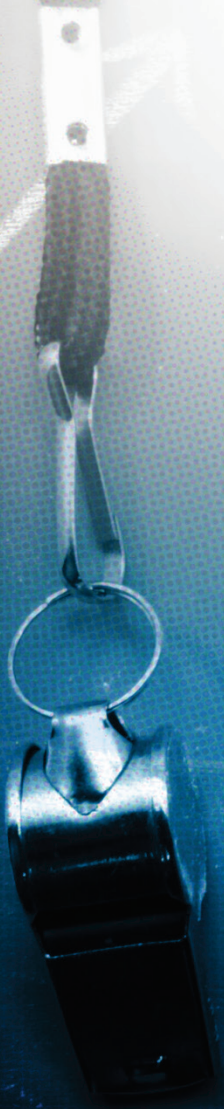




COACHING YOUR OWN

HOW TO COACH
YOUR OWN CHILD
EFFECTIVELY.





HOW TO COACH YOUR CHILD EFFECTIVELY:

**Inspiring Brilliance And Motivation
In Future Child Athletes**

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*"Do Not Let What You Cannot Do
Interfere With What You Can Do..."*

J. Wooden

Contents

Introduction	6
How To Use This Book.....	7
Who Is This Book For?.....	7
Part I - Wrestling With Preconception In Sports.....	8
On Winning.....	8
The Agony Of Defeat.....	9
Success	10
Part II - Building Friendships And Team Bonds	13
It's Just That Team Spirt.....	13
Part III - Coaching Your Child Effectively	15
Defining Your Role As A Coach	15
Your Role As Parent Vs. Coach.....	18
Don't Children Of Coaches Get Special Treatment?	19
Your Behavior And Role As Model.....	20
Simple Strategies For Motivating Kids In Sports	23
Teaching Children To Play With Confidence	24
Part IV - Stress In Sports	27
Coping With Youth Sport Stress.....	27
What To Do If Your Child Misbehaves On The Field	29
Deep Breathing Exercises For Children And Teens.....	29
Conclusions	31

Introduction

Have you ever looked out over a little league game? What do you see?

Do you envision children wildly pursuing their passion, enjoying their time on the field?

Perhaps you see your own child, stepping up to bat, or winding up to pitch. Maybe you see your child growing up and entering the big leagues.



Maybe your picture of children's sports is a little less "big" as you imagine your child scurrying around the field with several other uncoordinated kids, bumping into one another, losing the ball, while some children wander out into left field. Perhaps this image is a bit more accurate.

Whatever your perfect picture of children and sports is, this book is intended to help you learn how to motivate, inspire and encourage your child on their sports journey more effectively. The goal is not to inspire you to become a wild-eyed parent coach. There are plenty of those walking around. For the most part, this type of coaching is ineffective, and frightening for both other parents and children.

Rather, the aim of this book is to teach you how to use a gentle hand, and gentle, understanding heart to inspire your child to success on and off the field.

How To Use This Book

For purposes of this book, we will use the words he or she interchangeably. Know that each term refers to your child equitably, and some parents have both boys and girls interested in sports. There are no right or wrong sports for a child. You may have a girl that wants to try out for football very young, or a boy that shows an interest in ballet. The key success factor in sports is encouraging your little boy or girl to explore his or her interests to the fullest. As time passes your sport enthusiast will learn what skills, talents and abilities she has, and pursue them with vigor.

This guidebook will help you during the process of self-discovery every child experiences while pursuing sports. You are the most vital coach as a parent even if you do not always feel like it. A child always seeks support and encouragement from you as her role model.

Thus, you must coach well and often.

Coaching feels best when you succeed in motivating your child to stick with sports from beginning to end.

One of the most rewarding aspects of coaching is the feeling you get when you succeed at motivating your child to stick with a sport from start to finish. Your child will also gain a sense of accomplishment and victory.

Have fun. This book should challenge the current ideas and preconceptions you have about children's sports.

Who Is This Book For?

You can use this book as a parent, coach and as someone that is interested in helping children in sports succeed. There is no age range this book is intended for. This book can help children involved in sports whether they are aged 4 all the way up to the teen years. Hopefully, this book will inspire your own brainstorming allowing you to develop creating methods of inspiring your own children to excel in sports.

Part I

Wrestling With Preconception In Sports

Everyone has preconceived ideas about what sports mean. What are your preconceived ideas? What preconceived ideas do your children have about winning, losing and playing the game?

