

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS OF ATHLETIC CHILDREN

1. Let your children know that win or lose, you love them unconditionally. You are proud of their efforts and are not disappointed with them. You are the people in their lives who always give positive reinforcement.
2. Show them you are pleased that they chose to play sports and accept all the challenges that come with trying to better themselves in practices and games. Let them know that you understand how hard it is to constantly put themselves on the line in front of peers and spectators.
3. Be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, attitude, and sportsmanship. Remember that you don't know what happens in practice; you can't second-guess the coach's decisions, because you don't have all the information.
4. Let your children live their own lives. Try not to relive your athletic life through your children. You had your time, now it is their turn. Don't pressure them to shine for your ego. Remember that you made mistakes too.
5. Coach attitude, but don't coach skill. Leave that to the team coach. Refrain from the inclination to try to make your child just a little better by giving them tips on the way home from matches, or at dinner, or when they are trying to go to sleep.
6. Don't compete with the coach. You each have different roles to fill; leave them theirs and work on your own. "It takes a village to raise a child." Be glad you have an excellent adult role model contributing to the upbringing of your child. But remember, they are human; they will make mistakes.
7. Never compare the skill, athletic ability, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least not within their hearing. A team needs all kinds of different athletes to fulfill essential roles. Celebrate your child's special attributes.
8. Know your child's coach. Because of the special circumstances of a coach-player relationship, the coach has a tremendous potential to influence your child. Be aware of the coach's philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Allow them time to cool off. Chances are, tomorrow they will have more appropriately evaluated the situation, while you may be just beginning to investigate. If the situation warrants following through, investigate quietly before overreacting.
10. Make a point of understanding courage and the fact that it is relative. Some are terrified of talking in public, whereas others are not. Some are afraid of a mouse but not of a bull. Everyone is frightened in certain circumstances. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort. Be proud that your child has chosen to participate rather than spectate, to do and not only dream, to risk stumbling and rise to try again. Be supportive and encouraging; congratulate them when they succeed on their own.