to talk about and short games or using metaphors (e.g., calling defence "our home") increase motivation and a sense of ownership helping children to stay engaged and make emotional connections.
- **Positive role models can help.** Coaches suggested using well-known athletes and stories that highlight values like teamwork, joy and inclusion. When children see that even top players care about respect and fair play, it helps reinforce the message that football is not just for winning.
- **Support girls' inclusion.** Having women in coaching roles was seen as an important way to promote gender equality. When girls see female role models on the pitch, they're more likely to join in and feel that football is for them too. It also sends a strong message to all children about fairness and inclusion.
- **Coaches/trainers need support too.** Many said they don't have enough time during the activity or lack specialized training to fully lead the reflective parts of football³. More support, tools and training would help coaches/trainers feel more confident, especially in helping kids with emotional or behavioral challenges, supporting their emotional and psychological development.
- **Small groups and long-term engagement make a difference.** When coaches/trainers work with the same group of children over time, the impact is stronger. Trust builds gradually and children are more open to learning and reflection.
- **Clear rules help children behave better.** Children need guidance on what's okay and what's not, for example, not mocking others, avoiding swearing and showing respect. Setting these expectations clearly from the beginning helps create a safe and respectful space for everyone.
- **Coaches/trainers need to lead by example.** Children watch how coaches behave. When coaches show respect, fairness and calm conflict resolution, they model essential life skills, not just how to play the game.
- **Help all children feel included.** Use strategies and playful tools to encourage equal participation, particularly from quieter children and make sure everyone has a voice, for example, using a dice to randomly pick who speaks or what topic to talk about.
- **Involvement of parents.** Families play a big role in shaping children's attitudes. In some cases, parents hinder the expected impact, especially in communities where strong biases still exist. Supporting parents to understand what football³ it is about and why matters, could make a big difference in reinforcing the values taught on the pitch.

Part 1: Facilitating Social Inclusion

Football as a Tool for Social Inclusion

Football is a powerful tool for bringing people together. It crosses language, background, and borders, creating a space where everyone can play, connect, and feel they belong. Across the world, children regardless of their culture, religion, gender, ability, or economic background play football. This makes the sport a natural space for teaching respect, equality, and inclusion.

Children and young people who move to a new country often face big challenges, like learning a new language, finding friends, and adjusting to unfamiliar customs. Many also experience exclusion, misunderstanding, or even unfair treatment because of their background, religion, or appearance. These challenges can show up on the pitch just as they do in daily life, when children do not feel welcome, are left out or are treated differently.

For children who are new to a country or community, football can offer a safe space to connect with others and make friends, to boost their confidence and well-being and open doors to new learning and opportunities. When children play in mixed teams with kids from diverse cultures, languages, or backgrounds they form friendships that break down prejudice. Simple acts, like shaking hands after a match or cheering for both teams, help build empathy and a sense of belonging.

On the pitch, children also learn to work as a team, solve problems and support one another, regardless of their background. The difficulties of a game often mirror real life, which makes football an ideal setting to teach values like respect, tolerance, teamwork and fairness.

Using football3, coaches/trainers can actively create inclusive environments where all children understand each other's perspectives, learn about fairness and support each other as equals. football3 encourages teamwork and gives children not only the chance to play, but the chance to grow together, learn to listen to others, and stand up for what's right, both on and off the pitch.

Creating social inclusion means recognizing that some children may face challenges based on where they come from, the language they speak, their appearance, or their life circumstances. As coaches/trainers, you can lead by example using football to celebrate diversity and help every child feel like they belong on the team.

Trainer Tip: Remember, the pitch is more than just a pitch. It is a place where young people can learn how to live and grow together. Every child has something to bring to the team. Through football, we can help them see that and see each other.

As expressed by F.N., a 15-year-old girl from Pakistan who has been playing football3 for 4 years: *"It doesn't matter where you're from or your background..."*

We are all the same, as long as we can work together and respect our differences to create a world without bullying."

Recognizing and Addressing Racist, Discriminatory, and Xenophobic Behaviour

As a trainer working with young players, it is important to understand how racism, discrimination and xenophobia can show up in both obvious and subtle ways:

- These behaviors are often targeted at individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion or nationality.
- These behaviors can occur through unfair policies (like unequal job opportunities) or through everyday actions (like excluding someone or refusing service).
- Xenophobia, fear or hatred of outsiders or foreigners also appears in harmful stereotypes, unfair treatment of migrants/refugees and biased systems.
- Even social media contributes to the problem by spreading hate or normalizing harmful attitudes.

Why it matters in sport: Children can mirror the biases they see around them. When discriminatory behavior is normalized it can escalate from biased jokes or exclusion to more serious harm.

Your role as a trainer:

- Create an inclusive and respectful team culture.
- Intervene when you notice unfair or exclusionary behavior.
- Use football3's third half to guide open conversations around fairness, respect, and diversity.

By actively promoting equality, empathy and critical thinking, coaches/trainers can help shape a generation of players who challenge discrimination rather than contribute to it.

Trainer Reflection Question

Think about the players on your team.

- Who might feel like an outsider or less confident?
- What small action can you take this week to make them feel more included on and off the pitch?

Inclusion starts with noticing.

Trainer Reminder:

Inclusion means every child feels seen, valued, and part of the game. You set the tone, you model respect, celebrate effort, and create space for everyone to belong.

Part 2: What Is football3?

football3 is a unique approach that uses football not just as a sport, but as a powerful tool to engage, educate and empower young people. It goes beyond the game itself by addressing important social issues such as inclusion, equity, gender equality and peacebuilding. Through active participation, young players learn to take responsibility for their actions, communicate effectively and treat others with fairness and respect. The methodology also helps them develop essential life skills like teamwork, empathy, and problem solving, all critical for success in today's world. Each match is structured and includes fair play rules and time to reflect, so players learn important values both during and after the game.

Objectives of football3

The main goal of the football3 methodology is to teach important life skills and help young people become leaders in their communities. It focuses on encouraging open conversation and resolving conflicts peacefully. Through football3, players and mediators can grow personally and gain valuable skills, such as:

- Better communication and decision-making
- Improved skills in resolving conflicts and helping others get along
- Leadership and facilitation abilities
- More active participation in the community
- Greater respect for girls and women and understanding of gender equality
- A stronger willingness to include everyone, no matter their gender, ability, age, or background
- A desire to be a positive role model for others
- A deeper understanding of fairness, responsibility and accountability
- Increased self-confidence and resilience
- A sense of belonging and connection with peers

How to Explain to kids why football3 was created

When explaining to kids why football3 was created, keep it simple and focused on the positive impact it has. You can say that football3 was designed to help kids:

- Speak up in groups
- Listen to others
- Solve problems together
- Learn about fairness, respect, and inclusion

It is more than just a game, it is a way to build better communities.

For example, you could say:

"football3 isn't just about playing football, it is also about learning how to work together, show respect, and solve problems as a team. It helps you grow, build confidence, and become a leader who can make your community a better place!"

Trainer Tip: Use football3 to talk about real-life values, like what to do when someone is left out, or how to solve an argument peacefully.

The game of 3 “halves” - The structure of football3

Every football3 match is made up of **three parts**, that's why it is called *football3*:

1. The first half: pre-match discussion

Both teams sit down together in a circle, joined by a trainer or mediator.

- Players agree on the rules they wish to follow in today's session.
- The rules are designed to promote important values (teamwork, respect etc.).
- A trained mediator* facilitates the discussion and uses a mediator's form to document the rules agreed upon by the players.

**See more about the role of mediator on page 21 and the respective form at ANNEX 1*

2. The second half: the football match

football3 methodology was inspired by street football and as a result, they share many common characteristics:

- Involve smaller teams (e.g., 5-7 players per side)
- Short duration of matches (15-20 minutes)
- Small or often improvised pitches (football pitches, streets, parks etc.)
- Mixed teams (gender, cultural background)
- No referees
- Players take collective responsibility for the game

During the match, players should remember that they are playing by the rules they agreed on earlier in the 1st half.

In this part of football3, the role of the mediator/trainer is to:

- Oversee the game
- Intervene only if players cannot resolve a dispute themselves
- Observe and record on the mediator's form whether players respect the rules and demonstrate fair play.

3. The third half: post-match discussion

After the match, the trainer/mediator brings both teams together so that players can:

- Reflect on the game and share their thoughts and feelings
- Evaluate how well they followed the rules
- Give fair play points to both their own team and their opponents

During the third half, the trainer/**mediator**:

- Facilitates the discussion
- Ensures that everyone is fair and honest when giving out points
- Takes notes on the scores suggested by the players
- Calculates the total points of each team by adding the fair play points and the match points using the mediator's form

football3 Rules

There isn't just one way to play football3. Organizations that employ football3 methodology around the globe have adapted the rules to their specific needs and local contexts. You can make your program more educational and impactful by customizing the rules to support your roles, such as promoting female participation or fostering inclusion among participants from diverse backgrounds. Just ensure that any adaptation remains aligned with the core principles of the football3 methodology: the three halves format, small and mixed-gender teams, shorter matches on smaller pitches, and having mediators instead of referees.

Fixed and open rules

football3 has a specific rules system that differs from conventional football. There are two types of rules: fixed rules and open rules. Fixed rules are the basic rules that apply to every game, like how many players are on each team, the size of the pitch and the duration of the match. These rules stay the same in all matches and help keep the game organized and fair. Open rules, on the other hand, are flexible and created by the players

themselves before the match starts. These can include things like how to celebrate goals, how to handle fouls or how to show respect.

Fixed Rules

These are always the same, set by the organizers.

As a trainer, select the fixed rules at the start of a football3 program or tournament and apply them in every match. In the context of a tournament, some examples of fixed rules could be:

- Sliding tackles and offensive language are not allowed.
- Games are played five-a-side and last 12 minutes each.
- The number of girls and boys on the field must be equal.
- If a player falls, others should help them get back up.
- Players can be substituted without any limit.
- The offside rule does not apply.

Trainer's Recommendation:

If you are working with a team over the long-term using the football3 methodology, the fixed rules can serve as the team's "contract."

Examples:

- We listen to each other and respect everyone's opinion.
- We arrive on time for matches and training sessions.
- No smartphones are allowed during practice.
- We do not tolerate bullying or discrimination of any kind.
- We play honestly and do not cheat, even if we can get away with it.

Trainer Note: Encourage children to vote on the rule they believe is most important and explain why. It's a great way to start a meaningful discussion.