On Winning

Most children are consumed from day 1 with the idea of winning. From the moment your child picks up his first baseball bat, or kicks his first soccer ball, loud cheering will ensue (even if only inside your child's head). Modern sports involves pre-created images resulting largely from the media, but also those pre-programmed from sports fans, products, sales and marketers, and fanatic coaches eager to drive success into children from the time they can walk until the time they can no longer, whether from overtraining or from discouragement.

What are the very words come into your mind when you envision winning?

Use this chart as a tool to help your child determine the preconceived ideas she has about sports and winning.

ACHIEVEMENT	WIN	GRAND SLAM	SUPERIORITY
PRIZE	CONQUEST	GO FOR GOLD	UPPER HAND
DEFEATING	WINNING	TRIUMPH	VICTORY
ACCOMPLISHED	GRAND SLAM	GAIN	CLEAN SWEAP
SCORE	GAIN	SWEEP	FINISH
ATTAINMENT	SUCCESS	ACCOMPLISHMENT	EFFORT

These are all ways to think about sports. One simple and effective way to find out how your child thinks about sports is to have them look at this list, and select the top 4 words that he would use to describe how he views sports.

Find out how pressure-filled these words are. Are they healthy? Are they words that you would encourage? Can you think of other words that you might prefer your child consider, or would you add to this list?

Does your child already have ideas about winning that are self-defeating, or does your child have a healthy attitude about winning? Knowing this ahead of time will help you coach your child in a healthy, productive manner.

The Agony Of Defeat

Another good tool to use in learning more about your child is a list of terms to find out how your child views defeat. This will help you learn how seriously your child views the sport he plays. Learning this can help you motivate your child more, and help your child to learn how to view sports less seriously while young.



While it is important to play to win later in life, while young your child is still learning to manage his body, and to build relationships with teammates. Focusing too much on winning can destroy your child's sense of personal accomplishment, and can create stress and depression that is unnecessary and self-defeating.

Here is a similar chart that you can use to determine what thoughts your child has about defeat. You can use this chart in much the same way as you used the previous chart on winning. You can also use this chart to gauge your own perspectives on defeat, comparing these perspectives to your thoughts on winning.

FAIL	LOSE	GIVE UP	FALL SHORT
GRIEF	BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME	EXHAUSTED	TRIED
FUN	LEARNING	PRACTICE	EXPERIENCE
FAILURE	BAD	ROB	SCARED
FREE	SHAKE OFF	MISTAKE	LOSER

These words will help your child put their loss in context. Some children will worry more about a game loss than others. Some will have fun during a game, and see it as a learning opportunity. Others may view a loss in terms of mistakes made, or in terms of how another team robbed them of their winnings. Others will “shake it off” or you can teach your child to shake it off until next time. You can create your own chart, working with your child to come up with key words to help express your child’s feelings.

If you have children that are very young, from 3 to 5 that play sports, you can substitute visual images for words to help your child express their feelings, or have your child draw out how they feel about a game. This works particularly well for helping your child to resolve their feelings following a tough game.

Another way to use this technique is to have your child draw an image of enjoying their time playing with their teammates. This is highly effective in motivating your child on and off the field, particularly for children that are uncertain of their role in the game or sport they are playing.

Success

Success is not the same as winning, but very often parents and children put it in the same context. Take a time out to consider success as different from winning, and help your child determine success for himself, and see success in a new light.

This will help improve your child’s self-confidence, and work to improve your child’s performance on and off the field.

Success is never a term that is easily defined. In the sporting world success seems like it might be cut and dry. But think again. What really defines success for you and for your child? It might be the first time your child links bat to ball. Or, it may be the first time your child comes home with a participation ribbon.

Alternatively, it may be the first time your child gets through a game without throwing a temper tantrum (the same may be said for you). Each child is different, as is each parent and family. Thus, success is not something that is uniformly defined, but rather must be defined individually on a one-on-one basis.

To create a successful sports superstar in your family, you must work with your child to define success together. This will help create a sensational child, one with well-defined goals. When your child meets his very first goal, your next step should be setting the next milestone, so that your child is always moving toward something progressive and inspiring. Your child is a beautiful masterpiece, constantly evolving, growing and developing. You are instrumental in that process.

How do you set goals with your child? Simple. You determine what state your child is at, and set goals based on each incremental stage for any athletic sport that your child is engaged in. For example, let's say that your child just enrolled on a swim team. Your child has never taken swimming before.

