We are rolling into summer and for many youth that means school is out and summer sports are just beginning. Sports teams and coaches have an opportunity to create a strong community, especially for young men, that is not based on violence.

“For the millions of adults who played sports as youth, we can all recall a memorable experience with one of our coaches. No matter if the encounter was positive or negative, it had a great impact on self-image/identity, love for the sport, our character development and the way we live life.

Coaches are similar to teachers in the way that their job description demands them to instruct, improve and/or train a student to become better at any given subject. However, coaches are different from teachers because they control access to the game the students love and they have autonomy in handling conflicts, adversity and interactions with others in any manner they see fit without consequences. As a result, coaches have a uniquely powerful influence on our youth.

To someone who is given much power, much should be required of one. We invest so much into youth sports and its coaches. We invest a lot in our children’s time and their social-emotional growth. We invest our hard-earned money in the numerous expenses associated with our children playing organized competitive sports. But honestly, what do we require of these coaches to whom we’ve given so much power over our youth? Do we require(expect coaches to assist in building our youth’s positive self-image and identity and character? Do we expect our coaches to serve as role models for expectations of our youth’s behavior and character off the field? Or do we get caught up in the superficial aspect of sports - the winning at all cost mentality and
willingness to put our children in front of any former successful Collegiate or Varsity athlete that can make them better at a sport regardless of the social-emotional toll it takes on our children?

Coaches have the ears and hearts of our youth and they have the buy-in from our parents and families. Coaches have an opportunity to create a positive and lasting impact in youth’s perspectives on healthy masculinity and femininity. We all have an opportunity to guarantee that we are graduating good athletes who are even better men and women off the field."

Jerome currently works for the University of Wisconsin Madison and is a member of Christ The Solid Rock Baptist Church in addition to his role on the Power of One Leadership Committee.

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**Action Steps**

1. Watch Joe Ehrmann’s TEDx Talk as he discusses his work to transform the culture of sports.

2. Watch the film *The Mask You Live In* with a coach and/or other parents of your child’s team, then discuss the content of the film.

3. Not a parent? Take a moment to think critically of the behavior of athletes on the teams that you play on and the teams that we love. From summer volleyball leagues to professional sports.

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**Power of One**

We all have the power to change harmful attitudes, to speak up, and to support the work to end domestic abuse. It is the power of one voice, one message, one conversation, one intervention. The act of helping one leads to the impact of helping all. One. And for all.