



**Understand and  
manage**

**Soccer  
Referee  
Abuse**

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**Does your yellow jersey automatically identify you as a target?**





# Control the Game

- 1. Understand how your brain and body reacts to stress/threat**
- 2. De-escalate aggressive situations/people**
- 3. Control the Game – Ask Tell Dismiss**





**Understand how your brain responds to a threat.**





# Yelling

Being frequently yelled at changes the mind, brain and body in a multitude of ways including increasing the [activity of the amygdala](#) (the emotional brain), [increasing stress hormones](#) in the blood stream, increasing muscular tension and more. Being frequently yelled at as children changes how we think and feel about ourselves even after we become adults. That's because the brain wires according to our experiences—

- The loud *volume* of voice – non-verbal
- The shrill *tone* of voice – non-verbal
- The dead *look* in eyes – non-verbal
- The critical, disdainful and scornful facial expression that make one feel hated – non-verbal
- The long *duration* – non-verbal
- The names and *insults* - verbal
- The *unpredictability* – non-verbal



# Manage your emotions

1. Take a step back
2. **Breathe!**
3. Notice what you are feeling in your body (Emotions/Fight, Flight, or Freeze?)
4. Ignore the non-verbal behaviors (facial expression, volume, and tone)
5. Listen - What is the message being communicated?











# De-escalate aggressive situations/people (1)

- **Take a step back physically**

- personal space should be 4-6 feet.

- **Breathe!**

- Get out of your “emotional” brain and into your “logical” brain.
- Ask yourself what are they saying verbally, does this require a rule reminder?
- What are they demonstrating non-verbally, does this warrant a warning or a dismissal?

Questioning call

Yelling, swearing, name calling, using racial slurs, verbal harassing

Physical threats

Sexual harassment

- **State one time, firmly, what is needed**

- “Coach I need you to stop swearing.”

- **If a yellow/red is warranted, take a step back (4-6 feet) and show the card**

- **Do not turn your back on the person**

- until its clear they accepted your call, or you are at a safe distance where they will not come after you.



# Controlling the Game

## Ask Tell Dismiss

[Recommended by U.S. Soccer.](#)

### Ask: Verbal Warning

When irresponsible behavior starts, the ref should **ask** the person to modify his or her behavior.

### Tell: Warning/Yellow Card

Should the behavior not return to an acceptable level, the ref should **tell** the coach that his or her actions will not be tolerated and must be stopped.

### Dismiss: Red Card

Finally, if the unacceptable behavior continues, the ref should take the final step and **dismiss** the person from the area of the field of play and its immediate surroundings.

“Coach, if you refuse to leave the field area, I will be forced to terminate this match because of your actions.”  
Then abandon the match if the coach still refuses to leave.

**Automatic Red Card:** Offensive, insulting or abusive language or gestures; mocking the ref, an opposing player or coach; or using a racial, ethnic slur, etc.

Vogt, Randy. (2019). How referees need to deal with dissent from coaches. Retrieved from <https://www.socceramerica.com/publications/article/82259/how-referees-need-to-deal-with-dissent-from-coache.html>















# Practice your skills

1. Memorize what you will say to the coach:

“Coach, I need you to stop cursing.”

“Coach, I need you to stay off the field.”

“Coach, I need you to tell your parents to stop calling me names.”

“Coach, if you refuse to leave the field area, I will be forced to terminate this match because of your actions.”

2. Role play difficult situations with a friend or family member. It takes practice to recognize a difficult situation and then apply the correct course of action. If during a role play or real-life situation you find it difficult to manage your emotions, let's talk about what is going on 1:1.





# **High Stakes De-escalation Procedures and Skills**



# Physical Fighting (USSF)

- **Do not put yourself at risk of being harmed. This is not your job**
- **Stay Calm, Breathe!**
- **Use your whistle!**
- **Get your notebook out, back off and watch. Write down #'s of who you spot throw punches, kicks, etc.**
- **Once it dies down, dismiss the offenders.**

“Fighting is violent conduct and is always treated with a red card. USSF suggests we try to safely break up a two-person incident without getting between them. If you cannot, or a third person joins you are to back away to a safe distance so that you can observe if anyone instigates the fight further or joins. Write down numbers of any misconduct required. As referees, we cannot do much to stop mass confrontation or even a fight between two people. Do not put yourself in danger, that is not your job.”

“The most common warning story I've heard about trying to break things up, is a referee stepped between two players fighting and intercepted a punch to the face.”

- Retrieved from [https://www.reddit.com/r/Referees/comments/6uvmvc/how\\_to\\_deal\\_with\\_a\\_fight\\_that\\_breaks\\_out/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Referees/comments/6uvmvc/how_to_deal_with_a_fight_that_breaks_out/)



# Physical Fighting (PRO)

PRO Director of Training and Education Paul Rejer. 2017– Officials conduct at mass confrontations:

- **Showing observation and meaningful dialogue**
- **Remaining calm and concentrated**
- **Being assertive**
- **Being in appropriate viewing positions**
- **Issuing appropriate sanctions**
- It is vitally important that officials remain calm and adhere to all the approved practices and do not put themselves at risk. They are referees, not policemen.
- By PRO Director of Training and Education Paul Rejer. 2017. Play of the Week 17: Mass confrontation. Retrieved from [Retrieved from http://proreferees.com/2017/06/28/play-of-the-week-17-mass-confrontation/](http://proreferees.com/2017/06/28/play-of-the-week-17-mass-confrontation/)



# **De-escalate aggressive situations/people (2)**

## **Extreme Verbal/Yelling Situations**

**When the coach/parent/player is in their emotional brain and can't calm down, even after a red card has been presented and the coach/parent/player has been dismissed or the game terminated.**

- Listen, for as long as it takes until they calm down. Do not interrupt.
- If necessary, repeat back what you heard in a normal/calm voice. If necessary, follow up with rule. "I heard you, I heard your concern or Regarding offsides...the rule is..."
- If necessary, let them know how you will address their concern:
  - You can report to the SVYSA
  - I will speak with the SVYSA, and someone will follow up with you.
    - Note this on the back of you score card, so you do not forget.



# Post Game Support

1. Report to SVYSA
2. If you find the situation continues to upset you 1 week later, call Sara Myers to consult, no charge.
3. Coping Skills to manage stress:

## Meditation

<https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations>

Breathing Meditation 5 minutes – practice 1x/day

Body Scan Meditation 3 minutes – practice 1x/day

## Exercise

## Adequate Sleep

- Children 12 years of age should sleep 9 to 12 hours per 24 hours on a regular basis to promote optimal health.
- Teenagers 13 to 18 years of age should sleep 8 to 10 hours per 24 hours on a regular basis to promote optimal health

## Eat Healthy Foods

## Write/Journal about your experience