

Train Like a Champion

From the practice of Elliott McCray, Ed.S., The McCray Learning Lab

What this builds (transformative SEL): Agency (“I can do it”).

This comic turns a sports-psychology lesson into a kid-sized story. Riley loses a game, learns to calm the alarm, flip “can’t” with YET, read losses as clues, ask her coach, meet real champions who grew, make one real bounce-back choice, play her best game yet, and pass the lesson on: the mind game that builds champions.

Research basis: It draws on Carol Dweck’s mindset research and the deliberate-practice findings (Anders Ericsson) that skill grows mostly through focused effort, not fixed, inborn talent.

The champions are real and factual. Michael Jordan, Sheryl Swoopes, and Wilma Rudolph are presented with accurate, well-documented stories, framed around the work they kept doing. The illustrations are stylized, anonymous athletes, not depictions of these individuals.

Try at home / practice: after each part, ask your athlete for one real example from their own week. Catch them using a “can’t” phrase and add “yet” together.

This is a practice tool for rehearsing skills, not therapy, counseling, or a clinical service.

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For grown-ups: a companion practice for the adults in this child’s corner: [Coaching the Loss](#).

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