

# UNWANTED

## ERRANT COACH

### AKA

- Overly Helpful Parent
- Resident Consultant
- Interfering Sibling
- Over Zealous Friend
- Generous Teacher, etc

### CRIME: OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

- Aiding and Abetting a Problem Solution
- Helping the team TOO MUCH
- Highly correlated with adult competitiveness and lack of appreciation for the true value of the Odyssey of the Mind program, philosophy, and rules

### SENTENCE: 1–100 POINT PENALTY each offense

- Disappointment of the team
- Possible disqualification
- Suspension of the team from the program...if it continues year after year

### REMARKS:

- The team is the BIG loser in this scenario-they receive penalty points & miss out on a greater sense of accomplishment
- The perpetrator may suffer anguish, guilt, humiliation
- Team members may find themselves “guilty by association” and/or forced to lie to the judges

### WARNING:

### AVOIDANCE AND RESTRAINT ARE STRONGLY ADVISED!!!

These people are **ARMED**

(with too much information or a lack of understanding of the OotM philosophy)

And **DANGEROUS**

(to the Spirit of Odyssey)

## COACHES:

The above UNWANTED poster may be a bit heavy-handed, but unfortunately, **Outside Assistance is a BIG problem.** Outside Assistance can and should be avoided by all coaches through adequate training, familiarity with the Odyssey of the Mind rules and strict adherence to the principles that underlie the program. Parents and supporters also need to be told what they can and cannot do to "help" the team.

The foundation upon which Odyssey of the Mind rests is the belief that the solution that the team presents for judging at an Odyssey competition is "**pure.**" This means that the team members, and **only the team members**, have been the sole contributors to their solution (the ideas, designs, constructions, script, artwork, costumes, etc.) of that problem. Stated another way, it means that the solution has not been "tainted" by any outside influences.

**The most difficult job** for many coaches is to **be an observer** and **allow the team** to do the thinking, to work through the problems, to find the solutions, and to make the mistakes all by themselves. It is critical that the coach understand that his or her role is to be **a facilitator.**

Odyssey is first and foremost an educational program where the **students learn by doing.** Pride and confidence really shines when **ALL** the ideas and work comes together from those team members.

ASK QUESTIONS, instead of GIVING SOLUTIONS.

GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT, instead of OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE.

## What Do Odyssey Coaches Do?

### COACHES:

- help a team understand that it is the team who has the answers to their questions.
- sit on their hands and bite their tongues.
- give encouragement, not assistance.
- collect team-selected materials.
- provide a safe and nurturing environment where creativity can flourish.
- facilitate the team's cooperative interaction.
- make lists and schedule meetings.
- question the team to higher and higher levels of creativity.
- find the unique and diverse talents of EVERY person on the team so that  
**the solution comes from and belongs to ALL of them.**

Odyssey of the Mind, in its simplest form, means that **the kids do all the work**, come up with all the ideas, and use their own ingenuity to solve the problems. If you are an expert in some area that ties in with your team's problem, or you think you KNOW how it should be done, you are at risk of influencing your team's solution unless you practice extreme vigilance. There is a fine line between providing information of a general nature - like what a team could read in a book or get from another similar resource - and providing information not generally available to all teams, information which is custom tailored to the team's problem. Watch out for this - ask yourself often if you are stepping over that line! A coach of a technical problem is truly at risk here, but any well-meaning "expert" eager to share her or his talents and skills can also be Public Enemy #1 to the Odyssey of the Mind process.

### **Be the coach, not a personal trainer for the team.**

A consultant that a team invites to a meeting shares some general knowledge and information and then leaves. If the coach becomes the resident expert, and is constantly monitoring and correcting team errors and continuously teaching, then he/she is probably guilty of intervening and an Outside Assistance penalty should be levied against that team who was not given the opportunity to solve their problem alone.

The kids on your team will, with good coaching, solve their own problem. Their solution may look nothing like you envisioned – but that's the whole point, isn't it?