Open Rules

These are fun and flexible. The children decide on them together before each training session or match. Open rules teach respect, equality and creativity.

Examples:

- Everyone joins in the celebration whenever a goal is scored.
- Goals must be scored alternately by boys and girls.
- A goal can only be scored after completing a set number of passes.

- Both teams celebrate every goal, no matter which team scores.
- There are three options for the goalkeeper rule: a fixed goalkeeper, no goalkeeper at all, or allowing only the last defender to use their hands inside the penalty area.
- Only passes played along the ground are allowed. No balls played above waist height.

Trainer Tip: Have a visual list of open rules children can choose from. (Annex 2 -Open rules).

Scoring in football3

Now that the players understand the rules, fair play and how to express themselves in dialogue, it is time to talk about how scoring works in football3.

Unlike regular football, football3 doesn't just reward goals, it also values teamwork, fairness and respectful behavior.

Let's take a look at how points are awarded and how children can help decide what makes a winning team, not just the team that scores the most goals!

How Scoring Works



In football3, scoring isn't just about goals, fair play matters too. After the match, teams get points in two ways: match points (*based on the result: win, draw, or lose*) and fair play points (*based on how well they followed the rules, showed respect etc.*). The players discuss and agree on fair play points during the third half. Depending on the fair

play points system used ([SEE football3 handbook, pp14-19](#)), teams may give points only to their opponents or to both their own team and the other team. Then, the match points and fair play points are added together to get each team's total score. Sometimes, a team that loses the game but plays fairly can win overall because fair play matters just as much as goals.

Teams earn:

- **Match points:**
 - Win = 3 points
 - Draw = 2 points
 - Participation = 1 point

- **Fair play points** *(for behavior and teamwork)*:
 - The point range can vary depending on the scoring system you choose ([see football3 handbook, pp 17-19](#)).
 - Most teams use a scale of either 0-2 or 0-5.
 - Points are awarded by the players during the third half depending on the scoring system you choose, for instance, both to their own team and to the opposing team.

Adapting football3 for Ages 10–12

Here are three keyways to adjust football3 to better suit younger players while keeping the spirit of the game alive:

1. Modify Dialogue Sessions

Dialogue is a key part of football3, but with children aged 10–12, it helps to keep things short, visual and relatable. Here's how to make the pre- and post-match talks more engaging and age-appropriate:

- **Keep it short and focused** — 5 to 7 minutes for both pre- and post-match dialogues.
- **Use a timer or fun transition** (*like a clap or cheer*) to signal when it is time to talk and time to play.
- **Use Visual Aids** Bring in simple props like emoji cards, thumbs-up signs, or colored cones to help children show how they feel. Visuals make it easier for shy or younger players to join in.
- **Ask questions that are easy and meaningful, like:**

“What made you feel proud today?”

“What is one thing your team did really well?”

“Was it easy to be fair today? Why or why not?”

“Did you help anyone or get help from someone?”

Trainer’s Recommendation:

It is important to understand how participants feel when they arrive at training in order to support them more effectively. You can find a file with emotion flashcards in the Annex 3. Since there are quite a few, feel free to select the ones most suitable for your team. Players can indicate how they feel by choosing a flashcard. Repeat the process after training to observe any changes in their emotional state.

Note to Trainer: If a child struggles to answer, that's okay. Let them pass or come back to it later. The goal is to create a space where everyone feels safe and heard.

2. Adapt Fair Play Rule-Making

Creating Fair Play rules is a big part of football3, but younger players may need a little extra structure and creativity to get the most out of it. Here's how to guide the process while keeping it fun and meaningful:

- Give Guided Choices: Instead of asking kids to come up with rules from scratch, offer a short list of clear examples they can choose from or modify. This gives them ownership without overwhelming them.
- Use visual rule cards with icons or emojis instead of only verbal rules to make it tactile and engaging.
- Encourage children to co-create 1 or 2 rules for each match.
- Let kids vote or act out the rules to help them feel involved and remember them.
- For young players, it is advisable to limit the number of football3 rules, as they might have trouble applying them. A set of 3 rules is usually enough to keep things simple and effective. If the participants have voted and there is a tie between two rules, use them both.
- Display team-agreed rules on a "Game Rules Poster" visible during the game.

3. Adjust the Flow of the Game

- The actual game (second half) should last 15-20 minutes.
- Include regular breaks for drinking water, resting, or reflecting.
- Use halftime as a chance for players to reflect and talk about how they can improve in the second half.
- Use team-based praise or rewards (*like stickers or fun titles*) to encourage effort and fair play.

- Use fun prompts: "One word for today?", "What animal was our team today and why?"

4. Adapt the fair play scoring system

We propose an adaptation to the original football3 point system, as younger children may find it challenging to evaluate fair play based on the overall application of all the rules. At this age, players benefit from clearer and more concrete guidance.

For this reason, we suggest that players score each rule separately. The individual scores can then be added together to form the total fair play points for the match. Mediators can use the "Let's Reflect" form for alongside with the mediator's form to facilitate the scoring process (find it at Annex 4).

For each rule, players choose one of three emojis to indicate how well they believe they respected or applied the rule. Each emoji corresponds to a specific point value:

- 😞 Not at all = 0 points
- 😊 Partially / So-so = 1 point
- 😄 Fully = 2 points

Important note: If the fair play scoring system you're using includes both self-evaluation and evaluation by the opposing team (in addition to match points, of course), you'll need 2 forms per team, 4 in total.

Example (with both self-evaluation & evaluation of the opposing team)

In a football3 match, the players have agreed on the following three rules:

1. If someone falls, we stop the game and help them get back up.
2. We celebrate every goal together, regardless of which team scored.
3. The team must make at least three passes before scoring.

Let's suppose that Team A followed the 1st and 2nd rules only partially and applied the 3rd rule fully. They would reward themselves:

1 point (Rule 1) + 1 point (Rule 2) + 2 points (Rule 3) = 5 fair play points.

These 5 fair play points from the self-evaluation are added to the fair play points given by Team B, as well as to their match points based on the result from the game.

5. Positive Reinforcement Tools

- Coaches/trainers can award or use green cards or “team tokens” for acts of fairness, encouragement, or good listening.
- Children can nominate each other after matches for awards like “Most Respectful Player” or “Best Encourager.”
- Create a “team values board” where kids collect group achievements (e.g., 5 matches with full teamwork).

6. Use Stories and Characters

- Introduce football3 principles through short stories, comics or role-play. Characters from the stories can “teach” the rules or appear as part of warm-up games.

7. Routines for Safety and Inclusion

- Begin every session with a familiar “check-in question” (e.g., “How are you feeling today?”) by using the emoji flashcards (Annex 3).
- Create a “buddy system” so that quieter or new players feel supported by peers.

8. Promote Mixed Teams and Rotation

- Regularly mix teams to encourage new social connections and reduce exclusion.
- Ensure equal play time for all children, regardless of skill level.

Evaluation of the football3 Sessions

To track your players' progress and report on the impact of your sessions and program, it is important to collect **player feedback** at the end of each session.

- For **one-off sessions**, you can use our simple example below to gather feedback.

At the end of each session, gather the children in a circle and lay out the emotion flashcards from the Annex 3 (e.g., happy, confused, proud, frustrated, excited). Ask each child to choose one card that best shows how they felt during the session and hold it up.

Then, invite a few volunteers to explain their choice:

*“Why did you pick that emotion?” or
“What moment made you feel that way?”*

This fun and visual check-in helps children reflect on their experience and gives the trainer valuable insights into how the session was received, emotionally and socially. It also encourages emotional expression and supports empathy by hearing how others felt too.

- For **long-term football3 programs**, we recommend using the **logic model** to design your program and define your evaluation strategy. This will help you see how well you're reaching your goals! You can find more info on the logic model in the [football3 trainer manual](#) (pages 54-71), the [football3 handbook](#) (pages 40-41).

Part 3: Inside the Game: Key Roles in football3

First, you'll need to find and train your coaches/trainers and football3 mediators. In the next part, we'll walk you through everything you need to know about the team members who will help make football3 a success.

Coaches/Trainers

Coaches/trainers play a crucial role in football3. They lead the sessions, run tournaments, organize workshops and support the ongoing training and development of mediators.

Coaches/trainers as Role Models

Coaches/trainers aren't just teaching football3, they are also role models for the players, trusted contacts, and a source of support. As football3 coaches/trainers, they lead the sessions that focus on a specific social topic or life skills. They will also guide and support the teams during football3 tournaments and events, helping them grow both on and off the pitch. Coaches/trainers who can be positive role models help provide the support and guidance young people need.

What Makes a Successful Trainer?

A great trainer knows football3 inside and out, both as a player and as a mediator. They also understand the unique needs of their community and the power football3 has to inspire change, both personally and collectively.

Coaches/trainers Should Be Able To:

- Introduce players to football3
- Design football3 sessions that focus on enhancing life skills
- Help develop players within their teams, fostering teamwork and growth
- Help players develop their technical skills

Moreover, a successful trainer can:

- Communicate clearly
- Listen carefully
- Facilitate learning in an open, dynamic, and interactive way for groups of young people

Where to Find Training Methods and Activities for Coaches/trainers?

In the **football3 handbook**, [streetfootballworld](#) outlines how coaches/trainers can prepare for their role (see page 26).

Mediators

Mediators play a key role in making football3 a success. They guide the conversations between the two teams before and after the match, help sort out any problems and support the teams in agreeing on the rules and fair play points. It is suggested that mediation happens in pairs, so it is important that mediators reflect the diversity of the communities where the football3 games take place.

Key Responsibilities of a Mediator

1. **Preparing and Running Sessions:**
Set up and lead football3 sessions with participants, ensuring they are engaging and fun.
2. **Facilitating Discussions:**
Guide the teams through the pre- and post-match discussions, helping them agree on fair play and rules.
3. **Monitoring and Mediating the Match:**
Keep an eye on the match and step in to mediate if any issues or conflicts arise between players.
4. **Match Form & Evaluation:**
Complete a match form and evaluate how the session went in order to improve it for next time.
5. **Being a Positive Role Model:**
Lead by example and inspire the players and the community with positive attitudes and fair play.

Their Role Includes:

The mediator's role can be taken on by various people in your community, such as social workers, educators, coaches/trainers, and even young leaders who have grown through your organization. Experienced football3 players can also step up as mediators.

