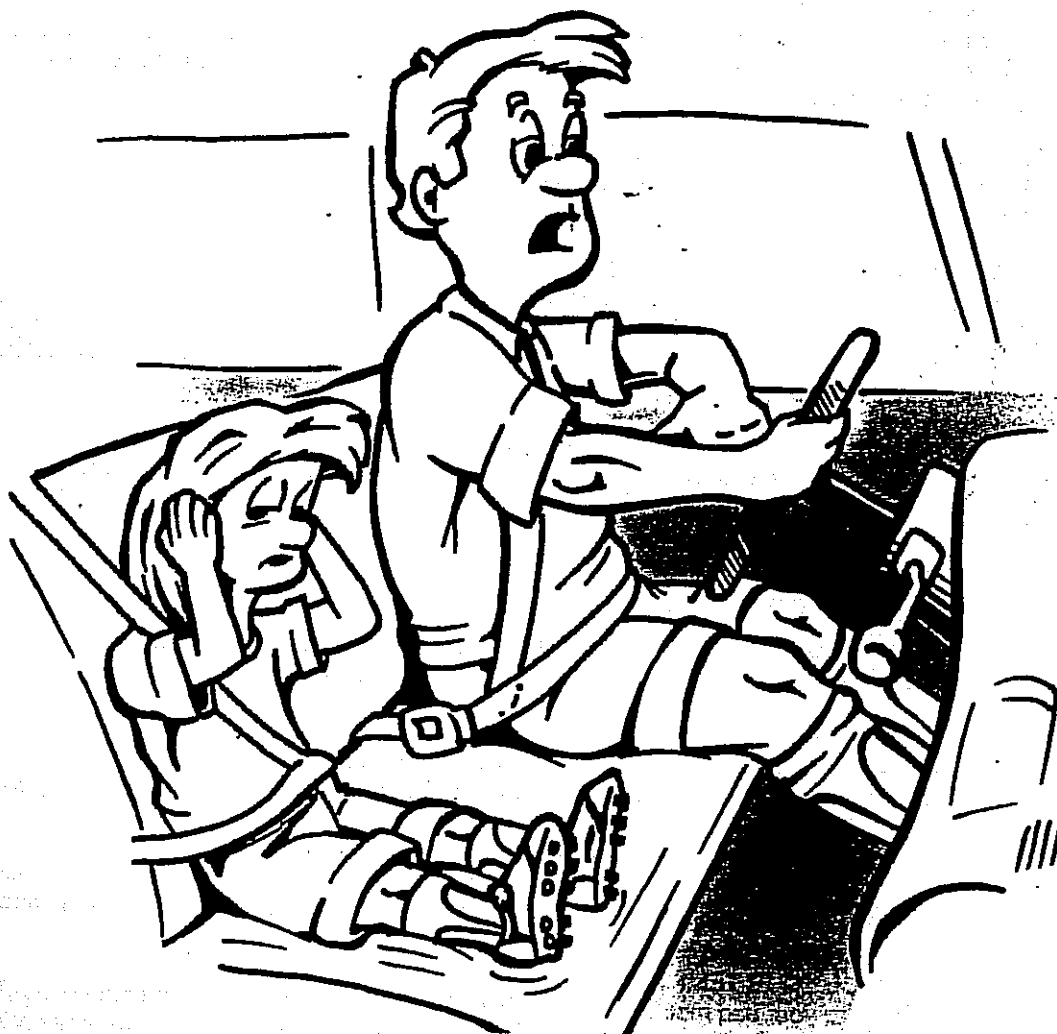


20 TIPS FOR COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

BY Lou Makarowski, Ph.D
Member: US Olympic Sport Psychology Registry
Achievement Place, Pensacola, FL



LET'S TEACH AND HAVE FUN!!

