

"TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS OF ATHLETIC CHILDREN"

1. Make sure that your child knows that win or lose, scared or heroic -- you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive enforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic capability, their competitive attitude, their sportsmanship and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful but don't coach them on the way to the rink, pool, court or track or on the way back or at breakfast, or at dinner, and so on. It is tough not to do this, but it is a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and critical instruction.
4. Teach your young athlete to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying", to be working to improve their skills and attitudes. Help them to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard and for having fun. Doing their best is all we really can expect.
5. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. Remember that you occasionally stumbled, you were frightened, you backed off at times, you were not always heroic and you lost as well as won. Don't pressure them because of your pride.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, the competition can run from enchantment to disenchantment or even worse with your young athlete. The confusion that the child athlete could carry away from this competition may very well last for the length of the child's athletic career. I
7. Remember that while you have but one coach to be concerned about, the coach has many, many athletes and parents. What seems to be life or death to you or your athlete may not be to the coach.
8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy and that you trust to have your child under his/her leadership. Also so that when you have a concern or question you will find it easier and more comfortable approaching them.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Always temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
10. Don't compare the skill, courage or attitude of your child with other members of the team, at least not within his/her hearing. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains, and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bumblebee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.

Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there trying and competing that needs a lot of understanding, especially when his world turns bad. If they are comfortable with you -- win or lose -- they are on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.

The job of the parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort when you hear your youngster say, "My parents really helped -- I was lucky."