However, just like any other skill, mediation requires proper training and ongoing development. Mediators are usually between 16 and 30 years old, but older participants are welcome too! It is ideal to have a good balance of genders. While strong football skills aren't required for a mediator, having experience in leading groups can be very helpful.

Note:

It is important to carefully choose mediators who are eager and capable of encouraging players and praising positive behavior, rather than focusing on punishing negative actions or poor performance. A mediator who displays dominant behavior could make participants feel uncomfortable and less likely to share openly or engage fully in the activities.

Training the Mediators

Once you've selected your mediators, it is time to get them ready for their role. Mediator training can last anywhere from a few hours to several days, depending on how much time you have. The more training they get, the better they'll be at guiding the games.

Objectives of the Training

Mediators play a key role in making football3 matches run smoothly. They may mediate one match or a series of games in a league or tournament. It is important to train them well because they are responsible for making sure the players feel safe and supported, both physically and mentally, throughout the match.

After Training, Mediators Should Be Able To:

- Identify and develop key mediator skills
- Explain football3 clearly to players
- Mediate a football3 match, taking charge of all necessary actions throughout the three halves

Where to Find Training Methods and Activities for Mediators?

You can find helpful training methods and activities for mediators in the [football3 handbook \(pages 22-25\)](#) and the [football3 trainer manual \(pages 24-36\)](#). These resources from streetfootballworld offer practical guidance on how to train your mediators. We encourage you to check out both toolkits and use the session plans provided.

Mediating football3 matches

Addressing Racism, Xenophobia, and Exclusion Throughout the Three Halves

As a mediator, you hold significant influence over the football3 match and you are responsible for the physical and mental well-being of the players. You can steer the discussions in a meaningful direction by encouraging players to reflect on rules related to specific social topics. This way, you can guide them to think about important issues like racism, xenophobia, exclusion and how they relate to the values of fairness, respect and inclusion within the game.

When working with children from non-migrant, migrant and refugee backgrounds, it is essential for a mediator to:

- Be aware of their own stereotypes to ensure they don't affect their neutrality
- Reduce language barriers to ensure clear communication

- Create a safe space and act if any racist behavior occurs
- Address social inclusion in both the first and third halves to foster respect and unity

Mediator's Neutrality

We all have stereotypes, as our brains naturally use them to simplify complex information. However, unconscious stereotypes can be harmful, leading to discriminatory or racist actions if not recognized. Self-awareness is key to preventing these biases from influencing your role as a mediator.

Reflect on Your Stereotypes

Take a moment to think about any stereotypes you might hold. Write them down without filtering or restricting your thoughts. You may be surprised by how many stereotypes you find! Here are some categories to consider:

- Migrants
- Christians
- Muslims
- Nationalities (e.g., Hungarians, Serbs, Greeks, Italians)
- Racial groups (e.g., Black, White)
- Refugees
- Gender (girls/boys/LGBTQ+)
- Football players

After writing them down, reflect on counter-examples, people you know who break these stereotypes. Discuss your findings with friends and share counter-examples to challenge your initial beliefs.

Self-Reflection Exercise

Try an icebreaker that doesn't rely on language to get everyone involved, regardless of language barriers. This helps foster inclusivity and encourages active participation.

Creating a safe space

A safe space is one where people feel protected from judgment, criticism, or harmful actions. For the football3 environment to be inclusive, it is essential to establish some basic rules for everyone to follow.

Players should commit to:

- No racist or discriminatory behavior
- Respecting everyone's opinions and not mocking others
- Confidentiality: Personal stories shared during discussions should not be repeated

- Active listening: No interrupting while others speak

As a mediator, you can have players suggest behavioral rules for discussions and then propose some additional ones to create a safe and respectful environment. In multi-ethnic contexts, mediators must intervene immediately if any racist or discriminatory behavior is displayed, as this can harm the emotional well-being of players.

Identifying Disrespectful and Discriminatory Behaviors

Disrespect can look like:

- Being treated with less respect than others
- Receiving poorer service than others
- Being treated as if you are not intelligent
- Feeling threatened or harassed
- Name-calling or insults
- Being excluded or ignored from games, work, or school

Discrimination can include:

- Verbal insults or mockery
- Unfair treatment because of race, ethnicity, language, or appearance
- Physical aggression
- Social exclusion in various environments like school or sports

Reducing Language Barriers

When working with diverse groups, not everyone may speak the same language. To ensure inclusivity in discussions, follow these tips:

- Speak slowly and clearly, using simple vocabulary to make sure everyone understands
- Use visual aids to explain concepts like the three halves, points, and rules
- Have translation volunteers among the players to assist those who may not speak the main language
- Keep discussions short and clear to limit the amount of translation work

Addressing Social Inclusion in the First and Third Half

As a mediator, you play a key role in fostering social inclusion through pre-match and post-match discussions. Encouraging players to reflect on social inclusion is essential for creating a fair and supportive environment where everyone can participate and feel valued.

Pre-Match Discussion: Encouraging Inclusive Rules

Before the match begins, encourage the teams to come up with rules that ensure everyone, regardless of their skin color, religion, origins, or gender, can participate and be included. Reflecting on potential exclusion within the group allows players to actively shape an environment that promotes fairness.

Questions to ask during the pre-match discussion:

- Who in the group might feel excluded during the game, and why?
- How can we prevent anyone from feeling excluded?
- Can we come up with rules that promote social inclusion?

Some example inclusive rules:

- Every player needs to touch the ball before a goal is scored.
- At least **X** different nationalities need to be represented on the pitch at all times.
- Passes must alternate between girls and boys.
- Goals must alternate between girls and boys.

By collectively agreeing on these rules, you empower the players to create a balanced, inclusive playing environment that sets the tone for fair play and respect.

Post-Match Reflection: Analyzing Social Inclusion

After the match, reflect with the players on how well they adhered to the inclusive rules and what the experience taught them about social inclusion. Asking the right questions can deepen their understanding and help them apply these lessons beyond the pitch.

Questions to ask during the post-match reflection:

- How did you feel during the game?
- Did everyone have the chance to participate?
- How did you ensure everyone had the opportunity to play?
- Why do you think some players may have participated less?
- What surprised you during the game?

Bringing the Discussion to Real Life

After the reflection on the game, bridge the conversation to real-life situations of social inclusion by asking questions that make the connection clear:

- Where and when do you see people not having equal chances to participate in society?
- Why do you think that happens?
- How can we include all people in life, just like we did on the pitch?

These questions encourage players to reflect on broader social issues, such as racism, gender equality, discrimination, and exclusion, and help them find ways to foster inclusion in their communities.

Key Takeways

- Encourage players to develop rules that promote inclusion both on and off the pitch.
- Use targeted reflection questions to prompt deeper thinking about social inclusion and its relevance to everyday life.
- Understand that players new to football3 may initially struggle to engage in discussions, but the more they play, the better they'll become at reflecting and expressing their thoughts.

By following these steps, you'll be helping players not just develop their football skills but also become champions of inclusion in their communities.

[For more on the mediator's role, check out the football3 handbook \(pages 22-35\)](#)

Players

Before any matches begin, it is essential that players are introduced to the concept of football3 and understand its core values. For many, especially those familiar only with traditional football, adapting to football3 may require a shift in mindset, one that embraces dialogue, fair play, gender equality and personal responsibility.

Once your mediators and coaches/trainers have been trained, they should lead an introductory session to help players get to know how football3 works. This session can take place either before the start of a football3 tournament or as the first activity in a new football3 programme. By the end of this session, players should have a clear understanding of the goals of football3, how the three halves function, the specific rules and their role within the game.

It is also important to make sure that the players reflect the diversity of the community. Since football3 is all about inclusion, special care should be taken to ensure that players come from a variety of backgrounds. Teams should have both girls and boys and we should focus on including, when possible, players from migrant, non-migrant and marginalized groups.

Players who have been actively involved with the football3 methodology over time and have gained experience can take the next step by training to become mediators. This opportunity allows them to further engage with the game in a leadership role, while also developing essential life skills. Through the mediator training, they enhance their communication abilities, strengthen their conflict resolution techniques and improve their overall interpersonal skills. It's a powerful way for them to grow both on and off the pitch, transforming into confident young leaders who can positively influence their peers and communities.

Note: Without proper training, players may struggle to understand the methodology behind football3, leading to confusion and loss of interest. Training is key to a positive and meaningful experience.

Organizing Football3 Tournaments and Programs

football3 tournaments and programs are usually planned and run by staff members, including program managers, project managers, mediators and coaches/trainers. To create fun, impactful, and meaningful events, it is important to receive some training and guidance.

Where to Find Guidance on Organizing Tournaments and Programs? 📖

You can find helpful guidance for organizing football3 tournaments and planning football3 programs in the [football3 handbook \(pages 36-37, 40-41\)](#) and the [football3 trainer manual \(pages 37-71\)](#). Streetfootballworld provides detailed advice on both organizing tournaments and implementing football3 programs.

We recommend checking out the toolkits for more in-depth information!

Parents and Guardians

Parents, guardians and families play a key role in how children approach new experiences. To create more inclusive communities, it is important to get parents involved in the football3 methodology. If they have the chance to try it themselves, they are more likely to support the program and understand its value.

For example, consider organizing a football3 match for parents in the community. The more engaged parents are, the more likely you are to successfully engage the players.

Support parents and community members in setting up their own matches or tournaments. Encourage them to help create new spaces to play and promote your events by sharing flyers or inviting friends to watch.

To Engage Parents/Guardians in Football3, You Can Organize...

- **Exhibition football3 matches** in the community, where both participants and parents/guardians can play
- **Information meetings** for parents/guardians to explain the goals and structure of the football3 program
- **Meet and greet events** where you can meet parents/guardians in community spaces to present the program and highlight how it benefits their children

Guidelines for Engaging Parents/Guardians

To ensure respect and inclusivity, keep these tips in mind when working with parents:

- Treat all parents/guardians as partners who want the best for their children and the community.
- Invite parents/guardians to share their family cultures and traditions.
- Recognize and respect differences in family structures.
- Acknowledge the role that identity and background play in shaping relationships between players, mediators, and coaches/trainers.

Part 4: Using football3 to Combat Racism, Xenophobia, and Exclusion

football3 is a flexible tool that can be used to address important social topics and teach life skills. In this section, we'll explore how football3 can be adapted to help young people fight against **racism**, **xenophobia**, and **exclusion**.

