

# TOP 5 COACHING TIPS FOR NEURODIVERGENT ATHLETES

Created in partnership with Neurodiverse Sport. Coaching neurodivergent athletes requires flexibility, empathy, and creativity. Inspired by Karen Nicholls' approach to coaching Zane - a young golfer with ADHD - these top five tips focus on communication, listening, space, positivity, and individuality. These principles can help create an inclusive, supportive environment where neurodivergent athletes can thrive.

## 1. CONVERSATION

Keep communication short and simple to maintain focus.



Karen has found the key to coaching Zane, or indeed any neurodivergent or neurotypical sportsperson, is to always simply have a conversation with them. That conversation might be short and simple, so focus can be maintained, and it should allow two-way interaction.

## 2. LISTENING

Always listen to the athlete's input and perspective.



As such being a good listener is critical so you can get a better understanding of what the player is thinking, feeling and saying.

### 3. SPACE

Always listen to the athlete's input and perspective.



Always give the player space, be it physical or time. And if something is not working, be prepared to stop and restart elsewhere. This could physically be walking around a putting green or just taking a short break so focus can be regathered.

### 4. POSITIVE ENDINGS

Convert negatives to positives. Always end sessions positively.



Confidence is key, so be ready to turn a negative into a positive because there might be a lot of negatives when you've had a round of golf or a lesson. End on a positive.

### 5. INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Work with each person as an individual and adapt your coaching style accordingly



Some players will grasp a coaching point immediately; others may take four lessons. There is no such thing as a coach's textbook because everything is individual. You've got to give them that time to understand it. I don't think there's a right way or a wrong way. You have to adapt your style to the student's needs.