

TOP TIP #7

There's always room for more people who care about your child.

Participation in youth sport typically coincides with two key psychosocial development stages that can be broadly divided by age: children (ages 6-11) and adolescent (ages 12-18). Parents, coaches, and teammates are an integral source of different types of support during these stages.

Children (ages 6-11):

- Children typically learn new skills.
- The goal of this stage is competence (“I can!”).
- Successfully navigating this stage will help children develop sense of self-worth

Parents can be an important source of support for children in a number of ways. Children learn by doing, so being committed to providing access to sport, using competence supporting language, and creating other opportunities for feelings of competence are some of the best ways to support your young athlete.

Adolescent (ages 12-18):

- Adolescent typically explore independence, personal values, beliefs, and goals
- The goal of this stage is sense of self (“who am I?”)
- Successfully navigating this stage will help the adolescent in their transition to adulthood.

Parents, along with coaches and teammates are an important source of support during adolescent years. Since a big part of this stage is building social relationships, it is understandable that the parents' role in adolescent lives will change.

Support type	Description of support
Esteem support	Includes actions and words that bolster a sense of competence, confidence, and self-esteem.
Listening support	Includes actively listening while refraining from giving advice or making judgments.
Emotional support	Includes impartial emotional help and empathy during difficult times.
Informational support	Includes feedback, advice, guidance, and assistance targeted directly at problem-solving.
Tangible support	Includes material assistance targeted to help with day-to-day activities, including money, transportation, nutrition, equipment, and laundry.
Motivational support	Includes encouragement to overcome, or give in to, various barriers.



SCIENCE FACT:

A review of literature found that for youth athletes, coaches have been identified as the most prevalent provider of social support. They typically offer athletes unique forms of tangible, informational, emotional and esteem support. The same review also found that support from coaches, parents, and peers has an important role in shaping youth sport experiences positively and negatively. (Sheridan, 2014)

Critical Questions:

When considering your role as a sport parent, ask yourself:

- In what ways do I support the psychosocial development of my 6–11-year-old?
- Are my words and actions consistent with their psychosocial developmental stage?
- How am I supporting their need for competence and learning new skills?
- In what ways do I support the psychosocial development of my 12–18-year-old?
- Are my words and actions consistent with their psychosocial developmental stage?
- How am I supporting their need to develop independence and importance of social relationships outside of home?