As a trainer working with young players, it is important to understand how racism, discrimination and xenophobia can show up in both obvious and subtle ways:

- These behaviors are often targeted at individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion or nationality.
- These behaviors can occur through unfair policies (like unequal job opportunities) or through everyday actions (like excluding someone or refusing service).
- Xenophobia, fear or hatred of outsiders or foreigners also appears in harmful stereotypes, unfair treatment of migrants/refugees and biased systems.
- Even social media contributes to the problem by spreading hate or normalizing harmful attitudes.

Why it matters in sport: Children can mirror the biases they see around them. When discriminatory behavior is normalized it can escalate from biased jokes or exclusion to more serious harm.

Your role as a trainer:

- Create an inclusive and respectful team culture.
- Intervene when you notice unfair or exclusionary behavior.
- Use football3's third half to guide open conversations around fairness, respect, and diversity.

By actively promoting equality, empathy and critical thinking, coaches/trainers can help shape a generation of players who challenge discrimination rather than contribute to it.

Preparing for a football3 match

Teams

When preparing for a football3 match, tournament, or league, it is important that mediators and organizers ensure the teams represent the diversity of the target group. The teams should be:

- Mixed-nationalities
- Mixed-ethnicity
- Mixed-gender (*ideally with an equal gender split*)

It is crucial to form diverse teams to avoid segregation and exclusion. Instead, promote intercultural communication, encourage new friendships and spark dialogue by bringing together players from different backgrounds.

Rules

You may also want to decide in advance which social topics or life skills should be addressed through the open rules. For example, you could set up the following:

- A rule on **equality**
- A rule on **inclusion**
- A rule on **celebration**

These rules should help guide players toward building a more inclusive and respectful environment.

Safe and Fun Space

To break the ice, build trust and create a sense of belonging, it is important to start each tournament day or the first half with some fun activities. This will help everyone feel comfortable and ready to participate in the matches.

Structure of the football3 Session

To make sure the players truly understand and integrate these important lessons, we suggest using the following structure:

1. **First Half:** Start with a short length activity focused on a social topic or life skill. This is where the players will reflect on the topic.
2. **Second Half:** Play a football3 match where the rules reflect the learning from the first half. The game becomes a way to practice and live the lesson on the pitch.
3. **Third Half:** After the match, debrief with the players. Discuss what they learned and how to apply it to real-life situations. This is when the reflections deepen.

By including a game where players can think about the topic in the first half, you create a strong foundation for the session. Be sure to keep the debrief quick after the first half and have a more in-depth discussion in the third half at the end of the session.

After the football3 sessions, players should be able to:

- **Understand social topics** related to racism and xenophobia through play
- **Acquire life skills** that help create more inclusive communities
- **Reflect the learnings** in the football3 rules
- **Transfer the lessons** from the pitch to real life

Part 5: Activities for Building Inclusion & Understanding

The DIALECT Toolkit for Children 10–12 Years Old, outlines the planned sessions for each team/group within the program, focusing on life skills and social skills through the football3 methodology. For achieving the maximum impact in the target group, we recommend conducting:

❖ **Weekly Sessions:**

- One session per week with each team, where coaches/trainers incorporate social topics and life skills, followed by one or more football3 matches.
- Coaches/trainers guide players in reflecting on these skills during the session.

Players will explore each life skill and social topic during two consecutive football3 sessions:

Week 1: The trainer focuses on addressing and reflecting on the social topic or life skill.

Week 2: The trainer helps the team translate the social topic or life skill onto the pitch by creating specific football3 rules.

- Each training session should last about 1 hour.

❖ **Bimonthly friendly matches:**

- One football3 friendly match per every 2 months where teams compete, applying what they've learned.
- Coaches/trainers facilitate the match and ensure principles of inclusion and fair play are observed.

- ❖ **Local tournaments** where children celebrate their achievements with the community, promoting counter-narratives on diversity, stereotypes and non-discrimination.

This structure helps achieve maximum impact, ensuring players not only learn important values but also have the opportunity to practice and reflect on them in a supportive environment.

In the following section, you will find a set of fun and thoughtful activities designed to help children explore important topics like teamwork, inclusion, discrimination, empathy and managing emotions, in ways that are safe, age-appropriate and engaging. Of course, there are many more topics you can explore, so feel free to search for additional ideas and incorporate them into your training curriculum. At the end of each activity, you will also find a list of suggested Open Rules to consider when leading football3 sessions with children. These are just starting points, feel free to add more to best fit your group's needs and ideas.

These activities use football and teamwork to open up conversations, build empathy and create stronger, more inclusive teams. Through play, children can begin to notice unfairness, celebrate differences and discover how to stand up for each other both on and off the pitch.

Experiential activities are a powerful tool to help young people reflect on important social topics. They allow players to experience situations, analyze them and then discuss what they've learned. Games spark imagination, build motivation and are always fun. They also make it possible to include all kids, regardless of their intellectual abilities, ensuring that everyone can engage, share their impressions and express their feelings.

As a trainer, your role is to encourage everyone to reflect on their experience by asking questions that prompt thoughtful discussions. You play a key role in shaping how children learn about respect, fairness, and belonging. These activities and discussions are tools to make that learning active, playful and powerful.

Weekly Sessions Overview	
Week	Focus
WEEK 1	Ice breaking activities/Team building
WEEK 2	Warm up activities/Team building
WEEK 3	Introduction to football3
WEEK 4	Introduction to football3
WEEK 5	Teamwork
WEEK 6	football3 matches with teamwork rules
WEEK 7	Intercultural Communication
WEEK 8	Football3 matches with communication rules
WEEK 9	Diversity / Belonging
WEEK 10	football3 matches with rules on belonging
WEEK 11	Empathy and Respect for the Other Team
WEEK 12	football3 matches focusing on empathy and respect
WEEK 13	Inclusion / Exclusion
WEEK 14	football3 matches with inclusion rules
WEEK 15	Self-reflection
WEEK 16	football3 matches with rules of self-reflection
WEEK 17	Overcoming Challenges and Building Perseverance/ story of role model
WEEK 18	football3 matches with rules on encouragement & no blaming
WEEK 19	Training Anxiety
WEEK 20	football3 matches with training anxiety management rules
WEEK 21	Managing Frustration and Anger/ fairytales-comics- symbolism etc
WEEK 22	football3 matches with rules on emotion management
WEEK 23	Conflict resolution
WEEK 24	football3 matches with rules on conflict resolution
WEEK 25	Gender-Based Stereotypes
WEEK 26	football3 matches with rules countering stereotypes

Trainer's Note: Creating a Safe Space

Before starting any of the following activities, take a few moments to create a space where children feel safe, respected, and heard.

Remind them that:

- Everyone has the right to share or to stay quiet if they prefer
- All voices matter equally
- We listen to understand, not to judge
- Mistakes are okay, we are here to learn together

You can set simple group agreements like:

"One mic" (only one person speaks at a time)

"Respect all answers"

"Try your best to listen"

Tip: *Start with a team meeting, use friendly body language and set the tone with your own openness. If you show curiosity and care, children will follow your lead.*

Warm up & team building activities

Activity 1.

“Human Bingo”-Get to know your teammates

Objective: To encourage participants to interact with as many people as possible by finding others who match specific football-related and personal-life statements.

Duration: 15 minutes

Materials: 1 Human Bingo Sheet (Annex 5) & 1 pen per person, 1 ball per person
(optional if you follow the variation)

How to Play:

1. Distribute the Bingo Cards: Give each participant a 5x5 Human Bingo sheet
2. Explain the Goal: Players move around and talk to others to find someone who matches a statement in each square. When they find a match, they write that person's name in the square.
3. Rules:

- You can't use the same name more than once right away. You must talk to everyone else before asking the same person again.
- Ask clear, specific questions based on what's written in the squares.
- The first person to complete a full row, column, diagonal, or the entire sheet can shout “Bingo!”

Variation: To practice technical football skills during the activity, participants should, for example, dribble the ball with their feet when moving to talk to the next person.

4. Wrap-up Discussion:

- What did you learn about your teammates?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Why is it important to learn about each other in football?

Activity 2.

"Move If..."

Objective: To help participants get to know each other in a playful and inclusive way by discovering shared interests, habits, or preferences.

Duration: 10 minutes

Materials: cones (1 less than the number of participants)

How to Play:

1. Set up cones in a circle. Use one cone for each player but leave out one cone so there's always one person without a spot.
2. One player stands in the center of the circle. Everyone else sits behind the cone facing inward.
3. The person in the middle says a statement that is true for them. For example:
 - "I love playing defense."
 - "I have a pet."
 - "I can do a bicycle kick."
4. Everyone for whom the statement is also true must quickly stand up, move and find a new cone.
5. The person in the middle tries to quickly find and stand behind an empty cone.
6. The person left without a cone becomes the next speaker in the center.

Rules & Tips:

- Players must move to a different seat (preferable: not the one right next to them).
- Use positive and inclusive statements that allow many people to participate.
- No pushing or blocking others from taking a cone
- Encourage statements related to football, hobbies or fun *facts* (e.g., "I've scored a header goal" or "I like pizza").

Topic: Teamwork

“Pass and Build”

Objectives: To promote communication, collaboration and collective decision-making in a fun game-like football setting.

Duration: 20–30 minutes

Materials: 1 football per team, Cones or markers (5–6 per team to outline zones)

How to play:

1. Divide players into teams of 4–6 kids.
2. Set up a small “passing zone” using cones (about 10x10 meters).
3. At the far side, place a goal or target area (can be two cones as goalposts).
4. The Challenge:

The team must pass the ball among themselves within the zone at least 3 times without losing control. After 3 successful passes, they may try to score a goal by working together to move the ball into the target area. If the ball is lost, the team restarts the pass count.

Variation (Optional): Add a “silent round” where players are not allowed to speak and must rely on non-verbal communication or play a round where each player can touch the ball only once per possession.

Debrief & Reflection (After the Activity):

Ask the group a few quick reflection questions:

- “What helped your team work well together?”
- “Was it hard to include everyone? Why?”
- “What can you do next time to help your team be even better at working together?”

Teamwork – Open Rule Examples:

- A goal will count as two if the team successfully passes the ball to every player before scoring.
- The goal will be worth as many points as the number of passes the team makes before scoring. For example, if the team makes 6 passes, the goal will count as 6 points.
- A goal is only valid after at least 3 consecutive passes between different teammates.
- Each player should say at least one positive thing to a teammate at the end of the match.
- After every goal, the player who scored swaps position with the goalkeeper.
- Teams are encouraged to involve less experienced or shy players in every attacking play.
- During the match, a bonus point is awarded if a player helps a teammate in difficulty.

