

# USA Swimming Parent Education Center:



## Do's & Don'ts for Sports Parents

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### **DO for Yourself:**

- Get vicarious pleasure from your children's participation, but do not become overly ego-involved.
- Try to enjoy yourself at competitions. Your unhappiness can cause your child to feel guilty.
- Look relaxed, calm, positive and energized when watching your child compete. Your attitude influences how your child feels and performs.
- Have a life of your own outside of your child's sports participation.

### **DO with Other Parents:**

- Make friends with other parents at events. Socializing can make the event more fun for you.
- Volunteer as much as you can. Youth sports depend upon the time and energy of involved parents.
- Police your own ranks: Work with other parents to ensure that all parents behave appropriately at practices and competitions.

### **DO with Coaches:**

- Leave the coaching to the coaches.
- Give them any support they need to help them do their jobs better.
- Communicate with them about your child. You can learn about your child from each other.
- Inform them of relevant issues at home that might affect your child at practice.
- Inquire about the progress of your children. You have a right to know.
- Make the coaches your allies.

### **DO for your Children:**

- Provide guidance for your children, but do not force or pressure them.
- Assist them in setting realistic goals for participation.
- Emphasize fun, skill development and other benefits of sports participation, e.g., cooperation, competition, self-discipline, commitment.
- Show interest in their participation: help them get to practice, attend competitions, ask questions.
- Provide a healthy perspective to help children understand success and failure.
- Emphasize and reward effort rather than results.
- Intervene if your child's behavior is unacceptable during practice or competitions.
- Understand that your child may need a break from sports occasionally.
- Give your child some space when need. Part of sports participation involves them figuring things out for themselves.
- Keep a sense of humor. If you are having fun and laughing, so will your child
- Provide regular encouragement.
- Be a healthy role model for your child by being positive and relaxed at competitions and by having balance in your life.
- GIVE THEM UNCONDITIONAL LOVE: SHOW THEM YOU LOVE THEM WHETHER THEY WIN OR LOSE!!!**

### **DON'T for Yourself:**

- Base your self-esteem and ego on the success of your child's sports participation.
- Care too much about how your child performs.
- Lose perspective about the importance of your child's sports participation.
- Don't with Other Parents:
- Make enemies of other parents.
- Talk about others in the sports community. Talk to them. It is more constructive.

## DON'T with Coaches:

- Interfere with their coaching during practice or competitions.
- Work at cross purposes with them. Make sure you agree philosophically and practically on why your child is playing sports and what he or she may get out of sports.

## DON'T with Your Children

- Expect your children to get anything more from their sports than a good time, physical fitness, mastery and love of a lifetime sport and transferable life skills.
- Ignore your child's bad behavior in practice or competitions.
- Ask the child to talk with you immediately after a competition.
- Show negative emotions while watching them perform.
- Make your child feel guilty for the time, energy and money you are spending and the sacrifices you are making.
- Think of your child's sports participation as an investment for which you expect a return.
- Live out your own dreams through your child's sports participation.
- Compare your child's progress with that of other children.
- Badger, harass, use sarcasm, threaten or use fear to motivate your child. It only demeans them and causes them to dislike you.
- Expect anything from your child except their best effort.
- EVER DO ANYTHING THAT WILL CAUSE THEM TO THINK LESS OF THEMSELVES OR OF YOU!

## You can HELP your child become a strong competitor by...

- Emphasizing and rewarding effort rather than outcome.
- Understanding that your child may need a break from sports occasionally.
- Encouraging and guiding your child, not forcing or pressuring them to compete.
- Emphasizing the importance of learning and transferring life skills such as hard work, self-discipline, teamwork, and commitment.
- Emphasizing the importance of having fun, learning new skills, and developing skills.
- Showing interest in their participation in sports, asking questions.
- Giving your child some space when needed. Allow children to figure things out for themselves.
- Keeping a sense of humor. If you are having fun, so will your child.
- Giving unconditional love and support to your child, regardless of the outcome of the day's competition.
- Enjoying yourself at competitions. Make friends with other parents, socialize, and have fun.
- Looking relaxed, calm, and positive when watching your child compete.
- Realizing that your attitude and behaviors influences your child's performance.
- Having a balanced life of your own outside sports.

## DON'T ...

- Think of your child's sport participation as an investment for which you want a return.
- Live out your dreams through your child.
- Do anything that will cause your child to be embarrassed.
- Feel that you need to motivate your child. This is the child's and coach's responsibility.
- Ignore your child's behavior when it is inappropriate, deal with it constructively so that it does not happen again.
- Compare your child's performance to that of other children.
- Show negative emotions while you are watching your child at a competition.
- Expect your child to talk with you when they are upset. Give them some time.
- Base your self-esteem on the success of your child's sport participation.
- Care too much about how your child performs.
- Make enemies with other children's parents or the coach.
- Interfere, in any way, with coaching during competition or practice.
- Try to coach your child. Leave this to the coach.