

Getting Parents on the Team

By Dr. Alan Goldberg, Competitive advantage

A successful sport experience depends on parents being proactively trained to play the right role on the parent-athlete-coach team. Coaches should take the time in the beginning of the season to educate parents on their very important support position. The coach should appeal to the parent's proper involvement for the team's and their child's success. In parents meetings and in written handouts the coach should present and discuss the correct parent, coach and athlete roles, the “do's and don'ts” for success.

PARENTS' ROLE

1. **DON'T COACH** - Leave coaching to coaches. This includes pre-race psyching, motivation, after race critiquing, setting goals, enforcing additional cross training, etc.
2. **SUPPORT THE COACH** - Your coaches are the experts. They need your support for everyone to "win".
3. **SUPPORT THE PROGRAM** - Get involved. Volunteer. Help out at meets, fundraisers, etc.
4. **BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST FAN** - Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly. Your child should not have to perform to win your love.
5. **SUPPORT AND ROOT FOR ALL ATHLETES ON THE TEAM** - Foster teamwork. Your child's teammates are not the enemy. When they go faster than your child, your child now has a wonderful opportunity to improve.
6. **DO NOT BRIBE OR OFFER INCENTIVES** - Your job is not to motivate. Leave this to the coaching staff. Bribes will distract your child from proper race concentration.
7. **TAKE YOUR CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS DIRECTLY TO THE COACH** - If you have a problem with the coach, do not go to other parents to discuss it. Go straight to the coach involved. Talking behind the coach's back will not get you what you want.
8. **UNDERSTAND AND DISPLAY APPROPRIATE MEET BEHAVIOUR** - Remember your child's self-esteem and race performance is at stake. Be supportive and cheer but always be appropriate.
9. **MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S STRESS LEVEL AT HOME** - Keep an eye on your athlete to make sure he is handling stress effectively from the various activities in his life.
10. **MONITOR EATING AND SLEEPING HABITS** - Be sure your child is eating the proper foods and getting adequate enough rest.
11. **HELP YOUR CHILD KEEP HIS PRIORITIES STRAIGHT** - Help your child maintain a focus on schoolwork, relationships and the other important things in life besides sports. Also' if your child has made a commitment to one sport help him keep the priorities around this in mind.

12. "REALITY TEST" FOR YOUR CHILD - If a swimmer, for example, comes out of the pool with a personal best time and a last place finish, help her understand that this is a "win". Help her keep things in their proper perspective including losses, disappointments and failures.
 13. KEEP YOUR CHILD'S CHOSEN SPORT IN PERSPECTIVE – The sport should not be larger than life for you. If your child's performances elicit strong emotions, keep these away from him. Remember your relationship will continue with your children long after their competitive days are over. Keep your goals and needs out of your child's sport.
 14. BE AN APPROPRIATE LIASION TO THE COACH - Keep the coach informed as to how your child is responding to the experience (when appropriate). If your child is having trouble with something that happened at practice or with something the coach said, help the child deal with it and if necessary, speak directly with the coach.
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