Topic: Intercultural Communication

“Speak in Color”

Objectives: To raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity as a value, to encourage cooperation and mutual respect and stimulate attention, coordination, and motor readiness.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials: 4 colored cones or circles: i.e. blue, red, yellow, green, one soft ball for each team, A written list with the names of the colors in different languages (to be prepared in advance), A large space (gym, courtyard, or pitch).

How to play:

Introductory Circle Time (5 minutes)

Participants sit in a circle. The educator introduces the theme:

"There are many languages and different ways of communicating around the world. Today, we'll play with colors to discover how words change from one country to another, but the meaning stays the same."

4 children with different cultural backgrounds are selected (or languages are assigned if there are no children from different backgrounds). Each child says the names of the 4 colors (blue, red, yellow, green) in their own or assigned language.

The group repeats the color names together 1-2 times to become familiar with them.

Team Division (1 minute)

Children are divided into 2 balanced teams. The 4 colored cones are placed approximately 5 meters away from each team's starting line.

Game: "Hit the Right Color" (10 minutes)

One player from each team takes turns starting from the throwing line with the ball in hand. The educator calls out a color but using a different language each time (from the prepared list). The player must listen, recognize the color in the given language, aim and hit the correct colored cone with the ball. The passing continues until each team

member has had at least two turns. The team that completes the most correct throws wins.

Variation: If the group is very diverse, teammates may help each other by translating the color before the throw (encouraging linguistic cooperation).

Concluding Circle Time (4 minutes)

A brief discussion to reinforce the message of the value and richness of linguistic diversity. You can address the questions below:

"How did it feel to hear words in different languages? Was it difficult? Why is it important to know words in other languages to communicate better?"

Encourage the group to reflect on how it felt to hear and use different languages. Some children may find it confusing or exciting, both reactions are valid and open the door for conversation. Remind the group that learning even a few words in another language can help us connect better, show respect and understand each other more deeply. Use this moment to highlight how language diversity is a strength, not a barrier.

Intercultural Communication– Open Rule Examples:

- Each player should shout their teammate's name when passing the ball
- Each player must remain silent throughout the entire game
- Each player must communicate in a unique and different way. For example: verbal communication in a different language; non-verbal communication, such as using hand signals or clapping twice to request the ball when unmarked.
- Use a greeting from another language before the match starts.
- Each team must create and use a cheer or team word in a language other than their own.
- Each player shares one thing about their culture during the pre-match circle
- The goalkeeper of each team encourages the players and organizes the formation.
- At the half-time break, teams do a briefing on what is going well until now and on which aspects they need to improve.
- For 3 minutes, teams must play without speaking, using only gestures to communicate.
- At the end of the match, each team teaches a kind word (e.g., "thank you", "well done") in their own language.

Topic: Diversity & Belonging

“Step Apart, Step Together”

Objectives: To help children explore how we’re all different and yet, all are sharing many things in common. A fun, physical way to spark discussion about inclusion, teamwork and empathy.

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Materials: Just an open space

How to Play:

- Ask for two volunteers to come to the front and stand back-to-back in the middle of the space.
- Ask the rest of the group:
“What’s something that looks or seems different between them?”
 (Examples: “One is taller,” “Different hair,” “Wearing different shoes,” etc.)
 For each difference named, the two volunteers take one step away from each other.
- When they can’t step further apart, say: *“Now let’s find what they have in common!”*
 (Examples: “Both like football,” “Both are kind,” “Both wear glasses,” etc.) For each similarity named, they take one step closer together until they meet again.

Trainer-Led Reflection:

After they meet in the middle, gather the group in a circle for a short talk:

- *Were the differences easy to spot? Why?*
- *Were the similarities sometimes harder to see? Why?*
- *Why do both matter when we’re building a team?*
- *How can we make sure everyone on our team feels included, even if they seem different?*

Trainer Tip: If the group is shy, you can model the activity first with another adult or older child. Keep the tone light, playful, and positive. The goal is to celebrate uniqueness and connection.

Diversity & Belonging – Open Rule Examples

- Each player must play in at least two different positions during the match.
- Before the game, each player says one thing they like about being part of this team.
- Use players' names when passing the ball.
- Each half must start with a pass from a player who hasn't spoken yet during the pre-match talk.
- Each player shares one positive word about a teammate before the match begins.
- No player can score more than two consequent goals.
- Before the game, everyone says one cool thing about themselves to the team.
- A goal scored by a player who hasn't scored previously in the game counts as double.

Topic: Empathy & Respect for the other team

“The Emotion Game: Dribble, Share & Connect”

Objectives: To enhance emotional awareness, trust and collaboration within the team and to promote fair play, inclusivity and respect.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials: balls, cones, small finish goal, any equipment that could be used in a dribbling course

How to play:

Warm-Up (8 minutes)

In a circle or freely around the field, players pass the ball with their hands or feet. The passer names one emotion (Joy-Sadness-Anger-Fear-Surprise-Disgust-Pride-Jealousy). The receiver must say a word associated with the mentioned emotion.

E.g. Joy – Ice cream/ Sadness – Winter/ Anger – Red

Dribble & Emotion (7 minutes)

Players freely dribble around the grid. On your whistle, they pair up and share a time they felt nervous, proud or frustrated in a game. Repeat the process 5 times with 5 different emotions.

Empathy Dribble & Respond (20 minutes)

Set up a dribbling course with obstacles – think of a slalom course. At the end of the course put a very small finish goal or two cones (approximately 1.5 meters apart) to indicate a finish goal. Next to the finish goal put on the ground the scenario cards (see below).

1. One player at a time starts the course, dribbling through cones or performing simple skill challenges (e.g., toe touches, inside-outside dribbles, pass off a wall/cone).
2. When they reach the end of the course they have to successfully score the ball to the finish goal.
3. If they score, they pick a card and keep it.

Examples of scenario cards:

- “You missed an open goal.”
- “You made a great assist, but no one said anything.”
- “You’re the smallest player on the field and don’t get many passes.”
- “Your parents watch you play from the stands and give you instructions on how to play.”
- “You are new to a team and you do not speak the same language.”

Repeat the process until all players have done the course at least two times.

Sit in a circle on the ground. Each player who has "won" a scenario card reads it aloud. If some players have multiple cards while others have none, encourage them to share so that each player can read out loud a scenario.

For each scenario card, the teammates respond on the following questions:

- “How would you feel if that happened to you?”
- “What could a teammate do to help in that moment?”

Have everyone stand in a circle. Go around and ask each player to complete the sentence:

“One thing I’ll do differently with my teammates after today is...”

Anyone can choose to pass if they don’t want to share.

You can share with children something like the following conclusion:

"Today we learned that football isn't just about winning or scoring goals, it is also about how we treat each other, both on and off the field. When we listen, share and support our teammates, we help everyone feel included and respected. That's what makes a real team. So let's keep playing with empathy, respect, and kindness because how we play matters just as much as the result."

Empathy and Respect for the other team– Open Rule Examples:

- Before starting the game, each player must say something positive about a teammate or an opponent.
- Any offense or inappropriate language stops the game for 60 seconds, and everyone performs a penalty (e.g., push-ups, squats, etc.).
- Any offense or inappropriate language grants the opposing team a free kick.
- If a player uses inappropriate language, they stay out of the match for 3 minutes.
- Each time a goal is scored, both teams gather in a circle and recite a common motto.
- At the beginning and end of the match, the two teams greet each other with a high five.
- After each goal, the scorer must thank the player who passed the ball with a gesture or a word.
- If a player helps an opponent up after a foul (e.g., fair play), their team receives an extra free kick to be used during the game.
- Each team chooses a "kind player" at the end of the game and explains why.

Topic: Inclusion/Exclusion

“What’s Under My Jersey?”

Objectives: To help children explore and share parts of their identity that may not be visible on the surface and to open a safe conversation about racism, discrimination, and exclusion. To encourage children to reflect on their own experiences and values while learning to respect others' differences.

Duration: 20–30 minutes

Materials: Paper, pencils/markers, optional printable jersey (Annex 6).

How to play:

1. Use the template (Annex 6) (10 minutes)

Give each child a drawing of a jersey split into two parts:

- Visible Side – This half represents what others can see (*e.g., appearance, behaviors, actions, how I act, how I dress, how I speak*)
- Invisible Side – This half symbolizes what is hidden or internal (*e.g., thoughts, feelings, worries, my culture, traditions, fears, dreams, language, experiences of feeling excluded, hopes for the team*)

Encourage children to write on both sides to express both the "seen" and "unseen" parts of themselves.

2. Reflection circle (10 minutes)

Sit in a circle and let kids share one or two things they are proud of that are “under their jersey.” No pressure to share everything.

Team Discussion Questions:

- *Why do you think people sometimes get treated unfairly just because of how they look or speak?*
- *What are some ways we can include and respect everyone on and off the pitch?*
- *How can knowing what’s under someone’s jersey help us be better teammates?*

Trainer Reflection Prompt:

“Think of a time someone judged you without knowing your story. How can you make sure no one on your team feels that way?”

You can conclude the session with the following:

“Sometimes, we all experience moments when someone judges us before really knowing who we are or what we’ve been through. It can feel hurtful and unfair. As teammates, it is important to remember that everyone has a story and by taking the time to understand and respect each other beyond what we see on the surface, we create a stronger, kinder team. Let’s promise to make sure no one on our team feels left out or judged because when we respect and support each other, we all play better together.”

Trainer Tips for Sensitive Topics:

- Avoid asking kids to share anything too personal.
- Normalize difference: *“It is okay to be different, that’s what makes a team strong.”*
- Use football metaphors to keep it grounded and safe:

“Just like we don’t win a match with one player, we don’t build a great team with only one kind of person.”

BONUS IDEA:

Create a “Team Identity Wall”

If the children feel comfortable, invite them to add their completed jersey to a shared Team Identity Wall in your training space. This collective display becomes a celebration of both individuality and belonging, a visual reminder that every part of us, visible and invisible, matters.

