

# Strategies to Build a Moral Community

## 1. Students/Athletes Know Each Other

Start with non-threatening tasks such as getting to know a partner, or doing finding others in the group with similarities. Continue to create opportunities for individuals to learn about one another throughout your class or season. Ensure each student/athlete is heard and that no one monopolizes discussions.

Holder and Charalambous (2021) provide tips on team building, even if it must be done virtually. Read their article [Rethinking the Way coaches Implement Team Building Activities During COVID-19](#)

Take 10 minutes to explore more *get-to-know-you* ideas. Start with the following resource: <https://teambuilding.com/blog/get-to-know-you-games>

## 2. Students Respect, Affirm, and Care About Each Other

One strategy to develop respect and care among a team is to engage in perspective taking where students learn about challenges others face. You will learn more about perspective taking in Module 3.

Building team cohesion is a second strategy for improving care and respect among groups. Collin Fehr (2021) discusses team cohesion strategies that focus on creating positive opportunities for players to become cohesive. Read his article [Team Cohesion: Strategies for Success](#).

Lickona (1991, pp. 141-142) also provided ideas for building respect through *class* meetings (*class* could be substituted with *team*). Review Lickona's 20 kinds of class meetings below.

## 3. Students Feel Membership in, and Responsibility to, the Group

Lickona (1991, p. 100) suggests:

- Developing class cohesion and identity through traditions and symbols.
- Develop each student's feeling of being a unique and valued member of the class community; intervene to help the ostracized child gain peer acceptance.
- Create accountability to group rules.
- Foster an ethic of interdependence ("Who has a problem the rest of us can help to solve?").

Long-time running coach Thomas Raunig discusses the importance of building good relationships between the coach and athlete and between the athletes. Read his article [Building Relationships in Sports One Circle at a Time](#).

# Strategies to Build a Moral Community

## TWENTY KINDS OF CLASS MEETINGS

1. *Good news meeting*: "Who has some good news to share?"
2. *Circle whip*: Go around the circle; everyone can either complete the "sentence-starter" or choose to pass. After everyone has had a turn, the teacher can use individual students' responses as a springboard for interactive discussion. Some sample sentence-starters are:
  - "Something I like about this class . . ."
  - "Something I think would make our class better . . ."
  - "A decision I think we should make . . ."
  - "I'm wondering why . . ."
  - "Something that bothers me . . ."
  - "I wish . . ."
3. *Appreciation time*: "Who would you like to appreciate?"
4. *Compliment time*: One or two children are chosen; taking one child at a time, the teacher invites classmates to say something they like or admire about that person.
5. *Goal-setting meeting*: Discuss the goals for the morning, the day, the week, a curriculum unit, the academic year.
6. *Rule-setting meeting*: "What rules do we need for our classroom?" "For going to gym?" "For the upcoming field trip?"
7. *Rule-evaluating meeting*: Have students write about, then discuss the following questions: "What are the school rules? Why do we have them? Are they good rules? If you could change one rule, what would it be? . . . Do any of our classroom rules need changing to make them work better?"
8. *Stage-setting meeting*: For example, before a small-group activity: "What can you do to make things go smoothly in your group?"
9. *Feedback and evaluation*: "How well did you work together?" "How could you make it go better the next time?" "What was good about today?" "How can we make tomorrow a better day?"
10. *Reflections on learnings*: "What did you learn from this activity (unit, project, book)?" "One new idea or understanding?"
11. *Student presentation*: One or two students present a piece of their work, such as a project or story; other class members ask questions and offer appreciative comments.

## Strategies to Build a Moral Community

12. *Problem-solving meetings:*
  - *Individual problem:* “Who’s having a problem that we might be able to help solve?”
  - *Group problem:* “What’s a class problem we should talk about?”
  - *Complaints and recommendations:* Ground rule: You can make a complaint about a problem, but you have to offer a recommendation for correcting it.<sup>8</sup>
  - *Fairness meeting:* “How can we solve this conflict (e.g., cutting in line, disputes over materials or equipment, arguments over cleanup) in a way that’s fair to everybody?”
13. *Academic issues:* “Why do we have to study this?” “What would help you do a better job on homework?” “On the next test?” “How could the last test have been improved?”
14. *Classroom improvement meeting:* “What changes would make our classroom better?” Possibilities: changing the physical arrangement of the classroom, new ways of working together, new learning games, ideas for class-created bulletin boards, etc.
15. *Follow-up meeting:* “How is the solution/change we agreed upon working? Can we make it work better?”
16. *Planning meeting:* “What group projects would you like to do?” “What topics to study?” “What field trips to take?” “What would be fun to do differently next week in spelling, math, or science?” “What would be the most exciting way to study this next topic?”
17. *Concept meeting:* “What is a friend? How do you make one?” “What is a conscience? How does it help you?” “What is a lie? Is it ever right to tell one?” “What is trust? Why is it important?” “What is courage? How do people show it?”
18. *Sticky situations:*<sup>9</sup> “What should you/would you do if: You find a wallet on the sidewalk with \$20 in it?” . . . “You find just a \$20 bill?” . . . “You see a kid stealing something from somebody else’s locker?” . . . “There’s a new kid that you’d like to be nice to but your friends think she/he is weird?” . . . “A friend asks to copy your homework?” . . . “A friend you’re with shoplifts a CD?” . . . “Two kids on the bus are picking on a little kid and making him cry?”
19. *Suggestion box/class business box:* Any appropriate item students have submitted for discussion.
20. *Meeting on meetings:* “What have you liked about our class meetings? What haven’t you liked? What have we accomplished? How can we improve our meetings?”<sup>10</sup>

# **Strategies to Build a Moral Community**

## **References**

Lickona, T. (1991). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.