

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS WITH ATHLETIC CHILDREN

Paraphrased from Colorado Sidelines, 1981

1. Make sure your child knows that, win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him or her, appreciate his or her efforts, and are not disappointed in him or her. This will allow your child to do his or her best without a fear of failure. Be the person in your child's life that he or she can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic capability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship, and actual skill level.
3. Be helpful but do not coach your child on the way to the court, field, rink, pool, or track; or on the way back or at breakfast, and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks, and often critical instruction.
4. Teach your child to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying", to be working to improve his or her skills and attitude. Help your child to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
5. Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. You fumbled; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, you were not always heroic and you made mistakes. The players and coaches on this team are attempting to win, although you may not agree with their decisions. Don't pressure your child because of your lost pride.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, your child's feelings will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with the coach.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitude of your child with other members of the team, at least not publicly.
8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that the coach's philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under that coach's leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before overreacting. Attempt to get the perspectives of everyone involved.
10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains and are afraid to battle. Some of us will battle, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort. Your job as a parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well.

Please do not degrade the participants of an athletic event: your children, the coaches, the opponent's players and coaches, or the officials. They do the very best they can. They never try to lose a game, blow a call, or make a mistake. Athletic events cannot occur without them.