### **COACH, DON'T ENCROACH!**

- Jill Schoonmaker, NHOM

## More Notes to PARENTS & COACHES:

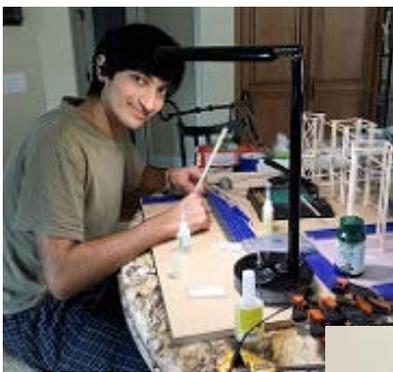
As adults we should always try to set a positive example for the young people with which we are involved. We must set an example that holds honesty and integrity in the highest regard.

"Winning at all costs" should not be the goal of an Odyssey of the Mind team. It is the process and what is learned "along the way" that should be important.

If the young people on the team cannot do something on their own, they should find an alternative way to accomplish the task. Adults and non-team members should adopt a general "HANDS OFF" attitude. If you are not sure if what you are doing could be outside assistance, it is best not to do anything or to stop what you are doing.

We must not forget why we are participating in the Odyssey of the Mind program. Saying it's okay to break the rules because "others are doing it" is wrong. When we as adults break the rules and are dishonest, consider the message this sends to the impressionable young people in our care.

Fight against Outside Assistance every day, in every way you know how.



## Outside Assistance – Yes or No

### This IS Outside Assistance Coaches CANNOT...

#### Conception and Design –

- \*Verbalize your own ideas/solutions to the team
- \*Have parents/friends/etc. do the same
- \*Ask leading questions that cause the team to think of “your ideas”
- \*Have a resource person instruct the team on engineering techniques to specifically improve their unique solution

#### Construction/Preparation/Practice –

- \*Use a power tool on the team’s actual solution
- \*Demonstrate a construction technique specifically on the team’s actual solution
- \*Hold a team member’s hand while performing a task on their solution
- \*Use prior year’s props with a different team makeup
- \*Help work on the team’s solution (only the actual team can do this)
- \*Help finish a prop due to lack of time (team members must solve this situation)
- \*Give “stage directions” – e.g. “You need to speak louder, stand there, etc.” (A team member should be the “Stage Director” or the team reviews video and makes decisions on improvement)
- \*Hold a dress rehearsal where constructive or verbal criticism is given to the team by non-team members (a dress rehearsal is fine, it is the critical feedback that is outside assistance)

#### Performance –

- \*Help the team with anything – costumes, hair, make-up, repair broken props, etc.
- \*Plug electrical cord into performance site outlet
- \*Tell the team where to place a prop
- \*Prompt a “stuck” team member
- \*Help in any way during the team’s performance

## This IS NOT Outside Assistance Coaches CAN...

#### Conception and Design –

- \*Help the team to understand the general rules of the Program Guide and find definitions in the Glossary
- \*Explain the Long-Term Problem to the team (without specific solution hints)
- \*Conduct brainstorming sessions for both Long-Term and Spontaneous
- \*Ask the team questions to make sure its solution is well thought out
- \*Give the team “homework” assignments based on THEIR ideas
- \*Write down the team’s ideas and/or instructions in the team’s words
- \*Have a resource person instruct the team on techniques – sewing, painting, acting photography, sawing/hammering, construction
- \*Watch films, videos, and live theater

#### Construction/Preparation/Practice –

- \*Plug electrical cords into an outlet during practice
- \*Move equipment and materials for the team
- \*Demonstrate the proper use of tools on something other than the team’s solution
- \*Have the team participate in a basic skills workshop
- \*Use leftover materials from prior year to create new props, etc.
- \*Schedule practice sessions
- \*Help the team improve its Spontaneous skills
- \*Critically evaluate Spontaneous sessions
- \*Have the team participate in a Spontaneous workshop

#### Performance –

- \*Check in and receive Registration packet
- \*Help move the props up to Pre-Staging
- \*Help the team with props after the performance is over
- \*Help the team “warm-up” for Spontaneous
- \*Obtain the team’s raw scores after their performance and share these with the team