Your goals may look something like this.

- **Goal #1** – Master proper kicking technique for the freestyle stroke.
- **Goal # 2-** Master proper hand technique for the freestyle stroke.
- **Goal #3** – Master proper breathing technique for the freestyle stroke.
- **Goal #4** – Master proper entry into and out of the water.

Each of these goals is progressive and builds on one another. After each goal is met, you can reward your child for a job well done, and encourage your child to continue building on the skills and abilities your child has already achieved.

Other goals you can build into this may include achieving proper physical fitness or nutritional goals, like eating a wholesome snack that includes one part protein, one

part carbohydrate and one part health fat. While your child learns about sports, your child can also learn about nutrition.

Success incorporates not only improved intelligence in sports, but also better chemistry within your child's body. This relates to improved confidence mentally, physically and emotionally. All of these lead to optimal performance on and off the field.

The idea is that your child, by setting goals, will have much success along their sports journey, rather than one whopping success or failure during sports events. Frequent success participating in sports much more invigorating for your child. It also teaches your child a lot more about life, and about personal development.

Coaching Tip: Take Your Time With It!

Far too often parents and coaches encourage children to rush through the goal setting and achievement phase during sports participation.

For example, some sports training programs are only a few weeks long. If this is the case, remind your child that he can sign up again during another set, or even during the next season. There is no reason to rush a child through achievement or goal setting. This results in stress and increases the pressure for your child to perform. This can also result in de-motivation, or cause your child to quit the sport you worked hard to encourage your child to participate in.

To maximize your child's chances for success, allow your child to take their time in developing the skills necessary to succeed. You should encourage your child to stay on task, and set reasonable goals for your child to achieve the tasks on his list. However, never pressure a child to complete tasks or set goals within an unreasonable time frame.

One child may only learn how to kick within a few weeks, while another may learn how to swim in just two weeks. This is natural and varies from child to child. Applaud your child for his efforts, and encourage him to stick with it!

Remember, if your child is not naturally gifted in one area, he may be in another. Encourage your child to try many different sports until he finds one that he likes. Even if he finds one that he likes, remember that he may never be an Olympic athlete. Enjoy him for who he is!

Part II

Building Friendships And Team Bonds

Your child is much more likely to succeed if she can build team relationships and bonds or friendships with other children in sports. This is particularly true of other children engaged in the same sport. While sports are competitive, there are also many opportunities for your child to develop deep and lasting friendships.

How do you promote that team spirit?

It's Just That Team Spirt

Sports in an opportunity for children to discover teamwork, their life purpose, fun and camaraderie. Far too often children are pushed into circumstances where they are driven to bully, carry a "win-win 'win'" attitude, and forget the true meaning behind sports.

Sports can provide a platform for team building combined with personal achievement, improvement and discovery, when coaching is carried out in a fun and motivating environment. When working with your child in a goal-oriented, yet motivating and fun atmosphere you'll have many chances to encourage your child to be their best, without inspiring an aggressive or discouraging atmosphere.

As a parent it is important to understand that your child may not be on a winning team as far as numbers are concerned, but may be on a winning team when it comes to personalities, inspiration and motivation.

There are 4 T's in sports coaching:

- Teamwork
- Tools
- Talent
- Triumph

TEAMWORK is required of all individuals working together to make the sports team successful. This includes individual players, parents, and coaches ... even audience members.

TOOLS, including the items necessary for children to succeed. This may include uniforms, equipment, training, and support from parents, teaching and fun.

TALENT is a child's natural ability. This may be in the sport a child is playing, but natural talent also comes in other areas. Recognize that some children bring talent in the way of helping the team work better together; some children bring laughter to the game, others bring strategy (they may be future coaches or trainers). Still others have talent in the way of leadership or encouraging other team members. By recognizing the talents and unique abilities of each child that participates as a team member you will serve your team best, and other children that are members of the team best.

Lastly, **TRIUMPH**. When all of these T's work together, the team ultimately wins. You will find that your child, as a member of the team will succeed and triumph, as will independent team members. Teach your child the 4 T's, and allow your child to share this information with others in their journey toward success in sports. This is a simple lesson that you can teach to your child in just a few easy minutes, but one that will last your child a lifetime.

Part III

Coaching Your Child Effectively

Your child will only succeed as much as you are able to succeed as a coach. Have you thought about what it means to coach your child in sports? As a parent, you are the #1 role model for your child. This fact can't be overstated.

