

Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach

The **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** is a philosophical approach to coaching and coach development, promoting participant learning and ownership of that learning through creating awareness, responsibility and self-belief. Many of the ideas embedded in the **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** are not new, but simply a reinforcement of contemporary best practice in coaching and how participants learn most effectively. Our approach aims to create resilient and competent participants, motivated to enjoy their participation in sport and be able to positively influence their own development, regardless of their level of participation, or their level of intellectual impairment.



Why have we developed the Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach?

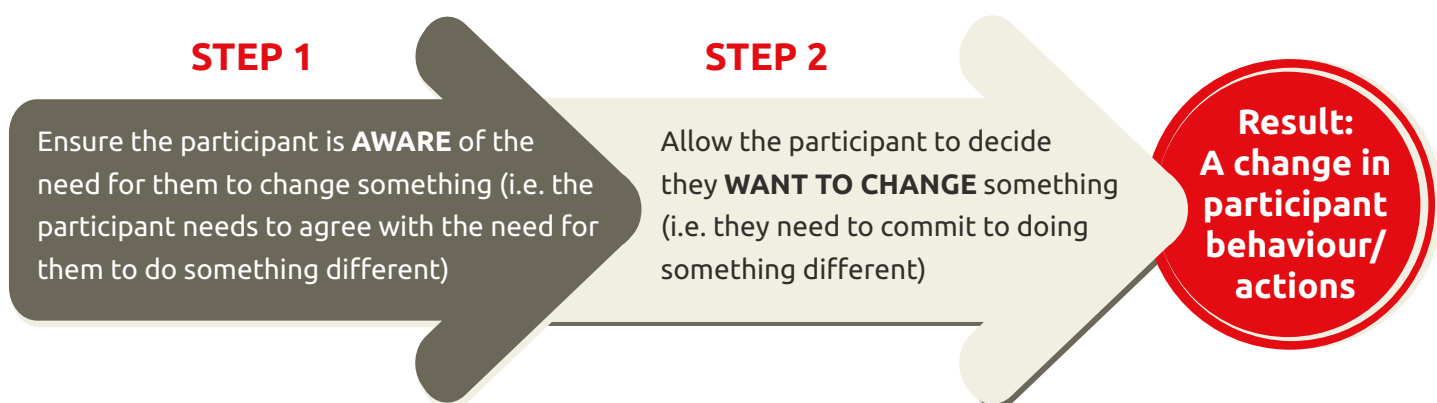
Special Olympics Australia and our partners want to ensure that we support our coaches to be the best they can be, in the coaching environments they wish to operate in. Before continual improvements can be made to our coach development programs, products and/or resources, we need to be very clear about our philosophy of coaching (i.e. how we would like our coaches to operate). The **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** gives us this clarity.

A coach-centred approach, which until recently was seen in Australia and throughout many countries, as the best approach to coaching, is limited to the imagination / knowledge and delivery skills of the coach. This approach also places the coach at the centre of the participant development process, when the participant themselves should be the central focus.

Today, if you ask a group of accredited coaches (coaches of athletes with an intellectual disability, or any athletes) if they've heard of and subscribe to the "**participant-centred**" or "**athlete-centred**" coaching approach, the vast majority will say yes. However, you ask them "why" they support this coaching approach, they often struggle to respond.

For coaches who work really hard in this space, a common response will be, "because it is the participant / athlete who decides what happens next, not me, as their coach". The **Participant-Centred Approach to Coaching** animation describes this well.

Special Olympics Australia coaches don't control what the participants they coach think, feel, believe in, or concentrate on. If a coach wants to change something in their participants (e.g. develop a physical capacity, improve a skill, improve their tactical awareness, change their attitude to training, etc.), they need 2 things:
Awareness + Intent = Change



A VERY common (and mostly incorrect) assumption coaches make is outlined below.



At the centre of the Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach, is that coaches constantly provide direction and support to participants, but they **do not control** their thoughts, feelings, behaviours, or performances.
This coaching approach has coaches ASKING more and telling less!

The **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** encourages a far greater use of participant-centred learning.

Some key reasons for this shift include:

- Individuals and groups have different needs.
- Research shows that participant enjoyment, development and performances increase when coaches tell less and ask more.
- Participants learn best when they have input into what they do in training and during competition; and therefore have ownership of the learning process.
- A participant-centred approach develops players' awareness, ownership and self-belief.

Be able to coach whoever is in front of you!

Note – Although the Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach is participant centred – always, the key skill set we want our coaches to have, is to be able to effectively coach “whoever is in front of them”. The coaching style and strategies used by Special Olympics Australia coaches will vary depending on the physical literacy capabilities (physical, psychological, social and cognitive) of the participants they are working with as well as their interests, goals and personalities. Sometimes, this will mean coaches use a questioning-based approach, whilst in other circumstances, they will use an instructional approach. The key is, they will have the skills needed to *effectively coach whoever is in front of them!*



Raising Coach & Participant Self-Awareness, Responsibility and Self-Belief

In order for **coaches** to also change their behaviour, they need to be AWARE of the need to change, and have the INTENT to make that change.

A key to coaches developing their self-awareness and then their intent to get better at what they do every day, is **self-belief**. If a coach doesn't believe that they have the ability to continually improve, the likelihood of them doing so is very low.

A key focus of the **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** is helping our coaches become more aware of what they are really capable of, what they want to achieve and how THEY might be able to do so. The **Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach** is about coaches having the confidence to try new things and to strive for continual improvement. Special Olympics Australia doesn't want coaches to let a fear of making a mistake, or not achieving their goals, stop them from trying! Sometimes, *“experience is what we get when we don't get the result we want!”*

The only coach you need to be better than, is the coach you were yesterday.

Some core objectives of the Special Olympics Australia Coach Approach:



Coaches and participants defining their own meaning of success



Coaches and participants being more aware of who they are



Coaches and participants taking charge of their development



Coaches and participants being more aware of what they are capable of

