

A Call to Character.

USWF
US WRESTLING FOUNDATION



Courage

Humility

Attitude

Respect

Accountability

Commitment

Teamwork

Endurance

Resilience

WRESTLING CHANGES LIVES®
#CALLTOCHARACTER

Photo: Associated Press

A CALL TO CHARACTER

Wrestling is more than a sport. It's a process where character is developed, tested, and refined.

Every challenge you face, every decision you make, and every experience - win or lose - builds character that lasts a lifetime.

This booklet is your guide to embracing the nine core values of **CHARACTER: Courage, Humility, Attitude, Respect, Accountability, Commitment, Teamwork, Endurance, and Resilience.**

These values form the foundation of wrestling and serve as a blueprint for long-term success, helping you learn how to respond to challenges and bring discipline to every area of your life.

In each chapter, you'll discover why each character trait is necessary to be successful.

Included are quotes from legendary wrestlers and practical steps to guide your path.

Start living out these values and become a champion in life.

COURAGE



Photo: Tony Rotundo / Wrestlers are Warriors

"I went 1-30 my first year. That season didn't define me, it taught me that courage isn't winning, it's showing up again when every reason says not to."

- Helen Maroulis, First U.S. Olympic Champion in Women's Wrestling

Courage

Take on Challenges

Courage is the spark that ignites every wrestler's journey. It's the decision to step into the unknown, take risks, and face adversity head-on.

It's the fire in your chest when you step onto the mat, heart pounding, as you face an opponent who might seem unbeatable.

Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's the choice to keep moving through it.

It's showing up, taking your shot, and staying in the match when things get tough.

Wrestling teaches that courage is a muscle, the more you use it, the stronger it gets.

Each time you face fear and push forward, you build the strength to take on whatever comes next, both on and off the mat.

How to Build Courage:

Step into the challenge, the hard, the unknown.

In practice:

- Practice shooting on the best wrestler in the room.
- Learn some shot recovery techniques.
- Perfect a go-to move.

In competition:

- Shoot on the whistle.
- If they stop it, hit your shot recovery move.
- Hit your go-to move.

In school:

- Raise your hand in class.
- Be the first to say hello.
- Invite people to sit with you at lunch.

At home:

- Start the hard conversation.
- Admit when you're wrong.
- Do the chore you've never done.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

"Courage isn't not feeling fear, it's doing what's right and giving your best, even when fear shows up."

Questions:

1. What does courage look like on our team?
2. What keeps us from being courageous sometimes?
3. How can courage help us become better teammates?
4. Who is someone, in wrestling or life, who inspires you with their courage?
5. How can we, as a team, show courage this week?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler write one small act of courage they'll commit to this week.

HUMILITY



Photo: Arizona State University

"I got pinned in practice wrestle-offs and that was very humbling. As time went on... I started to really learn really what I was made of on the inside."

- Anthony Robles, NCAA Champion

Humility

Learn from Others

Humility is the quiet strength that defines a true champion.

It helps athletes recognize weaknesses without being threatened by them.

When a wrestler isn't overly focused on protecting their ego, they're more open to coaching, feedback, and learning from teammates and opponents.

This mindset accelerates improvement because mistakes become information rather than personal failures.

In competition, humility is revealed by not overreacting to a win or a loss.

This sets the foundation for long-term growth and success.

How to Grow in Humility:

Practice humility through your actions.

In practice:

- Ask your coach for feedback.
- Work on something you need to fix.
- Teach your moves to your teammates.

In competition:

- Win with class. Lose with grace.
- Shake hands and say “good match”.
- Ask your coach for an improvement to make.

In school:

- Ask for help before you get behind.
- Find someone that needs a friend.
- Expand your circle.

At home:

- Say “thank you” often.
- Listen fully before you answer.
- Apologize fast. No “buts.”

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

"Humility means putting the team before yourself, learning from others, and knowing you always have room to grow."

Questions:

1. What does humility look like in a wrestler?
2. How can humility make our team stronger?
3. Why is it hard to stay humble after success?
4. What's one thing you've learned recently from a teammate or coach?
5. How does humility help us handle losses or mistakes?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler thank or compliment a teammate for something they've learned from them.