- 1. FIRST AND FOREMOST, KEEP IT FUN!**
If we know anything about children and sports, we know that children follow the fun. When the fun stops, kids quit playing. Come to think of it, don't coaches follow the fun as well?
- 2. EXPLORE AND DISCOVER YOUR SPORT GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD.**
What do you hope your child will achieve by participating in sports? Make a list of your sport dreams for your child. Now go over that list and ask yourself, "how will my presence as a coach impact these dreams?" Be honest. Be specific. If you remain convinced you are the best coach for your child, go ahead. If not, coach another team.
- 3. USE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER COACHES.**
Take time to recall coaches you admired. What qualities made these coaches special in your eyes. Make a list of the positive qualities and traits of coaches who were positive influences in your life. Try to emulate those coaches.
- 4. EXAMINE YOUR MOTIVES FOR COACHING YOUR CHILD.**
Be sensitive to your child's level of sport ambition as compared to your own. Are you projecting your dreams, your level of ambition, on your child? If you want it, sport success that is, more than your child, your relationship is at risk. Your relationship with your son or daughter will suffer if you press your child too hard.
- 5. TIMES HAVE CHANGED**
Remember your sport dreams and ambitions are a product of your childhood. Your own child is being raised by different people, at a different point in time, and with a different set of games than you were. Be sensitive to generation gap issues.
- 6. RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S INDIVIDUALITY**
Your child is an individual first, and athlete second. To insure a positive experience from sports, you must respect your child's individuality.
- 7. LISTEN MORE THAN YOU LECTURE**
Encourage your child to communicate openly with you. When you coach your child in team sports, other players may become jealous. They may express jealousy by rejecting or ignoring your child socially. Team-mates may criticize you to your child. Your child needs to feel free to talk about his/her feelings. Your child needs to know you will listen to issues such as these.
- 8. YOUR CHILD MAY FEEL JEALOUS OF TEAMMATES**
Your child may resent you for putting another ahead in the batting order or pitching rotation. Your child may be jealous of the care and concern you show toward other children. Jealousy and resentment may show up in negative attitudes.
- 9. TREAT YOUR CHILD EQUAL TO THE OTHER PLAYERS**
Never be harder on your own child than you are on the other players. Some coaches try too hard to prove their objectivity. They push their own child more than the other members of the team. This is wrong - it's bad for your child's self-esteem and destructive to the parent-child relationship.
- 10. BE AWARE OF YOUR LIMITATIONS**
Know when to say when. When your temperament or knowledge limits are met, it is time to move your child to a more appropriate coach. Do it graciously. Be supportive, give the new coach a fair opportunity.
- 11. BE POSITIVE: CRITICIZE CONSTRUCTIVELY**
Instructional comments will be more effective than emotional attacks. Studies have conclusively demonstrated that instructional feedback produces superior performance and more motivated athletes and builds self-esteem.
- 12. LEARN HOW TO COOL YOUR TEMPER WHEN ANGRY - LEARN TO WAIT!**
If your anger is related to your bad mood, dumping your anger on your child will create problems for two people instead of one. If the error is significant, it will be there tomorrow. Correct the error when you have cooled down. Remember, if she could have done better, she would have done better!
- 13. USE ASSISTANTS**
Your child may be more open to feedback from assistants, especially once puberty hits. At puberty and sometimes before, children have a strong drive to assert their independence. Sometimes advice is easier to take when it comes from outside the family.

14. RECOGNIZE YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

Are you mostly autocratic, democratic or laissez faire. Although some autocratic coaches are admired by their players, your child may rebel against a double dose of autocracy.

15. NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR MAY JUST BE THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

Learn to look for the message in negative behavior. Sometimes a child will act out in a negative fashion so that you will notice him/her. When this happens, schedule a private meeting with the player. Let your players know they can say whatever they want to you in private.

16. KEEP CONFIDENCES CONFIDENTIAL!

Never joke with other parents, your child or players about something told to you in private, and never hold a grudge.

17. CATCH THEM BEING GOOD

Reinforce behavior you want to see repeated. Too often coaches notice the error, but ignore the unselfish play that builds camaraderie and team spirit.

18. USE TEAM MEETINGS

Ask players for their input, perhaps even get a suggestion box for players and parents to provide suggestions about how best to achieve team goals. A suggestion box or similar system may help defuse perceptions of favoritism and build consensus.

19. CHILDREN NEED TO EXPERIENCE A SENSE OF MASTERY.

Success is important. Win/loss record is important. Why? Because children talk to other children. By third grade they will be asked how their team is doing. By middle school your children will be teased for poor performance. Persistent teasing will eliminate the joy in sport.

20. KEEP SPORT IN PERSPECTIVE

Balance between sport and life will reduce performance anxiety for the athlete. Balance includes doing chores and school work and maybe even scouts or church as well as sports. Balance will also keep brothers and sisters from resenting any special treatment your superstar might get.

20 + 1:

Be a coach on the field, and mom/dad the minute you step off the field.