Let's look more closely at your role as your child's sporting coach.



Defining Your Role As A Coach

Have you ever thought about what it means to be a coach?

Most people see the coach as the boss, as the craft master, or as the person that yells at children to do what is right.

I remember when I was first learning how to swim. The coach was the person that would walk back and forth, back and forth along the side of the pool, that dreaded figure that was checking on us to make sure that we swam mile after mile in the pool. It was hard to see him, except to hear his voice yell, "Hup! Hup!" Mostly, I remember feeling like drowning, but that word kept all of us in line, and kept us going.

He had a funny side though, and I think that was why he was well-liked. There are a lot of important characteristics that go into good coaching.

But, what really is good coaching all about?

The dictionary defines a coach as: a mentor, instructor, and teacher or as one who carries a student through examinations.ⁱ You are just as much a coach as anyone else. You are your child's personal coach, and your mission as a teacher or coach is to help your child find his passion for sports in a positive way.

This role should be all encompassing. Without sports, your child will fall into a world of video games, or other mindless tasks that will prove fruitless when compared to sports, which can help shape your child's future. Sports creates a healthy lifestyle. Sports can contribute to your child's future career, or help your child enter higher education. Sports teaches your child about teamwork, as we have already discussed. And, if for no other reason, sports gets your child out from under the television.

These are all good reasons to get your child involved in sports. It also teaches your child strategy, and helps your child learn to use his body more effectively. While there is nothing inherently wrong with playing video games sometimes, which may also teach your child another kind of strategy, all children can find sports beneficial for more than one reason at some point in their life.

The question remains then, how do you become an effective coach?

Coaches have many job responsibilities. The first of these includes assessing a potential athlete in terms of skills and abilities.

Thus, you have a duty to first honestly your child's talents and abilities. If your child expresses an interest in playing basketball, but has never set foot in a court in their life, do not enroll them in a master level basketball course. Find out if they can dribble. Find out if they bounce a ball, whether it bounces back and smacks them in the chin. You want to determine if your child has any natural talent, or any skill at all, before you enroll your child in competitive sports, or a training level sports class.

The better job you do of honestly assessing your child's skill level, the higher the odds your child will enjoy the experience of participating in sports.

No child will succeed in a sport they have no interest, skill and/or ability in. While it is possible to teach a child just about anything, most children have to have some interest in a sport.

Some parents try to force a child to participate in a sport their child has absolutely no interest in. This can have disastrous consequences.

Along these lines, your second role as a coach is to find out what your child's interests are.

Skills and interests are equally important. If your child has relatively low skill level, but a high interest in a sport, then enroll him in that sport so that he can learn more about it.

Never enroll a child in a sport simply because you played it, or because you have a high level of interest in it, hoping that your child will learn to enjoy it. If you enjoy football, but your child enjoys golf, allow your child to try golf. You may find that you learn to enjoy golf as well.

Likewise, if you enjoy football, and our child enjoys ballet, allow your child the opportunity to attempt ballet. There is no reason not to allow your child the opportunity to try ballet or modern dance, or any other sport that appeals to him/her.

As a coach, you also have an obligation to take things one step at a time. Many parents and coaches discover a child has an interest in a sport, and immediately jump on the fast track, assuming their child belongs in the Olympics. This is an egregious error. Not a small error, but a very large error that can result in the end of your child's sporting career.

Why? This conclusion can prove demotivating and push a child into an unhealthy pressure zone. Perhaps your child will best be served having fun at the beginner or intermediate levels of sports play.

To summarize these points, remember, as a coach your job when working to motivate your child and encourage them to participate in sports is to:

- **Determine whether your child has the basic skills necessary to play a sport.** If not, ascertain whether your child can learn these skills with relative ease. If not, find out what sport your child can play with success, and most of all, FUN.
- **Find out whether your child has passion or a high level of interest for the sport.** If not, your child is likely to quit at the first sign of difficulty or frustration.

Allow your child to choose the sport that he/she would like to participate in. Do not force them to play the sport that you want them to. This will result in failure or quitting.

- **Is your child considering a realistic goal, or does your child have realistic odds of success in this sport?** If so allow your child to continue. If not, try to realign your child's goals so that your child will succeed in their adventure.
- **Are you committed to helping your child succeed?** Do discover this you may have to ask yourself other supporting questions. These may include, Are you ready to drive your child to practices, and commit to extra training if necessary? If not, reevaluate your intentions. Remember you are there as a critical support person for your child.

