



# COACHING YOUR KIDS FROM THE SIDELINES

Participating in sports helps children develop a number of qualities that will have lifelong benefits. Studies suggest that participation in sports can help children learn responsible social behavior and gain an appreciation of personal health and fitness. Regular physical activity also helps the body manage stress, which can result in better school performance and improve your child's ability to respond appropriately to daily challenges. In addition to these benefits, team sports give children a sense of belonging. Below are some tips to help parents build confidence and good character in their children through sporting activities.

## Setting an Example for Your Child

- **Teach good sportsmanship.** Be a role model to your child and other parents. Offer words of encouragement to your child, his or her teammates and their opponents.
- **Be respectful of everyone.** Show respect for the other team, the coaches and the officials. Avoid criticizing a child's athletic ability, a coach's decision or an official's call on a play. Keep this in mind when attending athletic events and watching sports on TV with your child as well. If you have a concern about a coach's particular style of coaching, politely bring your concern to the coach's attention after the game. You may want to volunteer to help the coach during the next practice.

## Building your Child's Confidence and Motivation

- **Focus on effort, not results.** The message to "win at all costs" can put a lot of pressure on a child. Regardless of the final score, your child should feel proud that he or she played their best. Let children know when they had the right idea or made the right decision in the game even if it didn't result in a score. Let your children know they are always winners in your eyes.
- **Accept mistakes.** Children are still learning to master the skills of the sport and making mistakes is a valuable part of the learning process. Focusing on what they learned or what they can do the next time will help them make progress, which is what making mistakes is all about! To help your child stay motivated, point out areas in which you have noticed personal or team improvement since the last practice. This helps children keep mistakes in perspective.
- **Extra practice.** If the coach brings up an area your child needs to work on, help them practice at home and offer lots of specific encouragement. Occasionally plan to stay after practice for an extra 10 or 15 minutes so your child can get a little extra time with their teammates. This encourages social development and team building.
- **Encourage the team.** Cheer for the team, in addition to the individual players. This can help put the focus on the importance of all players working together.
- **Teach your child to honor their commitments.** When a child commits to play a sport, they should take the commitment seriously. Sometimes a child will have a bad experience during a game or practice, and they will not feel like playing anymore. Few children will be the star athlete on every team. The benefits of setting goals and following through greatly outweigh any MVP status. Explain to your children that their coach and teammates are counting on them. If they are not able to actively participate, it is usually a good idea to have them dress in uniform and sit on the sidelines to show support for their teammates.

- **Accept your child's decision to play or not to play.** Once your child has completed the season, he or she may decide to try a different sport, or discontinue organized sports altogether. Sporting activities can be stressful and are not a good fit for every child. As a parent, you can support your child's decision by finding out about other extracurricular activities that encourage social development and teamwork. Many children thrive in scouting programs or clubs that fit their specific interests (photography, books, chess or other board games, stamp or coin collecting, music, drama, chorus, arts and crafts, etc.).

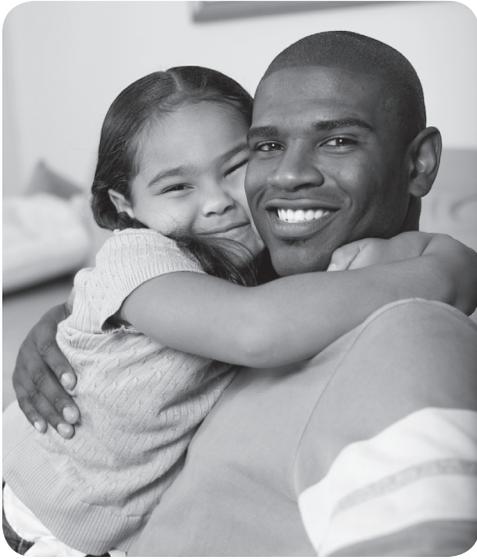
### Supporting Your Child's Coach

- **Evaluate a coach before placing your child on a team.** Practices can make or break a child's interest in sports. Find a coach who runs a fun and engaging practice. A simple test is to examine the faces of the athletes to see if they are having fun.
- **Make early, positive contact with the coach.** Introduce yourself, and be sure to keep positive lines of communication between yourself, your child and the coach open throughout the season. If a problem or concern does come up, it will be much easier to talk to the coach about it.
- **Recognize the commitment the coach has made.** Coaches invest many hours outside of practices and games; being a coach shows their commitment to the sport and to your child.
- **Help the coach.** During the season, don't hesitate to volunteer. The coach may need help calling parents about a schedule change, bringing a cooler of drinks to the game, or collecting equipment after the game. Your effort will show your child you also have an interest in creating a positive experience.
- **Fill the coach's emotional tank.** When coaches do something you like, let them know about it. Coaching is a difficult job and most coaches only hear from parents when they have a concern about something. A sincere compliment goes a long way and will help the coach continue to give his all to the team.

## HERE'S HELP



Use the **Family Resources on pages 91–95** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.



# JUST FOR DADS

**D**ads play an equal role in the development of their children from conception throughout the child's life. Boys' relationships with their dads help them identify who they are and where they come from. Girls' relationships with their dads help them feel safe and learn about being respected. Below are tips just for dads from the National Fatherhood Initiative.

## 1. Respect Your Children's Mother

One of the best things a father can do for his children is to respect their mother. If you are married, keep your marriage strong and vital. If you're not married, it is still important to respect and support the mother of your children. A father and mother who respect each other, and let their children know it, provide a secure environment for them. When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.

## 2. Spend Time with Your Children

How a father spends his time tells his children what's important to him. If you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Treasuring children often means sacrificing other things, but it is essential to spend time with your children. Kids grow up quickly. Missed opportunities are forever lost.

## 3. Earn the Right to Be Heard

All too often the only time a father speaks to his children is when they have done something wrong. That's why so many children cringe when their mother says, "Your father wants to talk with you." Begin talking with your kids when they are very young so that difficult subjects will be easier to handle as they get older. Take time and listen to their ideas and problems.

## 4. Discipline with Love

All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits. Remind your children of the consequences of their actions and provide meaningful rewards for good behavior. Fathers who discipline in a calm and fair manner show love for their children.

## 5. Be a Role Model

Fathers are role models to their kids whether they realize it or not. A girl who spends time with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect by boys, and what to look for in a husband. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility and responsibility. "All the world's a stage..." and a father plays one of the most vital roles.

## 6. Be a Teacher

Too many fathers think teaching is something others do. But a father who teaches his children about right and wrong, and encourages them to do their best, will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to help their children learn the basic lessons of life.

## 7. Eat Together as a Family

Sharing a meal together (breakfast, lunch or dinner) can be an important part of healthy family life. In addition to providing some structure in a busy day, it gives kids the chance to talk about what they are doing and what they want to do. It is also a good time for fathers to listen and offer advice. Most importantly, it is a time for families to be together each day.

