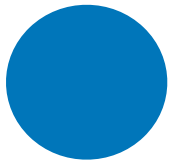


Choose to Matter: Being Courageously and Fabulously You by Julie Foudy
Book Discussion Guide by Anne Stricherz

Begin with an image of “The Empower-Rings” as seen on p 15. Use these concentric circles as a visual metric for how and what you will move from inward to outward reflection. Good individuals make good teams, good teams can improve our schools. With good schools our communities will grow stronger and why wouldn’t we want better communities, schools, teams, and people? We have one life to live. Let’s make it count.



Take Note: This book already has built-in exercises and space for journaling. Use at your pleasure/to your advantage!



Section 1: SELF

Chapter 4: The Non-Non-Negotiable Chapter p 66-67

Foudy refers to this as “non-negotiable” for good reason—as athletes we don’t have control over everything: playing time, results, what fouls are called or not, the weather etc. However, we can control our **attitude and effort**. Reflection on both is essential to be our best self

Have athletes draw a self portrait sketch—this is fun and can be funny. Have them list on one side:

- Things you can’t control
- Things you can control

Choose to Matter gives examples, but athletes should add to it. Encourage your team to name specific “things” within your sport.

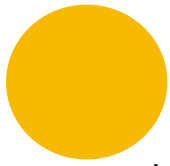
Have them discuss one or two of each.



Life Hack: Attitude 101

Foudy offers a number of pneumatic devices to keep our attitude in check.

- **Groan or Grow** reminds us of what we can do with the mistakes we make
- **The Power of Positive** calls us to consider the effects of positive (vs. negative) thinking
- **Attitude of Gratitude:** self explanatory! Or maybe not! Not everyone makes the team, not every athlete is gifted in your sport, Not every boy or girl, man or woman can participate in what you do. Be grateful!



Section 2: TEAM

Chapter 7: Team Chemistry is a Verb

Mojo Manual p 118-119

The “Finding Your Team Mojo” manual is fun and worth having your athletes read together. Have them address which ideas spark their interest. I would like to know how we can: “Make practice/meetings so much fun, no one will want to miss them.” This “Mojo Recipe” is but one of the many spirited and valuable ideas from this section.

“Fun Team Building Exercises.” p 120-123

What I appreciate about the examples from Foudy is that they are activities she has already done. There’s something to be said for offering an idea and another to advocate for one that works. As with any list, some will resonate with your team’s personality, size and season. But, Foudy and I both believe “the most important thing you do, as a group, is talk about what you’ve learned after the exercise, what worked, what didn’t work, take fifteen to thirty minute to debrief and review what you just did together. Talk about how the lessons learned during team building can apply to being better individually and collectively. Yes, team building is silly and fun, but effective team building makes sure all this silliness has a purpose. #TheBestKind”

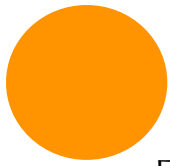
Chapter 8: There is No I in TEAM, but There is a ME p 128-129

I love the introductory quote, by NBA Coach Phil Jackson. It underscores the importance of this chapter’s contents. He said, *The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.*

I also believe the strength of each—the individual(s) and the team—is a byproduct of the coach. We ought to look to and learn from the great ones to understand how they strengthened both. “The Journey of Today” reveals what one of the winningest coaches of all time did. Foudy shares,

The legendary women’s basketball coach Pat Summitt once wrote a letter to one of her freshman players at the University of Tennessee before her first game. That player, Sheila Collins, still has the letter thirty-five years later. Sally Jenkins, a fabulous writer with the *Washington Post* shared the letter in an article when Coach Summitt passed away. It was dated November 22, 1982.

The letter is beautiful...inspiring....worth reading and worth saving. Summitt’s act took time and required introspection. The result was a pearl of great price. I’m grateful that Collins saved and shared her coaches’ written words.



Section 3: SCHOOL

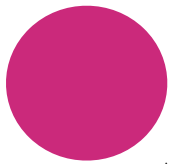
Chapter 9: Awkward is Awesome p 142-145

Foudy speaks directly about our humanity: each and everyone of us can be awkward. She writes “Awkwardness is nondiscriminatory. It’s the biggest common denominator in everyone’s elementary, middle and high school experience. FACT.” She offers two useful tools to navigate through it.

In addition to laughter and the call to “embrace the awkward” she includes:

- “Top 11 Things I wish I had known....”
- Writing a letter to a younger self.

I would invite seniors to create their own list of “Top 11 Things” or “letter to their freshman self.” Their words could be shared at the team banquet, a special gathering for your sports program, etc. And, by sharing our own stories of awkward, we can gain a greater grasp of what it means to be human.



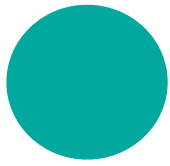
Section 4: COMMUNITY

Chapter 15: The F-Word p 228-230

A friend once told me that in golf you either win or you learn. In other words, a loss—or what some see as failure in sport—is always an opportunity to regroup, reassess and re-examine. Foudy agrees. She writes “failure is not defeat. It simply means you need to adjust. And most importantly, failure is not something to be feared. Often it leads to a new path—a better path. Instead of thinking of failure as the enemy to success, start accepting it as success’s best friend. Because without question, the common denominator of successful leaders is that they all see failure as a gift that keeps on giving.”

But Foudy doesn’t leave the reader with a rally cry to be ok with failure. Instead she addresses the “real” questions athletes and leaders ask e.g. “And what if I fail? What if I simply cannot do it?” She admits that with doubt and questions like these “life can become a wicked maze of stress.” In response she makes a distinction between two kinds of stress. In other words “all stress is not created equal ;-)”

Have your athletes use that same self portrait stretch and list the “good stress” and “bad stress” in their lives. The book explains the difference!



Section 5: LIFE

Chapter 20: Because You Can p 284-285

Foudy concludes *Choose to Matter* with affirmation. The reader—an athlete or an artist, an academic or a work in progress—have what they need. She says “Now is the time to DO.” In addition to leadership quotes from profiles of female leaders, is a space to articulate one’s own definition of leadership. Why? Because you can!

Have your team each identify what “I Choose to....” Why not!

Anne Stricherz is the author of *Pray and Practice with Purpose: A Playbook for the Spiritual Development of Athletes* and written for her blog “Sports and Spirituality since 2009. She has coached girls’ cross country and crew and today is the girls’ golf coach at St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco.

Anne has created viewer’s guides for *You Don’t Know Bo* (ESPN’s 30 for 30 series) as well as *When the Game Stands Tall*. Please contact her for more information