Inclusion/Exclusion – Open Rule Examples:

- Every player must play at least 5 minutes in a central role (e.g., striker or goalkeeper).
- If a player hasn't received a pass in 3 minutes, the team must make sure they get the next one.
- During breaks, teams must check in with someone who hasn't spoken yet
- Each team must nominate an 'inclusion captain' who checks that everyone gets involved.
- Each team must teach a teammate one word in another language before the match starts.
- If a team manages to pass the ball to all its players before scoring, the goal will count as two.
- After a goal, the team must do a celebration that includes everyone.
- Invent a "celebration dance" that both teams do together at the end.
- Players can request time-outs if they feel unsafe or excluded.
- Players take turns executing set-piece situations (e.g., throw-ins, penalties, corners, free kicks), following a pre-determined order.

Topic: Self-reflection

“My Match, My Mirror”

Objective: To help children reflect on their behavior, decisions, and teamwork during a game, building awareness of their actions and how they affect others.

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Materials: Colored cones (or anything to mark space), “Reflection cards” (optional – can just be verbal prompts), a ball.

How to play:

Mini-Match (15–20 minutes)

Divide players into 2–3 small teams and let them play short football-style matches (5–7 minutes each). No open rule this time, just normal play, but ask them to focus on how they act: “How do I treat teammates? Am I fair? Do I help others?”

Reflection Circle (15–20 minutes)

Set up 3 colored cones labeled: “Proud,” “Can Improve,” “Still Thinking.”

After the game, ask a question like “How did I communicate today?” Children run to the cone that reflects how they feel. Then ask a few players to explain their choice.

You can assist with prompting questions like the following ones:

- “How did I help my team today?”
- “Was there a moment I got frustrated? How did I react?”
- “What decision did I make that I’m proud of?”
- “If I could change one thing I did, what would it be?”
- “Did I respect others, both teammates and opponents?”

Self-reflection– Open Rule Examples_(Next Match Idea):

Let the players co-create a rule like:

- “At the end of the match, everyone gives one positive comment to a teammate.”
- “You can’t shout unless it is to encourage.”
- “Before the game starts, each team will choose one key word or value (*such as teamwork, respect, courage, communication or leadership*) that represents the attitude or behavior they will focus on throughout the activity. This word will serve as a theme for reflection at the end, helping participants identify what guided their actions and shaped their experience”.

Topic: Overcoming challenges & building perseverance

“Challenge Accepted!”

Objectives: To strengthen perseverance with thoughtful reflection and to support teammates under pressure.

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials: Balls, cones, ropes (*depending on the challenges you will choose to use*)

Perseverance Challenge Game (15–20 minutes)

Split into small teams. Create a mini obstacle course using cones or simple objects:

For example:

-zig-zag dribble → crawl under a rope (or pretend rope) → balance the ball for 5 seconds
→ shoot into a small goal.

-10 toe taps → 10 ball rolls → 5 weak foot touches → 3 juggles → 1 no-bounce kick into air

Each team must complete the challenge as many times as possible in 5 minutes, supporting each other. Each time they “fail,” they say out loud: “Next time!” and restart.

After the first round, add a small “unexpected difficulty” (*e.g., use your weaker foot or tie two players’ legs together to represent how life sometimes throws challenges at us*).

Emphasize: “It’s not about winning — it’s about encouraging your teammates and not giving up!”

Team Reflection (5–10 minutes)

Ask kids:

“What part of the challenge was hard?”

“How did it feel to keep going?”

Story Circle (10 minutes)

Gather the kids in a circle. Read or tell this short story:

“When Ángel Di María was a kid, his family worked hard in a coal yard to support him. They had very little money, but Di María dreamed of becoming a footballer. He ran to training, played on rough fields and was told many times he wasn't good enough. But he

kept going. Even when he missed the World Cup final because of injury, he didn't give up. Years later, he scored the winning goal in the Copa América and helped Argentina win the World Cup. His story teaches us to keep trying even when things are tough."

What challenges did Angel di Maria face?

What helped him succeed?

How can facing and overcoming challenges help us grow and become better people?

Have you ever tried hard at something even when it felt difficult?

Overcoming Challenges and Perseverance– Open Rule Examples:

- Every time a teammate makes a mistake (misses a pass, misses a goal, loses the ball), the team must cheer them on with a positive word or a high-five.
- Players are not allowed to criticize or blame a teammate during the game — only constructive or supportive comments are allowed.
- If a player makes a mistake, they must immediately make another move (another pass, dribble, or try again) no stopping or giving up.
- Players must find a "support buddy" before the match. During the game, they encourage each other whenever one of them struggles.
- A bonus point can be awarded if the team shows perseverance by continuing to play well even when they are losing.
- At halftime, every team must share one thing that was hard for them — and one thing they will do differently in the second half.

Topic: Training Anxiety

"Worry Walk – Power Pass"

Objective: To help children name and release training-related worries by turning them into strengths, through movement and teamwork.

Duration: 15–20 minutes

Materials Needed: Small slips of paper and pens/pencils, one large empty container or box labeled “Worry Box”, a football for each small group (3–5 kids per ball)

How to Play:

Quiet Worry Writing (5 mins)

Each child takes a slip of paper and privately writes or draws something that makes them feel nervous or anxious when training or playing (e.g., missing a shot, being watched, loud teammates). They fold their papers and keep them in hand.

Worry Walk (3–5 mins)

Children walk slowly around the pitch together, each holding their folded worry quietly in their hands, without speaking...

The trainer says: *“With every step, imagine the worry getting lighter. You're not alone, everyone carries something.”*

Power Pass (5 mins)

The group forms a circle and begins passing the ball around, making sure everyone gets a turn. Each time a child receives the ball, they say a phrase aloud (examples provided beforehand):

- “I can try again.”
- “It is okay to be nervous.”
- “I’m getting better each day.”
- “My team supports me.”

Encourage the kids to repeat or make up their own short supportive phrases.

The Worry Box (2–3 mins)

Once every child has shared at least once, they walk to the “Worry Box” and drop in their folded worry paper.

The trainer says: *“You’ve passed through your worry. Let’s leave it in the box so we can focus on having fun and learning.”*

Optional Reflection Prompts:

- *“How did it feel to say something encouraging?”*
- *“Did you notice your feelings change during the walk or passing?”*
- *“What can we do when someone else is nervous?”*

Training Anxiety– Open Rule Examples:

- Players can request a time-out if they feel unsafe or stressed.
- Mistakes are allowed. No one is perfect. Teammates encourage effort, not just outcomes.
- No shouting, blaming, or pressure. Everyone speaks calmly and respectfully.
- Small wins (like a good pass or first touch) are celebrated by the whole team.
- Players check in with each other before the game, during half-time, and after the game to see if anyone is feeling uneasy or stressed
- Before each match, players must say one positive phrase aloud as a team.
- After a missed goal or error, teammates must give supportive feedback, not criticism.

Topic: Managing frustration & anger

“Fire or Ice”

Objective: To help players identify what triggers their anger and explore strategies to manage anger through discussion and movement.

Duration: 60 minutes

Materials: red and blue cones, balls, paper & pens, bibs

How to play:

Unfair Match (7 minutes)

Begin a football match and take unfair decisions/give unfair instructions. Play for 5 minutes. Stop the game and devote the next 2 minutes to the discussion. Ask the players how they felt during the game. Did they feel frustration or anger?

Warm-up Discussion (8 minutes)

Ask the players:

- *“Are there other reasons to make you angry during a game or in life in general?” , “How do you understand that you are angry (red face, clenched fists, fast heartbeat etc.)”.*

(Write down their answers)

- *“What helps you cool down?”*

(Deep breaths? Talk to someone? Physical activity? Music?)

Explain that anger is normal, but what we do with it matters. Discuss how anger is like fire. It can give energy, but if it is not controlled it can burn us or others.

Fire or Ice (15 minutes)

- Create two zones about 20-30 meters apart. One of them will be marked with red cones representing FIRE and the other one with blue representing ICE.
- Instruct the players to stand in the middle of that distance in a line.
- You explain that fire represents anger, whilst ice represents no evocation of any emotion.

- Moreover, you tell them that you will read some scenarios, and they will have to choose if they will run* to the fire or ice area depending on if the scenario provokes them anger or not respectively.

**In order to enrich the activity, you can instruct the players to move to the designated areas by doing a drill with the ball instead of running, such as drive the ball with the right/left foot, move the ball by doing “bells” etc.*

- Choose and read aloud one of the scenarios that are provided in the table below.

Anger Scenario Statements

A teammate blames you for missing a goal.
The referee makes a call you think is totally unfair.
You're sitting on the bench and really want to play.
Another player pushes you during the game.
You mess up a play you practiced all week.
A teammate shouts at you angrily after a mistake.
The other team is playing dirty and not getting called for it.
You're feeling like no one is passing you the ball.
Someone on the sidelines is heckling you.
You feel like the trainer isn't noticing your effort. Your parents shout from the bleachers that you are not playing well/not scoring any goal.

- Ask some volunteers to explain their choice.
- Start over. Do this process 4-5 times in total.
- Remind the players the cooling down techniques they had mentioned during the warm-up discussion and choose 3 of them to practice on the spot (i.e., take 5 deep breaths, lie down and close your eyes for 20 seconds, sprint, seek advice from others etc.).

Football Match (20 minutes)

You continue the session by playing a football match. You instruct the players to keep in mind what you have already worked on and that they should try to implement them if needed.

Bonus Idea: You can secretly assign one participant to behave provocatively or unfairly on purpose, offering others the chance to practice anger management.

Reflection (10 minutes)

After the match you can all sit down in a circle, and you can pose the suggested following questions: How did you feel about this session? What did you learn? Why is it important to learn how to control our anger?

Close the activity by explaining that anger management requires constant practice and self-awareness. You can share examples of both successful and unsuccessful anger management from professional athletes. A successful example could be when famous footballers like Ronaldo or Messi, in specific matches, chose not to react to provocative or aggressive behavior from opponents. Instead, they stayed focused on the game and channeled their emotions into creating scoring opportunities or leading their teams.

In contrast, an example of unsuccessful anger management is the case of Boban Janković, who, frustrated after receiving his fifth foul, slammed his head into a padded concrete post—an action that tragically left him paralyzed for life.

!!! Always ensure the examples you choose are appropriate for the age, maturity level, and needs of your players!!

