

# Fixing "Broken Windows"

Written for AYSO



Malcolm Gladwell's book, *The Tipping Point*, describes the "Broken Windows" theory of crime reduction. Would-be criminals enter a neighborhood to find broken windows, graffiti and trash on the streets. They conclude, "This is a place we can do business!" They tend to avoid the well-maintained neighborhoods. New York City used this theory to reduce crime by painting over graffiti, picking up trash, and fixing broken windows.

Right now you might be wondering how this relates to your Region.

On the soccer field "broken windows" occur when someone dishonors the sport with actions such as yelling at the referee or disrespecting an opponent. If the culprit is allowed to get away with this behavior, others quickly conclude this is the way fans act in this Region, and more and more windows are broken.

As AYSO leaders, you can fix broken windows with swift intervention. There are two levels of intervention: informal and formal. You can tell if you have a healthy "Honoring the Game" culture if most broken windows are fixed informally. This includes gentle, low-key reminders that fans are in a Kids Zone where everyone has agreed to Honor the Game. This reminder can come from a parent, a board member, or a coach, and it is often all that is needed to get this fan back in line.

Sometimes informal intervention doesn't carry enough weight. Formal interventions include official warnings from the coach, referee, or board member stating that if the negative behavior does not stop, the offending fan(s) will be asked to leave the field. Although few situations every reach this level, it is important to have a formal intervention strategy in place in your Region.

*To find out more about fixing broken windows, visit the Positive Coaching Alliance web site at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org).*