

# (TRAINING ROOM)

## SOFTBALL EXCELLENCE

with Cindy Bristow



# Coach in a CONSTRUCTION ZONE

**W**hen your players make mistakes it's hard not to get frustrated and lose your temper, but you might be surprised to discover that's the worst thing you can do. Mistakes are part of life and everybody makes them, so isn't it amazing how mad we can get when a bunch of young athletes in pressurized situations make them?

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Yet, mistakes are exactly what cause so many coaches to lose their tempers and start yelling at their players. Ranting on and on about every single mistake that was made down to the smallest detail, belittling players for making errors or generally losing your mind might be common reactions from coaches but I want to change your perspective for a second.

Instead of thinking about how these mistakes hurt your team and impact you, I want you to switch your point of view for a minute to that of the player. You're the player now and you just made a mistake. Chances are good that you're mad at yourself and frustrated for letting your team and your coaches down. If this isn't your first mistake then you're no doubt discouraged and probably angry. Mad, frustrated, discouraged, angry – none of these are positive emotions and this player is obviously starting to fall apart. And yet now, the coach is going to pour more of the same on you. By getting mad at you (the player) the coach has actually just sped up your emotions and your destruction. Instead of helping a player correct her mistakes, yelling and getting mad at a player following a mistake actually just speeds up the problem and gets her to the point where she completely falls apart and wants to quit.

Most players start to fall apart following a mistake, so it's vital that as coaches we do everything we can to help build them up – construct them instead of destruct them. Instead of

getting mad at our players for making a mistake we need to keep in mind that they're madder than we are and depending on their mental makeup, are possibly on the verge of quitting. It's our job to Encourage them instead of Discourage them. Players that are struggling need our help, our encouragement, our support and our calm. They don't need our frustration, and anger – they've got enough of their own.

Trust me; I was that coach yelling her head off at my players whenever they made a mistake because I ignorantly assumed that I was the only one who cared. I thought their mistakes obviously meant a lack of caring. Then suddenly one day, like a bolt of lightning it hit me that my players weren't trying to make mistakes. That no matter how poor they were playing it was the best they could do, and yet it wasn't very good. My players

were on the verge of giving up thanks in large part to my maniacal ranting and raving. I suddenly realized that what my players needed most from me was my support and encouragement. I needed to convince them to try again, to encourage them not to give up. From that day on I was calmer, more supportive and encouraging whenever my players made mistakes. Sure, I still got frustrated, but I did my best to put that aside and be what my players needed, which was patient and encouraging to work through their mistakes and try again, instead of quit.

Let's all work harder to help build up and construct our players instead of destructing them and tearing them down. Encouragement doesn't mean you can't push your players to give more and try harder, it means you're there for them when those efforts fall short. Remember that softball is a team sport and you're all in it together!

For more help with this topic check out our book, *Coach's Guide to Creating Team Chemistry: Keys to Coaching the Female Athlete* and check out [www.softballexcellence.com](http://www.softballexcellence.com) for all your fastpitch needs!



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