ATTITUDE



Photo: Tony Rotundo / Wrestlers are Warriors

*“Everything I do is through a positive attitude.
It makes the work more fun for everyone.”*

– Kennedy Blades, Olympic Silver Medalist

Attitude

Be Positive

Your attitude is the lens through which you see every challenge.

A wrestler with the right attitude turns obstacles into opportunities, losses into lessons, and pain into progress.

A positive attitude isn't about ignoring difficulties; it's about approaching every situation with energy, determination, and the belief that you can overcome it.

Your attitude shapes your effort, your performance, and your ability to bounce back when things don't go your way.

It affects how you respond to setbacks, how you connect with teammates and coaches, and how you handle pressure in life.

Choosing positivity isn't always easy, it means refusing to let negativity control you.

How to Develop a Positive Attitude:

Choose your attitude every day. Positivity fuels comebacks.

In practice:

- Bring positive energy into the room.
- Use words that build others up.
- Help someone who's struggling.

In competition:

- Talk to yourself like a champ.
- Share joy with your teammates.
- Celebrate effort, not just outcome.

In school:

- Walk with confidence and gratitude.
- Greet people with a smile.
- Replace "I can't" with "I'm learning."

At home:

- No complaining, offer solutions.
- Thank your ride and your meals.
- Start the day with one win: bed made.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

"Attitude is something you control every day, it's how you respond when things don't go your way."

Questions:

1. How does attitude affect your performance on the mat?
2. What does a positive attitude look like during tough practices?
3. How does your attitude influence your teammates?
4. How can we help each other stay positive when things get hard?
5. What's one way you can reset your attitude when it slips?

Team Challenge:

Encourage one teammate every day this week, especially when they're struggling.

RESPECT



“The challenges of being a wrestler teach you to respect yourself. After you learn to respect yourself, you will learn to respect others.”

**– Cael Sanderson, Olympic Champion,
Head Coach, Penn State University**

Respect

Treat Others with Dignity

Respect is the soul of wrestling.

It's how a wrestler honors coaches, teammates, and opponents.

While humility means keeping your ego in check and staying coachable, respect means recognizing the value in others and treating them accordingly.

It's in the firm handshake before and after a match, the way you listen to your coach, and the gratitude you show to others.

Off the mat, it's how you speak, act, and respond to people.

Respectful wrestlers listen more than they talk, keep language clean, and celebrate others' success.

Respect isn't about agreeing with everyone, it's about valuing the humanity in others, even when you compete or disagree.

How to Show Respect:

Show respect in every interaction.

In practice:

- Eyes on coach. No side talk.
- Help teammates above and below you improve.
- Clean the mats like a pro.

In competition:

- Shake hands with sincerity.
- Cheer teammates, not drama.
- Let the officials make the calls. Without protest.

In school:

- Be polite to teachers.
- Hold doors open for other people.
- No trash talking online or anywhere.

At home:

- Don't bring your phone to the table.
- Say "please" and "thank you."
- Keep shared spaces neat.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

“Respect means treating others, and yourself, with dignity. It’s shown in how we listen, how we work, and how we handle wins and losses.”

Questions:

1. What does respect look like during practice?
2. How can you show respect for your coaches and teammates?
3. How do you show respect to an opponent?
4. What’s a sign of disrespect that hurts team culture?
5. How can we raise the level of respect in this room?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler name one way they’ll show extra respect this week, to a parent, teammate, teacher, or opponent.

ACCOUNTABILITY



Photo: Tony Rotundo / Wrestlers are Warriors

“When you step on the mat, there’s nowhere to hide. That’s accountability.”

– Brandon Slay, Olympic Champion

Accountability

Take Responsibility

Wrestling strips away excuses.

On the mat, there's no one to blame but yourself.

Accountability means owning your choices, effort, preparation, and results.

You can't point fingers or shift blame.

It's about being honest with yourself, knowing where you stand, and doing the work to improve.

It's showing up on time, giving your best in practice, and following through on what you say you'll do.

When things go wrong, it's not about guilt, it's about growth.

The best wrestlers don't hide from mistakes; they use them as tools for improvement.

Owning your actions builds trust, strengthens discipline, and prepares you for the challenges that come your way.

How to Practice Accountability:

Be accountable today.

In practice:

- Track weight, sleep, food, and water daily.
- Own missed cues. Fix them next go.
- Shower immediately after practice.