Once you consider the facts necessary to commit to a sport, and the facts about a sport, and then you can determine what the real odds are of success for your child in any given sports. Remember, coaching is all about building a child up for success, and not failure. If your child cannot succeed in one sport, don't give up. The odds are very high that your child can succeed in another sport.

Your Role As Parent Vs. Coach

Coaches and parents each have a critical role you're your child's personal and "professional" development. The role of the coach is to ensure that your child receives positive reinforcement, technical skills, discipline where necessary and to have fun.

Your role as a parent is similar, but perhaps not quite as intense when it comes to reinforcement of skills and training. As a parent your job is much more intensive along the lines of positive reinforcement, the fun factor and making certain your child does not burnout on sports. In this way you can keep sports fun and encourage your child to remain balanced and realistic about their goals in sports and in life.

Coaches have the unique opportunity to offer life experiences about sports that some parents may not have. If you've played professional sports by all means download this information and provide it to your children. Many parents get involved in coaching because they want to give back to their children.

If you find you are in the role of a coach, be sure you separate your time from coaching from your time as a parent.

Your child will want to spend quality time with you too. It isn't uncommon for some children to crave one-to-one time with parents. Spending so much time with other children can foster jealousy or concerns among children. Once coaching is done, make sure you give yourself a little R&R and then remember to be a parent.

Spend quality time with your child focused on fun tasks other than sports. This may be time at the library, time spent playing puzzles, time creating, or other time enjoying the outdoors outside of sport time. Your child will need that balance in their life.

Don't Children Of Coaches Get Special Treatment?

One concern that you may have as a parent coach is whether you will treat your child differently or whether other parents will feel this way. The first step you can take to prevent this is appraising your behavior.

Do you treat your child differently? Are you more protective? Will you offer your child more opportunities? The odds are actually against your child. Many coaches are actually harder on their own children.

One way to prevent this is to simply coach a sport that your child doesn't play in. This will prevent anyone from calling foul play when it comes to favoritism. Most parents would prefer an opportunity to coach their own child at some point however. In youth sports coaching is a huge need, and there is a good chance you may be called on to help at some point if you can coach.

If you are, consider each choice you make objectively. If your child is more skilled, and has more knowledge of the game than other children than your child may have an important position on the team. Other children may also have key roles on the team based on their skills and abilities. Children with key skills and abilities often have more playing time as a result of their skills and abilities not because they are the children of the coach.

This is important to remember and remind other parents if necessary. If all children are provided with an opportunity to try all roles, then no favoritism is possible. If your

strategies allow all children opportunities to practice and excel, then no favoritism is possible. Here are some important questions to ask if facing questions of favoritism:

- Are you allowing all children opportunities to excel on the team?
- Are children ranked based on their skills, talents and abilities?
- Is your child positioned because of his skill level or because of his role as your child?
- Have you spoken with your child about how he feels about their role on the team? How has this affected your child's performance? Does he feel like he is treated fairly?
- How do other parents feel about the team's strategy?

If comments are coming from one parent, but not other parents, uniformly you probably do not have an issue on the team. Look at your situation objectively. It is always a good idea to talk to someone one-to-one to approach any beliefs or concerns that other parents have. Communication is the key to success in coaching and in parenting!

Your Behavior And Role As Model

As a parent and coach recognize how your behaviors influence your child. Many parents fail to realize that children learn from their parents and teachers, as much as they discover information on their own.

Have you ever considered just how much junior learns from you, when you stomp your feet and cross your arms? The next time your child has a temper tantrum on the field, consider where he/she learned this behavior from. The source may be closer than you realize.

Often children model behaviors after their role models, who are none other than their beloved parents. While this fact is sometimes hard to swallow, it is indeed a fact. Many parents are very extreme when it comes to children's sports. This more often happens as children get older, and begin participating in little league games where the stakes are higher. But even at a very young age some parents engage in embarrassing beha-

vivors. These are behaviors that sometimes drive children away from sports altogether.

Make sure you conduct a self-check not only on the sport field, but at home and in public.

- Are you behaving in an exemplary manner?
- Do you use bad language?
- Do you get angry or lose your temper frequently?
- Do you manipulate people to get your way?

Remember children will model behaviors after their parents more often than they model their behavior after peers, particularly until they are in their early teens. Only then do children begin settling into a pattern of becoming their own independent person.

