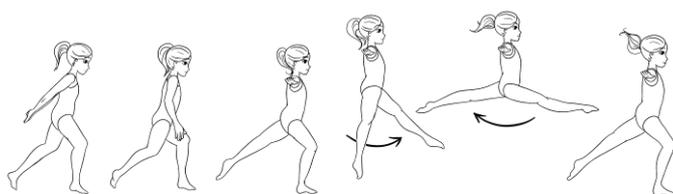


Perfect Balance Gymnastics Books
Book 7 - Courage to Fly
Chapter 10 - Safe Sport Chapter
Page 7 – Safe Sport Conversation Begins
Print version safe sport section is pages 71-74

Chapter 10



Switch Leap on Floor

We wander around the lake for a while and Savannah, Madison, and I try to skip rocks while our moms chat with other parents walking by.

“Okay girls, we should head back over to the dining hall for orientation,” my mom announces.

We walk back to the building where we checked in and they have changed it by setting out several rows of folding chairs. There’s a microphone stand at the front along with a lot of people wearing dark green shirts and jean shorts or black leggings. I recognize some of them as coaches from teams we’ve competed against.

“Is that the judge that used to compete for Utah?” I ask

Courage to Fly

Savannah.

“Yes, Megan Cruz,” Savannah confirms.

“I hope she coaches us.”

We find seats in the middle with enough chairs for all of us to sit together. My mom spots Carmen and her mom and waves them over.

“This is amazing,” Carmen says as she walks up.

“I know, I can’t wait to workout. Did you see the equipment outside?” I ask her.

“No, we just got here. Day camper check-in was later. I haven’t seen anything yet,” she says, taking a seat next to me.

“It’s awesome. You’re going to love it,” Savannah says from the other side of me.

Our moms are chatting together next to us and they quiet down when a familiar coach walks up to the microphone.

“Welcome!” she says, pausing while she lets the room quiet down.

“Welcome gymnasts and parents to our fifth year of Pioneer Kids Gymnastics Camp. I am Ashley Cooper, the camp director. We have a great week ahead of us full of learning and fun. I have an amazing staff and coaches here this summer to make your time at camp productive and memorable.

“First, I would like to introduce our head coach, Chris Stewart.”

The parents clap and a coach walks forward to the microphone.

“Hello everyone! My name is Chris Stewart and we are going to have a lot of fun this week. I have four assistant

PERFECT BALANCE GYMNASTICS SERIES

coaches that are responsible for each of our programs. Megan Cruz is responsible for Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Martin Ramirez for Men's Gymnastics, Morgan Young for Rhythmic Gymnastics, and Parker Hughes for the Trampoline Program.

"All athletes will report to the spring floor at 9:00 a.m. Megan will warm us up together and then we'll split into groups. Trampoline is one group, rhythmic and men's are two groups each. Our artistic gymnasts will be split into six groups based on skill level. We will assess groups this afternoon."

Savannah looks at me with wide eyes, "We better be in the same group," she says. I nod. Of course we'll be in the same group since we're the same level.

"Morning practice is from nine to noon. Then we'll have lunch and a short afternoon practice from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Open Gym is from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m."

Then he introduces all the coaches for the different groups. I'm impressed with how long each of them have been involved in gymnastics.

Finally, the director of the camp, Ashley, walks back up to the microphone. "Thank you Chris. Now that we are familiar with the coaches and the training schedule. I would like to introduce your chef, Diane Coleman, to talk to you about the dining hall."

One of the staff members wearing green approaches the microphone.

"Welcome everyone. My job is to make sure you are fueled up for all the training you are going to do this week. Breakfast is served from 7:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. Lunch is noon to 2:00 p.m. and dinner is from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Courage to Fly

You can drop in anytime during those hours. We are scheduled around practice hours. If you have food allergies I should already know about them. Come see me if you're worried about something."

She continues to talk to us about the healthy meals she has planned and answers a few questions for parents.

The director steps back up to the microphone and says, "Where are my overnight campers?" and about three-fourths of the room raises their hands, including Savannah and I. "Overnight campers, listen up. Here are the rules for the cabins. There is a coach and a parent staying in each cabin. Everyone leaves the cabins in the morning together and they get locked for the day. We have public restrooms here in the dining room and out by the training area.

"After the afternoon training session, cabins will be opened up for the evening. The buddy system here is three people, not two. You should never be alone in a cabin with just one other person. In the late afternoon and evening you will have a chance to rest, hike, play at the lake, or do Open Gym. We will have campfires from 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and lights out by 10:00 p.m. We need you rested to train each day.

"Day campers will be checked in and out here at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. They will have time to play and relax for an hour before they get picked up."

Any questions so far?" she asks us and a few parents have questions about the check-in and out process for day campers.

"That's four and a half hours of gymnastics a day," Carmen whispers to me.

"I know, isn't it great?" I ask. She nods, but looks less

certain.

“I want time to swim in the lake,” Savannah says.

“Before we go,” the director continues. “We have a special guest here today to talk to us about practicing safe sport. What safe sport means is that you should always feel comfortable and safe with your coaches. Dr. Roberts is going to explain safe sport practices to us.”

