



TIPS for Parents – How to be a Winning Parent

Youth soccer parents are often chastised by their over involvement in the children's game. But they're given few guidelines on how to help their youngsters develop a healthy attitude toward sports.

Dr. Alan Goldberg, a sports psychologist, has developed a "Parent and Coach's Guide for Winning in the Youth Sports Games".

Among his tips:

- Teach your child to never view the opponent as the "bad guy". Instead talk to and make friends with the parents of the opponent. Root for great performance and good play by both sides- not just for the winner.
- Encourage your child to compete against himself. The ultimate goal of sports is to challenge oneself and continually improve- but judging improvement by winning and losing is unfair and inaccurate measure. If a child plays his best and loses, help him feel like a winner- and when he or his team performs below potential and wins, do not gloat.
- Be supportive but do not coach. Provide encouragement, empathy and transportation; help with fundraisers- but leave the coaching and instruction to the coach.
- Help make the sport fun for your child. If your child does not enjoy what she is doing, investigate, why. Is it the coaching? The pressure? Is it you? Keep in mind that in a competitive program, there should still be room for FUN.
- Remember whose goal the game is. If your child is playing soccer to please you, he is in it for the wrong reason. Avoid pressuring him with your expectations, or using guilt or bribery to keep him involved.
- Your child is not her performance- love her unconditionally! Do not equate her self-worth with her game totals. If your daughter lets in a goal or misses an easy shot, do not respond with disgust, anger or withdrawal of love.
- Remember the importance of self-esteem. Athletes of all levels perform in direct relationship to how they feel about themselves. Do not assault your child's self esteem by degrading, embarrassing or humiliating them.
- Give the gift of failure. The most successful athletes are willing to take more risks than others (and therefore fail more frequently); they also use their failure as a positive source of motivation and improvement. Teach your child to view setbacks and mistakes positively, and you'll give him the key to a lifetime of success.
- Challenge don't threaten. Using fear as a motivator takes the fun out of performance, and seldom produces long-term results. A challenge, on the other hand, sends the powerful message, I think you can do it!



- Stress process (skill acquisition, master, FUN), not outcome. Help your child get her focus off how important the contest is and onto the process at hand. Supportive parents stress the game itself, not the final score.
- Avoid comparisons and respect developmental differences. Comparisons are useless, inaccurate and destructive because each child matures differently. Worrying about how another athlete is doing interferes with a child's attempt to stay within herself.
- Teach your child to have PERSPECTIVE on soccer. Help him develop realistic expectations about himself, his ability and his goals – without robbing him of his DREAMS!!!!