Most children are tiny versions of the most influential people in their lives ... parents. If your child is kicking, screaming, shooting off at the mouth ... then the odds are this is a direct result of their parents or coaches. While it may be hard to admit, the proof is in the pudding. There are endless examples of parents and coaches that yell at children to achieve a goal or desire on the field.

There are also many examples of parents yelling at coaches, and parents acting out in order to get what they want. The behavior often demonstrated at little league games can be classified at best at times, as appalling. This sets an example for children, encouraging children to either act out, or run away from games out of fear and loathing.

Children do not participate in games because they want their parents to fight for them. They want to participate in sports because they like to play games. Thus, when parents engage in bad behavior, many children will do whatever is possible to prevent this behavior in the future, including quitting a sport.

Here is what is important for parents to know about children when they are learning sports:

Ages 6-8

Kids are learning to use their bodies. Many kids are still very unconditioned and not coordinated. Balls may bounce around and knock children around. While kids may be very enthusiastic about sports, they may not be very good at it. This is a wonderful time to enjoy children, and the joy that children express in life. Some children, particularly those whose parents have participated in a sport like baseball, soccer or football, may have a natural inclination to the sport or have some ability. These kids may be more coordinated and may help coach other children. It is still very important that these children have fun while playing sports.

9-11

Children begin to stand out based on skills. Many skills are easily taught, although natural abilities begin to separate some children from others. Adult involvement and coaching is key during this time. Physical and emotional maturity can grow and develop during this time through strong and motivating relationships.

Learning how to shoot a basketball or kick a soccer ball, catch a football and related skills become more important now, as many children want to make an impression on others, and want to participate as part of a team. Life skills can be passed on at this point. These include how to be thoughtful toward one's teammates. Traits that you want to teach may also include how to encourage other teammates, and the idea of sticking through a game, or not giving up on a sport.

12-18

This is a time of maturity for most children. It is important for children to participate in a well-organized program. As a parent and coach your role is ensuring that your children have well-outlined goals. Work with your children to establish goals that make include your family and personal goals. What is your child's purpose for participating in sports? Is your child interested in a scholarship? Does your child need independent training? Is your child interested in building new relationships outside of school? Evaluate how your child's sport participa-

tion enhances their school experience. You may also need to look at whether sport participation interferes with schoolwork, as this can sometimes be problematic. If this is the case, you will need to work with your child on establishing balance between the two. The goal of sports should always be a positive outcome, and the creation of something positive in your child, no negative. By working as a teammate with your child, it is always positive to create something beneficial with your child.

Simple Strategies For Motivating Kids In Sports

The single most important thing you can do to motivate your child to succeed is make your child his or her own coach. Most children are used to taking orders from others. Over time, this can become tedious and boring. Most children want independence from a very early age. Many parents realize the best way to do this is to allow children to choose their own clothing. As time passes, children are given more choices.

The same is true in sports. Allow your child choices. Let your child choose the sport your child plays in. If your child prefers soccer, let that be soccer. If it is ballet, let that be ballet. If your child wants to try several different sports, by all means allow him, only allow one sport at a time.

Trying too many sports can result in exhaustion for you and your child. Limit your child's activities, so there is time for family, fun and school. This will benefit you and your child. Don't simply tell your child no, explain the reasoning and set a schedule for your child.

Remember you can find a tutor or school activity that may allow your child opportunities to sample many different sports at once. Often there are summer camps that allow children to sample many different sports at once.

By finding an opportunity like this, your child can try several sports, and then focus on the one that she likes best.

Reward your child when your child meets the goals that he set for himself, or when your child meets their team's expectations or needs. If you find your child doing something to benefit the team, without you asking or anyone else for that matter, reward your child!

Nothing is more motivating than rewarding positive behaviors! Along the same lines, if you find your child practicing on their own, reward them! Find out what motivates your child and reward them in this way. If your child wants to spend extra time at the park, or time with friends, then allow your child this extra time. In this way, your child will want to continue in these positive behaviors.

Teaching Children To Play With Confidence

James had a very strong arm. Ever since he was only 5 years old he would throw a ball, and it would fly across the yard and shoot like a bullet coming out of a gun. This would inspire me to think that he should play baseball. After all, baseball pitchers were known for their fastballs, and I would nearly duck every time James would throw what I presumed to be a fast ball.

