



# STMA Boys Basketball



## *Character Strong December Newsletter*

**The mission of STMA Basketball Program is to foster a culture of positivity where kids learn from success as well as failure, become elite basketball players and even better teammates; develop a diverse skill set in the present that will allow them to own their futures and fall in love with the game.**

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Strong*

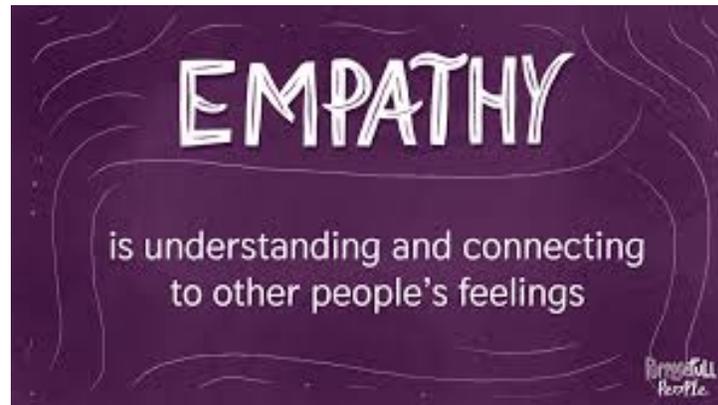
### **Purpose**

Our aim extends beyond building a top-tier basketball program; we are also dedicated to shaping outstanding young men who will bring pride to our community.

### **December Important Dates**

- **6th & 7th–Elk River Travel Tournament**
- **11th–STMA Boys Basketball Season Tip-Off Event at STMA HS Gym**
- **13th & 14th–STMA Travel Tournament**

## Character Strong Trait of the Month: Empathy



We have completed two months of the 2025-2026 season. Thank you all for your continued support of the STMA Boys Youth Basketball Association. Last month, we introduced “Gratitude” as our third Character Strong trait. Even though the month of November is over and we are moving forward with “Empathy” as our next trait, it is important that we don’t forget what we learned about Gratitude. Players, coaches, and families need to continue to be grateful each day in the gym and in our community.

**Gratitude & Empathy are deeply connected because they support both personal growth and team success.**

- **Team cohesion: empathy helps players understand teammates’ feelings and perspective; gratitude reinforces appreciation for contributions, creating trust and cooperation.**
- **Gratitude and empathy skills transfer off the court too—they build better friendships, leadership skills, and community involvement.**

Gratitude and Empathy work hand-in-hand as empathy reduces blame and defensiveness and gratitude makes feedback easier to give and receive.

### How can players show **Empathy**?

- **Listening Actively:** Give your full attention when a coach or teammate speaks, ask clarifying questions, and reflect back what you heard to show you care.
- **Offering Support:** Notice when a teammate seems frustrated, anxious, or tired—offer to help with drills, encourage a break, or simply ask yourself, “I wonder how I can help?” and “What would I appreciate from other people if I were in the same situation?” Then offer to help.
- **Stepping Into Others’ Shoes:** Before critiquing a mistake, recall a time you struggled and frame feedback around “I had that experience before...how are you handling it?” and offer to help if needed.
- **Respecting Differences:** Acknowledge each teammates’ background, personality, and learning style—adjust how you communicate to meet them where they’re at.
- **Being Mindful of Emotions:** Recognize when coaches or officials are under pressure; maintain a calm tone, avoid escalation, and approach tense moments with understanding.

### How can coaches show **Empathy**?

- **Observing Beyond Performance:** Track players’ body language and mood—if someone seems off, follow up privately to ask how they’re doing on and off the court.
- **Recognize small contributions:** Rotate praise beyond scoring and recognize defense, hustle plays, good passes, being a good teammate, etc.
- **Validating Emotions:** After a tough loss or poor practice, say “I know that stung—let’s talk through it,” giving space for players to process their feelings.
- **Creating a Safe Space:** Invite players to share academic, family, or social concerns without fear of judgment and connect them with resources when needed.
- **Two-minute check-ins:** After practice or game, each player names one teammate who helped them and why.
- **Celebrate effort and growth.**

### How can families show **Empathy**?

- **Engaging in Active Listening:** After games or practices, let your child vent without interruption—validate their feelings before offering advice or solutions.
- **Recognizing External Pressures:** Understand the demands of school, work, and life—be flexible and communicate early if family commitments conflict with team events.
- **Focus on effort and learning:** Praise hard work, resilience, and improvement, not only scores and wins.
- **Respecting Individual Journeys:** Avoid comparing your child to siblings or teammates; focus on their personal milestones and effort.
- **Supporting Mental Well-Being:** Learn to spot signs of stress or burnout, and encourage breaks, mindfulness exercises, or conversations with a trusted mentor.
- **Modeling Empathetic Behavior:** Demonstrate kindness and patience in your interactions with coaches, officials, and other parents while your child observes.
- **Encouraging Peer Connection:** Facilitate team social events, study groups, or carpooling so players build deeper bonds and look out for one another.



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## Character Dare Challenge

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The STMA Boys Youth Basketball Association invites all players, coaches, and families to demonstrate empathy by supporting the STMA Food Shelf. Please bring your items to our annual STMA Youth Basketball Tip-Off event. Thank you for your support!