A smartly dressed lady walks up to the microphone and thanks the director.

“Good morning everyone,” she says, and we say good morning back.

“My name is Helen Roberts and I’m a child psychologist. I work with kids every day to help them with little problems and big problems. I’m happy to be here today to explain to you what behavior is acceptable, what to be aware of, and when to tell a trusted adult if you encounter unacceptable behavior.

“First off, who is a trusted adult?”

Hands fly up and kids are yelling out examples of their trusted adult, which is mostly parents, coaches, and friends.

“All of those answers are correct. It would be an adult that you trust to help you if you ever felt unsafe. I want you to all close your eyes and think about who you trust. I am sure there are several people. Once you have thought of them all, decide on which one is your most trusted adult.”

The room is quiet and I close my eyes. My mom comes to mind first. Then my dad, James, and shockingly, my sister. But she’s not an adult, so I settle on my mom as my trusted adult.

“Okay, now that we all have someone to go to, we are all a little safer. I bet this person loves you no matter what.

Courage to Fly

You can tell them anything and they will help you.

“Now, I am going to talk about acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the gym. First, coaches and trainers should not be giving you gifts or treats that they are not giving other kids. We want to treat all of our athletes equally.”

A hand shoots up and she calls on him.

“What if you win a treat or prize?”

“Great question. If a prize is offered to your entire group and you win it, that’s okay because it was possible for everyone. What we do not allow is an adult singling athletes out and treating them differently.

“Secondly, there should never be just two people in the gym. If you have a private lesson scheduled, then bring a parent or another athlete to watch your extra training session. Remember, the buddy system here is three people.”

More hands go up as parents ask about private lessons at camp and the director has to step back up.

“We don’t need to schedule private lessons here because we offer Open Gym. Sometimes there is only one gymnast at Open Gym. We want to make sure there will always be three people. Plus, this is good information and safe sport habits for these athletes to take home with them.”

She steps back and lets Dr. Roberts continue.

“Okay, so no gifts, and three or more people in the gym. Now we are going to talk about spotting. We have a video to show you examples of appropriate spotting techniques.”

She steps back and Ashley goes to a computer that is off to the side and a video starts up on the wall behind

PERFECT BALANCE GYMNASTICS SERIES

them.

The video shows a girl being spotted by her coaches on back handsprings, cast handstands on bars, body shaping drills, and a few vaults. Everything in the video is similar to how James and Melony spot us. They talk about how spotters should never touch where a bikini covers for girls or where underwear covers for boys.

I remember James once caught me flying out of a round-off back handspring back tuck that I barked on. He caught me mid-air on my waist and bum to keep me from landing on my head. I remember we laughed about it and I never felt like it was wrong. Was that wrong?

The video ends and Dr. Roberts steps forward again.

“Gymnastics is a sport in flight, which means that sometimes you guys are difficult to catch,” she says and we laugh a little.

“Sometimes coaches do make unintentional mistakes and will accidentally hit a body part that your swim suit covers. If that happens, you should expect an apology from your coach and trust your instincts. If your instincts tell you it was an accident, it was probably an accident. If your instincts tell you something weird is going on, that is when you tell a trusted adult.”

More hands go up as kids ask about instincts.

I think about that crazy catch James made a few weeks ago. I’m glad they explained mistakes because I never felt weird about it.

“You all have instincts, trusted adults, and a voice. If for some reason your trusted adult does not listen to you, tell another trusted adult. Do not second guess yourself. You are smart and you will know when something doesn’t

Courage to Fly

seem right. Children have rights. No one gets to mistreat you because you are a child. No one should ask you to keep secrets from your trusted adult.”

More hands go up and we go over several spotting examples. Most kids have experienced what I did and are also confused. Dr. Roberts patiently listens and answers each question.

When she is done answering all of our questions she says, “Let’s review safe sport practices. One, no gifts. Two, at least three people in the gym at all times. Three, spotting should not be where your bikini or underwear covers. Four, you have instincts, listen to them. Five, you have a trusted adult and can tell them your concerns. Six, you have rights and a voice.”

She asks about questions again but by now we are ready to move on. She hands the microphone back to Ashley.

“Thank you Dr. Roberts for speaking with us. One more thing, I forgot to mention the two hiking trails. One goes to a waterfall and the other one leads up to great view of the valley. If you decide to go on a hike, you must check-in with us to tell us what time you are leaving, who you are going with, and which trail you are taking. Of course, it must be a minimum of three people. You will need water, a whistle, and bear spray. And you must check back in when you return. Please don’t forget to check back in, I do not want to send Search and Rescue after a bunch of kids that are here at the lake.

“Okay everyone, let’s get settled in and have an afternoon gymnastics session!”

We cheer at this because we’ve been sitting at

PERFECT BALANCE GYMNASTICS SERIES

orientation for a long time.

Copyright © 2019 Melisa Torres
All rights reserved.
Written by Melisa Torres
Cover Art and Illustrations by ezarago
Illustrations by Alison Ou
Edited by Clara Somers Editing Services
Edited by Patricia Hoopes Professional Editing
Chapter 10 reviewed by Dr. Jake Andreason (safe sport explanation)
ISBN: 978-1-700444-882