James always felt very good about the way that he threw balls at home, but this was another thing entirely after I signed him up for his first baseball game. When he was on the field with other boys, some of them who had been playing baseball since they were five (we signed on when he was 7), all of this natural confidence in that strong arm suddenly faded. It wasn't that he couldn't throw the ball ... he knew he could throw it. Only, he couldn't catch a ball, and he had no confidence in his ability to hit the ball.

This was something shocking, given that there were dozens of other boys all around that were failing to hit the ball and catch it. James could not, would not see this. He didn't have the ability to see past his own failures.

Little boys are sometimes different from little girls. While girls may team up naturally and move past this, boys are bred to be different. They are often taught from a very young age that they are supposed to be good at not one thing, but everything. As a parent, you can help your child to overcome this immediately by building your child's confidence in what they can do from day one.

This is not to say that little girls don't get caught up in this cycle too. Some girls are natural perfectionists. Driven to succeed in everything, they will want to be the best, look the best, and win at everything. This is often most evident in sports like ballet other forms of dance, or swimming where a child's image along with their sporting

ability is on the line. As a parent, the number one thing you can do to build confidence is build your child's inner "little man" or "little woman." Teach your child to have confidence without relying on others to build it up, and you will end up a winner, and so will your child.

Far too often children look externally for confidence boosters, when true confidence begins within. James was looking around for confidence, and comparing his ability with the ability of others. While it is natural to want to compare oneself to others, this can be the single most damaging thing a child, and even a grown up can do to destroy confidence.

Little girls compare their bodies and their ability to others, resulting in insecurity and indecision. Remind your child that the only person they have to report to is their inner guardian. You can even establish a dialogue with your child to this effect.

While your child will also have to report to their coach, and try to meet the goals and measures established by the coach, the coach will likely recognize your child's talents, abilities and inabilities. The coach may be less hard on your child than your own child.

So encourage your child to only work on improving him or herself and not comparing him or herself to others. How do you do that?

For James, despite fact that it was plainly obvious that other boys were not able to hit the ball, and James could plainly see this, James was still very upset. He was upset at the fact that he couldn't hit the ball as well as he could throw the ball.

"I am stupid. And this is a stupid sport!" Have you ever heard that on the field? It is often more common than many parents realize, and very frustrating.

What does a coach/parent do with this sentiment, and this type of self-aggression? The most powerful weapon a parent can use against self-aggression is love and compassion. This type of feeling often simply comes from lack of self-confidence.

The simplest way to combat it is to teach your child to applaud the things your child does do well. When your child doesn't succeed, take a step back to focus on the skills your child does well in. For James, that was throwing. So, spend some time at home practicing your child's throwing ability. In this case, James could spend hours throwing the ball.

Then, allow your child to set some goals in areas that he or she is weak in. Let your child practice in a non-threatening atmosphere, where there will not be anyone around for your child to compare himself to. In James's case, the best person he could practice with was me, because I couldn't hit a ball to save my life. That made James feel better, because while he shouldn't compare, at least he could see that he was not the only person that couldn't hit a ball.

It is hard to tune out the noise from so many children when your thoughts are crowded out with failures. This is even truer with children. So take some time to laugh with your child. Allow them to practice in a safe place, outside of normal practice time. Then if you can, find a friend that can play ball, or soccer, or one that can swim, or dance well. This should be a person that your child trusts. See if this person will spend time "tutoring" your child in the skills your child is weakest in.

Sometimes when training for a sport, a child needs a tutor. Just like a child that falls behind in school need a tutor, a child that lacks a skill set sometimes needs a tutor to catch up with others, or to simply build confidence in his ability to succeed.

This may require only one or two sessions with a friend, or peer that understands how to excel in a skill area that your child is lacking. You may be able to find this peer or tutor in an older child in the neighborhood. Remember this person must be someone that your child can trust, and rely on. This person should praise your child just as you would, when your child masters a skill. The goal is to get your child feeling good when they are able to accomplish the goal set before them.

Part IV

Stress In Sports

Stress is a fact of life. If you think you can make it in the sports world without coping with stress, think again. Fortunately there are several simple solutions for coping with stress successfully.

Coping With Youth Sport Stress

Today's youth are faced with more stress than ever. While a worthy goal is teaching children to focus on fun, enthusiasm, motivation and building skills, the reality is the world is focused on winning. If more parents and teams were focused on building values, then it isn't likely that we would see children out to kill each other during practice for little league, and parents are doing the same when approaching the referee.