Managing frustration and anger-Open Rules Examples:

- If a player feels frustrated, they must raise their hand and take three deep breaths before continuing.
- If a player feels overwhelmed, they can make a “pause gesture” to take a breather. Everyone respects the gesture and takes a short break.
- If a teammate shows signs of anger, another player must offer encouragement with a positive gesture (like a high five or thumbs up).
- No arguing with referees, mediators, or other players — disputes must be resolved with a team huddle.
- After a foul or mistake, players must use a calming word (like "reset" or "focus") to remind the team to stay positive.
- Each team has a “well-being ally” who observes how everyone is feeling during the game.
- If a conflict occurs, captains from both teams meet quickly in the middle and agree on a fair solution without blame.

Topic: Conflict resolution

"The Magic Football Problem"

This activity is inspired by the classic 'Ugli Orange' negotiation scenario, originally developed for conflict resolution training.

Objective: To encourage kids to solve a conflict peacefully by talking, listening, and finding a win-win solution.

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Materials:

- Printed Role Cards *(one for each team or written on index cards)*
 - Team Lightning Strikers' secret info
 - Team Golden Goalies' secret info
- Facilitator Script or Sheet *(the scenario setup you read aloud)*
- Timer or clock
- Space for group work and negotiation *(just areas on the floor)*

How to Play:

Story Setup (10-15 minutes)

1. Gather the children and introduce the activity:

"Hi everyone! Today, we're going to play a fun game called 'The Magic Football Problem.' You will be split into two teams and each team will have a special problem to solve. The goal is to work together, talk and find a way that both teams can win!"

2. Break the children into two teams:
 - You can divide them evenly by counting off numbers ("1, 2, 1, 2...") or choose teams by letting kids pick their favorite football team names.
 - Name the teams: Team Lightning Strikers and Team Golden Goalies.

3. Give each team their secret role card:

"Each team will get a card with some secret information about your team's problem. Remember, don't show the other team your card! Read it quietly and don't share it just yet."

•Team Lightning Strikers' Card: Your team has old, worn-out jerseys, and you need the special fabric from the Magic Kit to make new ones. Without it, you can't play comfortably in your big match.

•Team Golden Goalies' Card: Your goalie gloves are falling apart, and you need the super-grip material from the Magic Kit to fix them. Without it, your goalie can't stop any shots.

4. Explain the scenario:

“Two football teams, The Lightning Strikers and The Golden Goalies both have a really big game coming up this weekend. Both teams were told that Coach Maria has the only remaining special "Magic Football Kit" and she will give it to only one team unless the two teams can figure something out together.”

!!The Twist (hidden from all children at first)!!

The Magic Kit contains both:

- Fabric for jerseys
- Material for goalie gloves

So, if the teams talk and share what they actually need, they'll realize they can split the kit and both teams win.

Negotiation Phase (10 minutes)

Bring both teams together.

Say to both teams: *“You can now talk to the other team and try to solve the problem. Remember to listen carefully, be respectful and try to find a way that helps both teams.”*

Set a timer for 10 minutes.

You observe silently. Just encourage respectful talking and listening. As the facilitator, you don't guide the kids toward the solution during the negotiation phase. You just observe.

Why this is important:

The learning comes from them figuring it out themselves especially the moment when they realize: “Oh! We don't actually need the same part of the kit, we can both win!”

If you hint or lead them (e.g., *“Maybe you should tell the other team exactly what you need...”*), you take away that aha! moment, which is the most powerful part of the activity.

Examples of what **NOT** to do during negotiation: *“Why don’t you ask them what part of the kit they need?”*, *“You both want the same thing... or do you?”*, *“There might be a way you can both win...”*

What you **CAN** do: Observe quietly, remind them of the time if needed, step in only if they argue disrespectfully or get off track.

Solution Sharing (3–5 minutes)

Teams share what they decided and how they worked it out.

Debrief & Reflection (10–15 minutes)

Group discussion on what they learned about communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution. That’s when you help them reflect.

Debrief Questions (after they negotiate):

If the teams found a solution/agreement, ask:

- *What happened when you first started talking?*
- *Did you think only one team could win at first?*
- *How did it feel to find a solution that helped both teams?*
- *What helped you reach an agreement?*
- *How did it feel to find a way both teams could win?*
- *Can you think of real-life problems where this could help?*

If the teams did not find a solution/agreement, ask:

- *What happened when you first started talking?*
- *What made it hard to agree or find a solution?*
- *Did you listen carefully to what the other team needed?*
- *How do you think sharing your real needs might have helped?*
- *What could you do differently next time to work better as a team?*
- *Can you think of a time when talking helped you solve a problem?*
- *Why is it important to stay respectful even when you disagree?*

If the teams reached a solution, but only one side really “won”..

If children find a solution, but it's not a win-win (e.g., *one team "gave up" or made all the compromises*), this is a great teachable moment. You'll want to guide them to reflect more deeply on fairness, collaboration and missed opportunities. You can ask some of the following questions:

- *Did both teams get what they needed or did one team get more?*
- *How do you think the other team felt about the outcome?*
- *Was there another way you could have solved the problem so that both teams were happy?*
- *What can you do next time to look for a solution where everyone gets something they need?*

Add a Fun Twist (Optional Bonus Idea!)

- A small "Magic Football Kit" prop (*box or bag with fabric scraps and glove pieces*) to add to a hands-on, visual element.
- Whiteboard or chart paper for debrief (*e.g., to list what helped them resolve the conflict*).
- Small prizes or certificates for teamwork or creativity.
- Kids this age love a bit of role-play and creativity. Consider giving them team name badges or letting them draw their team logo before starting in order to build engagement.

Conflict resolution– Open Rules Examples:

- Raise your hand if there's a disagreement or unclear situation. In case of disagreement, take a "fair-play pause": each team proposes a solution and everyone votes together.
- Raise your hand and stop the game if you commit a foul.
- Speak calmly and respectfully to everyone.
- Stop the game if someone gets hurt or upset.
- Use a timeout if emotions get too high.
- Help others calm down. Try not to make things worse.

Topic: Gender-based stereotypes

“The Name Game: Breaking Stereotypes!”

This activity is inspired by the 'Making Rights a Reality' gender awareness workshops developed by Amnesty International, originally designed to enhance understanding and promote discussions around gender equality.

Objective: To introduce and explore gender-based stereotypes in a fun, simple way while helping kids understand how language can shape the way we view others.

Duration: 35-40 minutes

Materials Needed:

- None (*just a football or any ball for tossing, if desired*)
- A whiteboard and marker (*if you want to write down some notes coming from discussion with children*)

How to Play:

1. Stereotype Name Game (10 minutes)

Start by explaining that stereotypes are ideas or thoughts people have about others based on things like their gender, age, ethnic background or appearance. For example, sometimes people think only boys can be good at football or that girls should always be kind and gentle.

Form a circle with the kids. The game starts with a person saying their name, but they need to come up with an adjective that starts with the same letter as their name and is related to being a girl or woman. These words can be both positive and negative. Example answers can be: "Pretty Paula", "Nagging Nora", "Bossy Bella", "Kind Kelly", "Strong Steven", "Wild Will", "Lazy Luke".

Note to trainer: This can be a great way to start a conversation about stereotypes. The activity helps the children see how certain words are used to describe girls and boys.

2. Group Discussion on Stereotypes (10 minutes)

After everyone has shared their name and adjective, lead a discussion with the following questions:

- “How many of the words used describe girls in a positive way?”
- “What do you think would happen if we used the adjectives we used for girls to describe boys and the ones we used for boys to describe girls?”
- “Why do you think people use words like "bossy" for girls or "tough" for boys?”

- “Can the way we talk lead to treating people unfairly?”

Trainer Note to share with children: “Words can be powerful and they can shape how people are seen. Stereotypes often use words that make some people seem stronger or better than others, based on their gender. Even positive stereotypes, like saying girls are always kind or boys are always strong, can be harmful. These ideas make people feel like they have to act a certain way and they can't be themselves. It is important to remember that everyone should be free to express who they are without being judged, even if the stereotype seems nice”.

4. Challenging Stereotypes (10 minutes)

Ask the group to come up with words that could be used to describe both boys and girls in a positive way. Write these words on the board.

For example: "Smart", "Brave", "Kind", "Strong", "Confident", "Creative"

Explain that words like these should not be tied to one gender or the other. Everyone can be smart, strong, or brave, whether they are a boy or a girl.

5. Wrap-up Discussion (5 minutes)

Ask the kids:

- “What can happen when people believe stereotypes?” (Explain that believing stereotypes can lead to unfair treatment, hurt feelings and stopping people from trying new things or showing who they really are.)
- “Where do you think stereotypes come from? (Explain that stereotypes are often learned from things like TV shows, social media and sometimes even from what people say to us at home or at school.)
- What can we do to limit stereotypes? (Encourage ideas like using fair language, recognizing that boys and girls can do the same things, and treating everyone equally.)

Conclusion: Reinforce that no one should be limited by stereotypes and everyone should be free to do what they love, whether playing football, reading or anything else. Stereotypes can make people feel less like themselves, like they're not being treated as real people. When we start seeing others as just part of a group or label, it is easier to treat them unfairly. We all deserve to be seen for who we really are, not just a label.

Gender-based stereotypes– Open Rules Examples:

- Each consecutive goal scored by a team must alternate between a girl player and boy player.

- There should be equal boys and girls within a team (if the number of girls in the team is adequate to support such a rule).
- Each player must make at least one pass to a teammate of the opposite gender before shooting.
- Girls' goals count double (i.e. if a girl scores, it counts as two goals).
- A mediation round (post-game) is led each time by one boy and one girl.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The above-mentioned rules in football3 are designed to encourage inclusion and enhance girl participation but may unintentionally create positive discrimination. Ideally, fairness should not depend on gender. Coaches/trainers should critically assess their group's needs and decide whether such rules support or hinder inclusive play. For example, if the boys on a team hold strong stereotypes about girls and tend to exclude them from the game, then these rules can serve as an effective tool to challenge that behavior.

PART 6: Training with Care: Tips, Energy, and the Role of the Trainer

Trainer Tips: Keeping Attention & Managing Energy

Working with kids aged 10–12 means lots of energy, short attention spans, and tons of curiosity. Here are some helpful tips to keep your sessions fun, focused, and full of positive vibes:

1. Keep it Short and Active

- Break up activities into short chunks (10–15 minutes).
- Use quick transitions between exercises to keep momentum going.

2. Use Clear, Simple Instructions

- Give one instruction at a time. Show it, say it and then do it.
- Use hand signals or visual cues to help reinforce what you're saying.

3. Mix Physical and Mental Activities

- After a high-energy game, do something slower, like a discussion circle.
- Balance brain breaks and movement to help kids reset.

