



Parent & Coach Partnership

Coaches of youth sports often find the most challenging part of their role is managing the relationships with parents of their players. This is an important relationship to foster. The key to managing this successfully is to meet the parents before and during the season to ensure that the parents understand:

- your coaching philosophy
- the team's objectives for the season
- what is expected of them and their children
- what the lines of communication are
- how they can be involved and help out during the season
- how to deal with any issues they may have
- the team rules

Useful Guidelines to communicate to Parents:

- **Parents Sideline Role** – Is to encourage and support their child and their team-mates. It is not the role of the parent to coach their child from the sideline, that is the role of the coach. All this does is confuse the child. Parents yelling instructions to a player involved in the play, under pressure and trying to make the decisions that the game requires is confusing and is scientifically proven to diminish performance (refer to the book, Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence by Daniel Goleman).
- **Parents Respecting Officials** – Practice what we preach! We teach our kids to respect authority figures (parents, teachers, coaches, referees etc). It is unsettling and confusing to all children involved when a parent loses their cool and reacts inappropriately to an umpire, especially a youth umpire.
- **Parents Questioning the Coach** – If you want to be coach, put your hand up next time! When parents question coaching decisions they undermine the coaches' authority and adversely affect the player-coach relationship. This type of behavior results in kids being indecisive in the game as they start to focus on the things they can't control like coaching decisions rather than focusing all their energies on the things they can control such as their attitude and their effort etc. This behavior will also impact the child's ability to form positive relationships with their coaches in the future which will ultimately impact on future selections.
- **Parents Commenting negatively on the play of Teammates'** – Keep your thoughts to yourself! Comments like these destroys the critical trust that teammates need in each

other and their coach and teaches kids that it's okay to say disparaging comments about how their peers and friends play sport.

- The Ride Home – Keep it positive and framed around what your child wants to talk about. Coaches generally don't give feedback straight after a game for a reason – athletes are tired, possibly emotional and need time to reflect on the game themselves. . It's best to touch base with the coach if you want to help your child with giving feedback as providing mixed/contrary messages to the coach is counter-productive for all involved.

- **Developing Character:**

- The most important learnings for your child in their sporting experiences are the skills and knowledge they can transfer into their everyday life. Whilst your child's talent has opened the sporting door for them, it's their leadership skills and character traits that will ultimately take them to the top and keep them there - in sport, school, work, relationships – life in general.
- Encourage independence and accountability by talking to your child about how they could be organising themselves rather than you organising them (packing hockey gear, organizing liquids and recovery food etc).
- Encourage broader thinking when things don't quite go to plan. Try to explore some positives from another angle (a silver lining) and empathy for another person's circumstances or point of view.
- While it is important for you to always be there to listen to your child's issues and feelings it is also important to help them think of constructive solutions to their problems. Listening to them and validating their emotions and feelings is an important part of the process as well as thinking of constructive solutions. Providing your child with tools to remain composed in the heat of the moment, eg a self-control routine is also a powerful way to help your child deal with adversity in life – eg take a deep breath, turn away from person/incident and count backwards from 100 or engage in self-talk etc.
- Always praise your child for their effort rather than their ability as this sends the right message to your child about how to improve their sporting performance on an ongoing basis. For more reading on this topic see Dr Carol Dwecks' Mindset: The New Psychology of Success book.