



## **7 Things You Can Do Right Now to Help Your Child Have an AWESOME Sports Season!**

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Sport psychologists have learned many of the key components that are commonly found when kids have fun and successful sport experiences, including the following:

**1. Set goals together.** Rather than simply telling your child about your expectations, take a few minutes to sit down and brainstorm specific, realistic, controllable sport goals together. Not only will this be more enjoyable for your child, he will also take a stronger sense of ownership over the goals since he will have had a hand in setting them.

**2. Reinforce effort, not just results.** Too often we get caught up in only offering rewards or praise for when goals have been met, missing out on all the opportunities to use positive reinforcement for effort along the way toward goal fulfillment. Catch your child exerting mental toughness and effort, offer genuine praise, and continue to support future efforts — this is the best way to help guide and shape behaviors for the best chance of goal attainment in the future.

**3. Model integrity and sportsmanship.** If you want your child to respect the opponent (and referees), make good decisions around fair play, and act as a role model to his teammates, then it is imperative that you model these very same behaviors. Remember, you (the parent) are the #1 source of influence to your child, so be sure to set examples for the future behaviors you wish to see.

**4. Listen.** Active listening is a powerful tool that can help build trust and rapport with your child, yet too often when kids speak we are too busy thinking of what we want to say (rather than truly listening to what is being said). Sometimes we even have to look for body language (non-verbal communication) and pick up signs that our kid might not be having a good experience in sports (i.e. he looks disinterested in playing today because he just played 10 games over the weekend and is burned out!). Active listening requires that we allow the child to speak and we reserve judgment before fully understanding his thoughts and opinions.

**5. Problem-solve together.** When your child experiences a stressful situation in sports (and she will), sit down together and frame the problem responsibly while coming up with possible solutions together. Again, keeping your child invested and part of the process (like with goal setting) is very empowering and motivational.

**6. Have FUN!** The #1 reason why kids play sports is to have fun — if you remind yourself of this each and every day you can almost guarantee your son or daughter will maximize the athletic experience.

**7. Continuously learn.** Read articles like this or one similar, to help you keep up with all the latest contemporary and traditional issues commonly experienced in youth and interscholastic sports. A lot has changed in just the last few years, so be sure to stay on top of what's going on so that your child won't be caught off-guard.