In competition:

- Pack with a checklist. No excuses.
- Review film and write three fixes.
- Make weight the right way.

In school:

- Use a planner. Deadlines visible.
- Contact teachers before conflicts.
- Study on the bus. No dead time.

At home:

- Set your alarm. Get up on your own.
- Do laundry before it's urgent.
- Admit mistakes, then repair them.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

"Accountability means taking responsibility for your actions, on and off the mat, no excuses."

Questions:

1. What does accountability mean to you as an athlete?
2. How can teammates hold each other accountable without tearing each other down?
3. Why is it important to own mistakes instead of blaming others?
4. What happens to a team that avoids accountability?
5. How can we create a culture where honesty and ownership are respected?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler write down one thing they'll take ownership of this week.

COMMITMENT



Photo: Levi Ventura

“Be disciplined or be disciplined.”

**– Jordan Burroughs, Olympic
and 6x World Champion**

Commitment

Be Disciplined in Everything

Commitment is the application of character in every area of your life, even when you don't feel like it.

Wrestling is about control, but the person you must control first is yourself.

It's the daily decision to stay disciplined - when you wake up and go to bed, what you eat and drink, who you hang out with, how you spend your time, what words you say, how you treat others.

When you build strong habits, you take control of your future. That's the power of commitment.

If you are not disciplined, you can be disqualified.

Missing a practice or breaking a rule might mean missing a match, or worse.

It's not just about doing what's easy. It's about doing what's right.

How to Deepen Commitment:

Discipline in small things builds strength in big things.

In practice:

- Prioritize your schedule. Don't add conflicts.
- Attend every practice. Even on bad days.
- Communicate with coaches and parents.

In competition:

- Control your emotions.
- Wrestle to win the last point.
- Bring healthy food and hydration.

In school:

- Ask to sit in the front row of class.
- Set specific times to use your phone.
- Finish assignments two days early.

At home:

- Block daily study time. Non-negotiable.
- Prep meals and lay out gear nightly.
- Leave your phone outside of your room.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

“Commitment means bringing discipline to every area of your life.”

Questions:

1. What does commitment look like in our wrestling room?
2. What does commitment look like in your daily life?
3. Which is harder to control?
4. How do we stay committed?
5. How can our team raise the level of commitment together?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler share one thing they're committed to doing for the next week.

TEAMWORK



Photo: Nebraska Athletics

*“Your team pushes you to places
you can’t go on your own.”*

**– Mark Manning, Head Coach,
University of Nebraska**

Teamwork

Work Together

Wrestling may seem like an individual sport, but no champion stands alone.

You need a team around you: a partner to push you, a coach to guide you, a family to support you.

TEAM is best defined as Together Everyone Achieves More.

It's the power of the team that keeps everyone moving forward to a goal.

True teamwork is the camaraderie in the practice room, the encouragement when things get tough, and the shared belief that drives everyone to give their best.

How to Build Teamwork:

Build your team by supporting others.

In practice:

- Rotate partners. Help rookies level up.
- Call out energy, not people.
- Share something that works for you.

In competition:

- Be the loudest positive voice.
- Hand out water, towel, and belief.
- Celebrate everyone's win like your own.

In school:

- Be loyal on social media and in social settings.
- Greet people in the hallways.
- Include the new kid at lunch.

At home:

- Ask, "What can I do to help?"
- Do an extra task without being told.
- Run family logistics like a captain.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

“Teamwork isn’t just about winning matches; it’s about helping each other every day.”

Questions:

1. What makes a great teammate?
2. How do we help each other grow as wrestlers?
3. How does communication affect teamwork?
4. What breaks down teamwork and how can we fix it?
5. What can each of us do to make this team stronger?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler do one act this week to help a teammate, inside or outside of practice.

ENDURANCE



*“Endurance is built when you’re tired, sore,
and tempted to quit,
but you keep going anyway.”*

**– Dan Russell, 4x NCAA Champion
& Author, *Finish Strong***

Endurance

Finish Strong

Endurance is the will to keep going when the going gets tough.

Wrestling demands physical stamina, but it also requires a mind that refuses to quit.

Matches may last six minutes, but the preparation is a marathon of workouts, habits, and relentless persistence.

Endurance is built in the moments when you're tired, sore, and tempted to stop, but choose to keep going.

