



SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PARENTING

What Can You Do to Help Your Child at Practice?

The best thing you can do is to encourage your children to “have fun, be safe, and play smart” before practice and be sure they have everything they need. After practice ask them if they had fun and learned anything new or did anything they had never done before and offer your praise. Sometimes children will express feelings to their parents that may help the coach provide a more suitable environment for the individual. You are encouraged to talk to the coach about your child’s responses to the practice sessions.

If you decide to watch practice the most important thing you can do is allow your child to focus on the coach and on the tasks at hand. We know it is common in many youth sports for parents to stand at the sidelines and shout instructions or encouragements and sometimes admonishments to their children. We ask you not to signal them, or to try a certain technique, or to offer to fix an equipment problem or even to remind them to listen to the coach. In fact, just as you would never interrupt a school classroom to talk your child, you should not interrupt a practice by attempting to communicate directly with your child.

What’s wrong with encouraging your child during practice? There are two issues. First we want the child to focus on the coach and to learn the skill for their personal satisfaction rather than learning it to please their parents. Secondly, parental encouragement often gets translated into a command to swim faster or run faster and going faster may be the exact opposite of what the coach is trying to accomplish. In most skill development we first slow the athletes down so that they can think through the motions. Save encouragements and praise for after the practice session.

What’s wrong with shouting or signaling instructions to your children? When I watch my 8 year old daughter play in a basketball league I understand the overwhelming desire to shout instructions to your child because that is what I want to do. But those instructions might be different from the coach’s instructions and then you have a confused child. Sometimes you might think the child did not hear the coach’s instruction and you want to help. The fact is that children miss instructions all the time. Part of the learning process is learning how to listen to instructions. When children learn to rely on a backup they will have more difficulty learning how to listen better the first time.

What’s wrong with helping your child fix his equipment? Quite simply, we want to encourage the children to become self-reliant and learn to take care of their own equipment.

If you need to speak to your child regarding a family issue or a transportation issue or to take your child from practice early you are certainly welcome to do so but please approach the coach directly with your request and we will immediately get your child out of the practice. If you need to speak to the coach for other reasons please wait until the end of practice or call the coach at an appropriate time.

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