If you want to teach your child to handle himself well during stressful situations, you have to learn how to handle your own stress first. This means learning to handle your work stress, along with coaching and sport stress.

Here are some tools for doing just that.

- **Be active in your child's sport.** Learn the rules of the game, so that you can referee appropriately and honestly. Before you shout out at your child's coach, reconsider your approach. Take a few deep breaths. Remember that this is a game, and you are representing your child, and acting as a role model.
- **Support your child's coach and team leaders.** They have a very difficult job, and very often do not receive the support they need from family and parents of the children they coach. Find out how you can volunteer and act as a mentor to the

coach your child relies on. This may help reduce stress, and help you learn ways you can better coach your own child.

- **Realistically evaluate your child's short and long-term goals.** Find out what sports your child may excel in and encourage them in a positive direction. If your child is flailing in a particular sport, take a new direction.
- **Find out your child's motivation for playing a sport.** If it is to please you, then your child is moving in the wrong direction. If it is to "look cool" you may want to set up some new goals for your child. Remember that children may have many different reasons for engaging in sports. Work with your child to determine realistic expectations.
- **Make sure that your child only engages in one sport at a time.** Have you ever seen that parent that moves from one game, to the next, and next? This can be tiring for not only the parent, but also the child. Overstrained and overtired children are not a good combination. Limit your children's activities to one sport per season. Everyone will thus feel less stressed. Not just mental stress, but physical stress. Nurture your child's body, mind and spirit. Teach your child the value in balancing sports with other activities including an active play life and teach the importance of adequate rest between activities.
- **Develop a healthy interest in playing sports for team building, fun and learning rather than for winning.** Remember that constantly focusing on winning places unnecessary pressure on everyone.
- **Teach your child healthy decompression skills.** Practice them together. These may include taking a time out when needed to breathe. The sooner your child learns the value in deep breathing, the better. This exercise can help your child learn to relax much faster and even help your child when your child has to cope with tests and other major stressors. Teach your child to use breathing techniques for big games!
- **Learn healthy tools for distressing on your own.** Walk the dog, meditation, exercise and journal. Teach your child to do the same.

- **Laugh!** Remember laughter is truly the best medicine and will relieve even the most stressful situations.
- **Teach your child to shake things off.** This is the simplest way to combat stress. Just like a duck shakes his feathers, your child can learn to shake off the small stuff. In the grand scheme of things youth sports are the small things in life!

What To Do If Your Child Misbehaves On The Field

If your child does lose his temper, or gets upset at another child for something frivolous during training, or worse, because of losing, this is a good learning opportunity. Allow the coach to discipline your child if you are not in that role. If you are, take time to teach your child what behaviors will and will not be tolerated. Your child may be out for the rest of the game. Gauge the severity of your reaction based on the severity of your child's behavior. When the game is done, leave the issue behind. Never let a child that misbehaves get away with this behavior because this can lead to further temper tantrums or upset down the road.

You may have to take over the role of disciplinarian. Children must learn to control their temper very early, or they will grow into adults with loose tempers.

Deep Breathing Exercises For Children And Teens

One simple method you can teach your child for relaxing, starting at a very early age, is deep breathing. Many adults are shallow breathers. Teach your child to breathe deep young. This is a simple matter of having your child place their hand on their belly, and learn to feel the air in their lungs also fill their belly.

Ask your child to take a slow, deep breath in, counting 1-2-3.

Inhale through their nose, then exhale through their mouth, 1-2-3, exhaling on "Ahhhhh."

Have your child repeat this, up to five times if necessary. In the beginning, your child will be so busy trying to figure out breathing, that he will not have time to have a tantrum. This is also a good technique for helping children that have too much going on in their mind at night and have difficulty sleeping.

You can practice this with your child, and then offer them time for a “time out” to shake it off and breathe when things get stressful.

Journaling is another way that many children find relief. Some children prefer to keep diaries. This can be a great way for children to also keep a dialogue of their victories and achievements while playing sports! Keep in mind you want to reinforce the positive actions your child is engaged in during their sporting career.

Conclusions

The role of parent coach is truly rewarding. If your child decides to take up a sport, consider yourself lucky. Your child is beginning a long journey that can bring with it opportunities for new friendships, skill building and several opportunities for self-discovery.

Use this book to learn more about how to motivate your child during that journey, and how to open doors for your child so that your child learns to love the sport they started, and perhaps join many sports down the road of life!

ⁱ Random House Dictionary, 2014.

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