Every time you push through one more drill, one more sprint, or one more tough day, you strengthen your ability to finish strong and train your mind for any challenge.

How to Develop Endurance:

Train your mind and body to go the distance.

In practice:

- Win the last :30 seconds of every go.
- Add one extra sprint after conditioning.
- Breathe through your nose between reps.

In competition:

- Handfight to set the tone.
- Run to center after out of bounds.
- Push the pace in the third period.

In school:

- 30-minute focus blocks. Timer on.
- Finish the assignment in one sit.
- Review notes nightly, not crammed.

At home:

- Walk or bike for errands.
- Stretch while watching TV.
- Sleep 8+. Guard it.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

“Endurance isn’t just about lasting longer, it’s about refusing to quit when things get hard.”

Questions:

1. When do you feel most tested in practice or competition?
2. What helps you keep going when your body wants to stop?
3. How does mental endurance matter as much as physical endurance?
4. How can we help each other push through tough moments?
5. Is there a time you surprised yourself with your endurance?

Team Challenge:

During a hard workout this week, pick one moment to push harder.

RESILIENCE



*“Don’t judge yourself by wins or losses.
Win or learn and you’ll never lose.”*

**– Mean Gene Mills,
Most Pins in NCAA History**

Resilience

Bounce Back

Losing and suffering are facts of life.

While painful and unpleasant, they are the stimulus for growth.

Losses sting, injuries hurt, and setbacks challenge your spirit.

But every time you get knocked down, you have a choice – to stay down or get back up.

It's how you respond that makes the difference.

Resilience means using every setback as fuel to improve, refocus, and work smarter.

Instead of reacting with disappointment, respond with a positive attitude, evaluate your preparation, listen to your coach, do a little extra, and make the necessary changes.

On the mat and in life, your story isn't defined by what happens to you, it's defined by how you respond.

How to Strengthen Resilience:

Respond, don't react.

In practice

- Ask for feedback for a move that's not working.
- Drill the position you hate for 10 minutes.
- Reset face. Next rep, clean slate.

In competition

- Gave up a takedown? Hit your reversal.
- Injury timeout? Breathe, plan, execute.
- Next match mindset within 10 minutes.

In school

- Retake, rewrite, redo to improve.
- Ask for a second chance. Then earn it.
- Turn a zero into a fifty with late work.

At home

- Re-do chores to perfection.
- Communicate. Ask for help.
- Take a walk to get a new start.

Team Application:

Coach's Intro:

“Resilience means you get back up, every time, no matter how many times you’ve been knocked down.”

Questions:

1. How do you respond after a loss or mistake?
2. What’s the difference between failing and giving up?
3. How does resilience show up in everyday life, not just in matches?
4. How can teammates help each other stay resilient?
5. What’s one challenge you’ve overcome that made you stronger?

Team Challenge:

Each wrestler share one obstacle they’re working to overcome, and one way they’ll keep fighting through it.

Conclusion

Wrestling is more than a sport. It's a way of life.

The mat is your classroom, and every moment is a lesson in character.

By having the discipline to embrace Courage, Humility, Attitude, Respect, Accountability, Commitment, Teamwork, Endurance, and Resilience, you're not just building a better wrestler, you're building a better person.

Carry these values with you, on and off the mat, and you'll find that the character you develop in wrestling will help you through every challenge life throws your way.

This is your call to CHARACTER.

Answer it with everything you've got.

A CALL TO CHARACTER

"Wrestling has always been more than a sport; it's a training ground for life. A Call to Character helps wrestlers and coaches adopt the traits that lead to long-term success."

– **Jack Clark**, Executive Director, U.S. Wrestling Foundation

"There's a real call to character in our world today and wrestling answers it. This sport challenges young people to learn how to respond in a positive way."

– **Mike Moyer**, Executive Director, National Wrestling Coaches Association

"The National Wrestling Hall of Fame honors those who transformed the lessons of the mat into lifelong triumphs. It was their character that lifted them beyond competition, guiding them to success in every arena of life."

– **Lee Roy Smith**, Executive Director, National Wrestling Hall of Fame

"My hope is that character will be what everyone takes away from wrestling. It's the prize that lasts forever."

– **Rich Bender**, Executive Director, USA Wrestling

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