4. Set Time Limits

- Use countdowns ("*5 more seconds!*") to keep things moving.
- Kids respond well to predictable timing; it helps with focus and transitions.

5. Involve Kids in Leading

- Let them demonstrate warm-ups, suggest drills or help set up equipment.
- Giving them responsibility boosts focus and teamwork.

6. Use Call-and-Response to Regain Attention

Examples:

- Trainer: "*Ready to listen?*" Kids: "*Ready to learn!*"
- Trainer: "*1-2-3...*" Kids: "*Eyes on me!*"

7. Praise Positive Behavior Loudly

- Notice when kids make good choices and celebrate their efforts
- Use phrases like: "*Great teamwork!*" or "*Awesome focus!*"

8. Know When to Pivot

- If energy is crashing or chaos is rising, switch it up.
- A quick game, a water break or a group cheer can reset the vibe.

9. Keep a Calm Presence

- Stay positive and consistent, even if things get noisy or chaotic.
- Kids mirror your energy—calm confidence is contagious.

Final Reflection: Preventing and Stopping Racist, Discriminatory, and Xenophobic Behaviour

It is essential for coaches/trainers to reflect on the larger role they play in shaping the environment for the players. By actively preventing and addressing racist, discriminatory and xenophobic behavior, we ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, feels safe, valued and respected in your teams.

Here are some key steps you can take:

1. Identify Your Own Unconscious Biases

We all have biases and some of them are unconscious. It is crucial to reflect on how your own beliefs and attitudes toward people who are different from you, may have been shaped. Being aware of these biases allows us to approach each situation with an open and non-judgmental mindset.

2. Speak Up Against Racist or Xenophobic Language

If you hear any racist jokes, comments or xenophobic language, whether from players or other adults, make sure to call it out. These remarks, though sometimes deemed as harmless, can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and attitudes. Silence can be interpreted as agreement, so it is important to address these behaviors right away.

3. Support Cultural Diversity

Encourage your team to embrace and learn about different cultures. This could mean attending cultural events, exploring cuisines, reading books or watching films/animation from different countries. When players see you supporting and celebrating cultural diversity, they will be more likely to do the same.

Your Role as a Trainer:

You don't need to be an expert on every culture or have advanced football skills. What you need is to lead by example. Creating an inclusive environment is about empathy, awareness and open communication. Guide your players to understand the importance of fairness and respect, not only in the game but also in how they interact with others in their daily lives. By fostering empathy, awareness, and inclusivity, you can help shape players who will become not only great athletes but also better individuals, contributing to a more peaceful society.

Conclusion

At a time when children across Europe are navigating a world shaped by social tensions, shifting communities and growing digital influences, it is more important than ever to create safe, inclusive spaces where young people feel they belong. This is where football when used intentionally can be more than just a game.

The football3 approach reminds us that football can foster empathy, cooperation and respect. This toolkit adapts that powerful methodology for children aged 10–12, giving coaches/trainers and facilitators playful, creative ways to open up conversations on important social topics while supporting emotional growth and social connection.

By combining sport with dialogue, storytelling and team-based challenges, we can help children learn life skills that go far beyond the pitch. Activities in this guide support self-reflection, emotional regulation, critical thinking and active citizenship skills that young people need to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Community organizations, educators and coaches/trainers have a unique opportunity to transform football into a space that challenges exclusion, bias and discrimination, while promoting fairness, teamwork, and mutual respect. This toolkit is just the starting point. May it inspire you to adapt, expand and craft your own creative and playful paths toward inclusion.

Annexes

Annex 1-Mediator's Form

Mediator's form

Mediator(s):

Place:

Date:

Match Score

_____ Teams _____
Goals
Match Points
Fair Play Points (self-evaluation)
Fair Play Points (Given by the other team)
TOTAL POINTS

THE RULES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

NOTES

Annex 2-Open rules

Visual Open Rule Cards

These are simple, playful open rules that are easy for children to understand and fun to vote on or rotate weekly. You could put these on cards or small posters and let children pick the ones they want.

Visual Theme	Open Rule	Value It Teaches
 Confetti Popper	Everyone celebrates every goal, no matter who scores.	Inclusiveness, joy, shared success
 Handshake Icon	Players shake hands or high-five before and after the match.	Respect, connection
 Arrows Loop	You must pass the ball to at least 2 teammates before scoring.	Teamwork, equality
 Boys and girls	Boys and girls must alternate who scores.	Gender equity, fairness
 No shouting	No shouting or angry reactions. Calm voices only.	Conflict management, emotion regulation.
 Crown	The team must choose a “team captain of kindness” who gives compliments during play.	Leadership, encouragement
 Rainbow	Create a team celebration pose or dance for after the match.	Creativity, team bonding
 Goal	Each goal counts as many points as the passes the team made before scoring. (i.e., six passes-six points)	Teamwork, Cooperation



JOYFUL



HAPPY



SAD



ANGRY



CALM



TIRED



CONFUSED



SLEEPY



WORRIED



LONELY



PROUD



HUNGRY



COLD



HOT



EXCITED



SATISFIED



Let’s Reflect!

Date: _____

Topic: _____

Place: _____

Team: _____

Rules	Not at all	So and so	100%
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1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Overall Points: *(Not at all =0, So and so=1, 100%=2)*

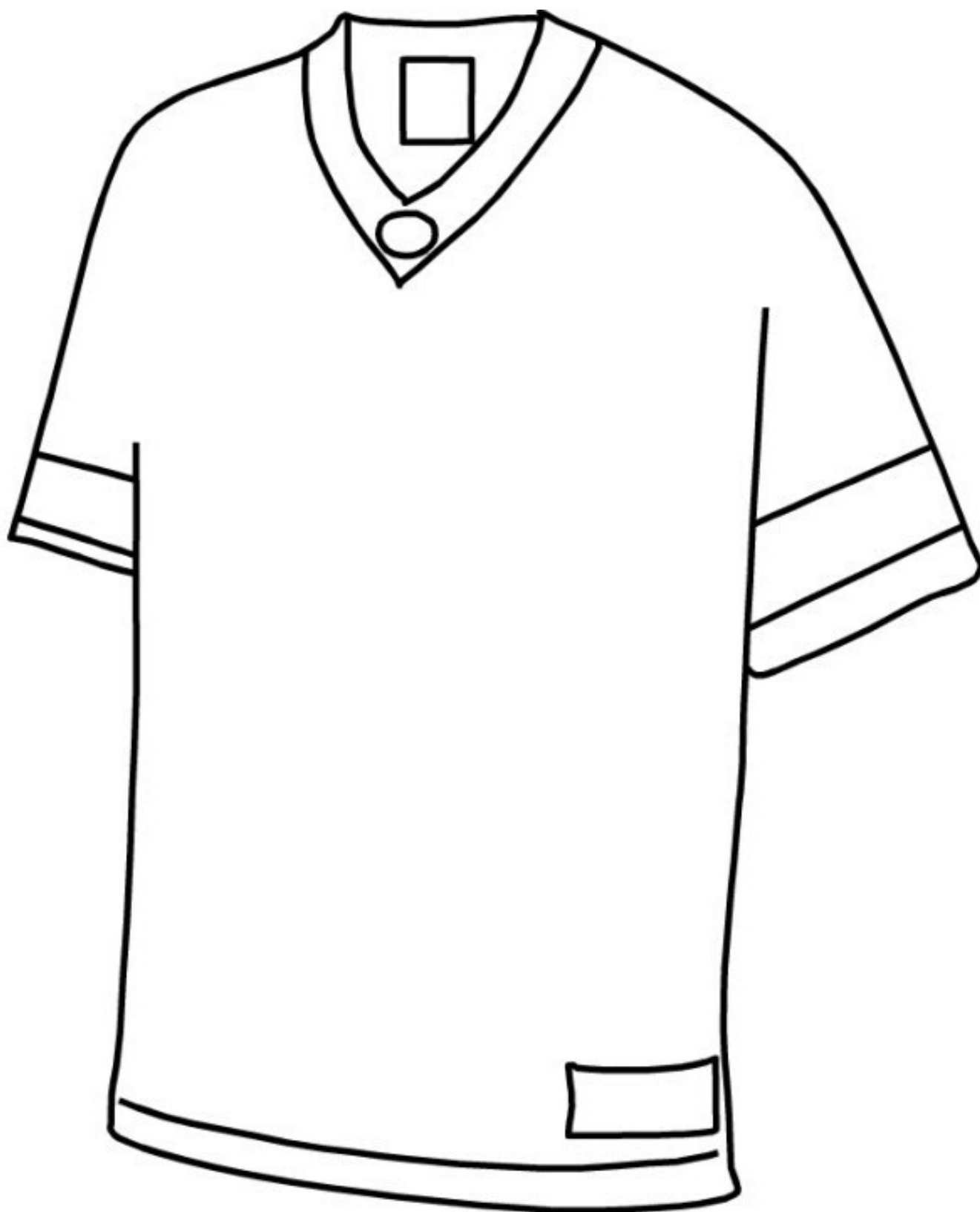
Comments:

Annex 5-Human Bingo

Find someone who...

Can do a bicycle kick	Has two siblings	Has practiced a sport other than football	Can demonstrate the signature goal celebrations of two famous footballers	Can name 10 countries in 10 seconds
Was born in a different country	Knows a famous footballer's birthday	Speaks a different language at home	Loves pizza	Has a pet at home
Can name 3 football positions	Has a flag from another country in their home	Can say 'hello' in five different languages	Was born in the same month as you	Has played as a goalkeeper
Can whistle	Has traveled abroad	Can do at least 5 keepie-uppies	Is left-footed	Knows a referee signal
Has friends from different cultural backgrounds	Has tried food from another country	Can recite a tongue twister	Is really good at video games	Wants to be a coach one day

Annex 6-Jersey worksheet



Resources

- Horne, M., & Thiele, V. (n.d.). *DIALECT Toolkit: Disrupting polarisation – Building communities of tolerance through football* [PDF]. streetfootballworld.
https://dialectproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/DIALECT_Integrated-Training-Toolkit.pdf

- streetfootballworld (2018): football3 trainer manual. Available at: <https://www.streetfootballworld.org/sites/default/files/football3%20for%20respect%20Toolkit.pdf>.

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- National Center of Social Research (EKKE). (2020). *Primary and secondary research findings report*. Retrieved from <https://dialectproject.eu/dialect-4/news/>

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Disclaimer

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