

# Changing the Game

## *10 Things Parents Can Do to Support and Enhance their Child's Experience in Youth Sports and Create Happy and High-Performing Athletes*

Based on the book by John O'Sullivan

Youth sports need to be FUN. The minute kids begin to think of sports as WORK instead of PLAY the sport does not become fun anymore. 70% of youth athletes drop out of organized sports before high school. This is a problem and a change is needed.

### 1. Encourage your child to play multiple sports.

- a. Early specialization often leads to burn out or injuries.

### 2. Celebrate your child's effort and sportsmanship, above results such as points or winning and losing.

### 3. Help your child create a GROWTH mindset instead of a fixed mindset.

- a. Fixed Mindset Individuals: Believe their abilities and qualities are set in stone.
- b. Growth Mindset Individuals: Believe that one's abilities are starting points and that talents are capable of being cultivated, nurtured, and developed through effort, commitment, hard work, risk, and failure.
- c. PRAISE EFFORT, HARD WORK, PROGRESS, & CHARACTER... not points and wins

### 4. Discuss VALUES and LIFE LESSONS that you feel are important for them to develop through sports.

- a. Be an example of the values and character traits you want to see in your child (Reinforce)

### 5. Emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit your son.

- a. De-emphasize games and competition at the lower age groups.

### 6. Be PATIENT

- a. Do NOT coach from the stands.
- b. Do NOT question or yell at the refs or coach. SUPPORT THEM.
- c. ENCOURAGE taking Risks and making Mistakes
  - i. *Children are learning. They do not need our help to prevent failure. They need us to help them overcome the fear of failure.*

### 7. Give your child CONTROL over their sports experience. (Activity/Action Steps below)

- a. High performers must have control over their own sports experience
  - i. Creates Ownership
  - ii. Performance must be based on his efforts and motivation
  - iii. Development must be a result of his failures and successes
  - iv. As a result, the outcome of his achievement belongs to him and him alone
  - v. Practice more deliberately and more often because the child takes pride in his/her work
- b. How to give Control
  - i. Sit down with your child and ask them why they play basketball and what their goals are for basketball
  - ii. We must accept our children's goals, if we force ours they will never take ownership in what they are doing
  - iii. Goals should be process oriented
  - iv. Parents and children who have the same goals often have great relationships.
  - v. Set PROCESS and FORWARD MOVING GOALS
    1. Process are commitments that focus on the journey (I will make 500 shots 4 days per week)
      - a. Attainable
      - b. Within a child's control
    2. Forward moving goals are our dreams (I want to play college basketball)
      - a. Many things outside of our control can affect these goals

- c. How to Push your Child
  - i. It is our job to push our children when they become complacent
  - ii. When they are not following through with the steps necessary to achieve their goals (practicing, lifting weights, getting good grades, etc.) you can now approach them and positively encourage what it take to have success. You hold them accountable to the goals that they created for themselves.

**8. Do NOT discuss the game, good or bad, on the ride home.**

- a. Give your child time and space to digest the game and recover physically and emotionally from the match
- b. Be a source of confidence and comfort in all situations
- c. If they bring it up, be a quiet and reflective listener and make sure they see the big picture and not just the outcome of the event
- d. Help your child grow through the experience
- e. The only exception to the above rule is if your child engages in behavior that you would not accept at home on the court or bench. This situation should be addressed immediately.

**9. Love your child unconditionally.**

- a. Do NOT let your child think your love is tied to their or their team's performance.
- b. Allow your child to take risks and fail. Teach them through their failures.
- c. Tell your young athlete, every single day, "I LOVE WATCHING YOU PLAY!"

**10. Remember: "Your child's success or lack of success in sports does not indicate what kind of parent you are. But having an athlete that is coachable, respectful, hardworking, a great teammate, mentally tough, resilient, and tries their best IS a direct reflection of your parenting."**

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**Activity #1: Parent/Child Questionnaire**

**Child**

1. Three ways I am an asset to my team are...
2. My role on the team is...
3. Three things I want to improve on are...
4. Three individual goals for the season are... (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time Based)
5. Three team goals for this season are... (SMART)

**Parent**

1. List three things your son/daughter does well already as a player.
2. What is your child's role on the team?
3. List three things you would like to see you child improve on.
4. List three individual goals you have for your son/daughter.
5. List three goals you have for the team this season.

**Action Steps for Giving Your Child Control**

1. Reflect on whether you have let your child go.
  - a. Are my emotions tied to wins or losses?
  - b. Do I coach on the ride home?
  - c. Do I model good behavior?
  - d. Do I take credit for my child's accomplishments?
2. Help your child set process goals that are SMART.
  - a. Help them think BIG!
3. Accept your child's goals.
4. PUSH your child when their actions are not matching their goals.
5. Do NOT push your child to achieve things that are in YOUR best interest.