

Communication Strategies

Communication with parents / guardians

The relationship between the AusTouch Leader, the child and his or her parents / guardians has an important bearing on the outcome of a AusTouch program. Parents / guardians can have a positive or negative impact and to ensure that support for the program is secured, it is essential for every AusTouch Leader to effectively communicate with parents / guardians.

It is important that the program's aims and the AusTouch Leader's philosophy, role and goals are communicated to parents / guardians. One of the most effective ways to do this is for the leader to conduct a short, parents / guardians' orientation meeting or provide a letter before the commencement of the program. A typical orientation program could cover some or all of the following topics:

- Welcome and introductions
- Overview of the topics to be addressed
- Major goals of the program
- An outline of the program philosophy
- Codes of behaviour
- Behaviour expectations
- Parent roles and responsibilities
- Encourage their help & involvement in the program through playing a major or minor role in the sessions
- Assisting with training and with other activities
- Administrative arrangements (fees, schedule, special events, transport, safety)
- Questions and answers / group discussion (eg. parent expectations)
- Encourage positive feedback to all participants as they watch sessions, this can be done through clapping or cheering in appropriate games

To effectively sustain parental - leader communication, the program may include social activities involving parents / guardians, a parent / guardian feedback survey and opportunities to review the success of the AusTouch program.

Communication with participants

There are numerous ways AusTouch Leaders can communicate positively with their children. Good positive communication builds confidence and commitment. Some approaches that you can use during activities include:

- A warm greeting, using the player's name
- A smile, a wink and/or a thumbs-up sign
- A pat on the back and an arm slung around a child's shoulder. Ensure any touching is appropriate and expected by the child
- Talking and joking and playing some games with children
- Asking advice and listening to what children say
- Helping children to set and adjust learning goals
- Giving individuals specific suggestions for improvement
- Offering regular praise and encouragement
- Staying around after training to talk to children and meet parents / guardians

At all times AusTouch Leaders should demonstrate exemplary behaviour and set the tone for the group. You should always try to avoid:

- Sarcasm or ridicule
- Making hasty judgements about the cause of any misdemeanours
- Disciplining the group for the behaviour of an individual
- Becoming too emotional
- Displays of erratic behaviour
- Threatening or frightening a child or providing moralising and long winded 'sermons'