

A Coach's Letter to Parents

By Darrell J. Burnett, Ph.D.

Dear Parents,

Here are some hints on how to make this a fun season, with lots of positive memories for your kids and your family.

1. Make sure your kids know that, win or lose, you love them. Be the person in their life they can always look to for support.
2. Try to be completely honest with yourself about your kids' athletic capability, their competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their level of skills.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach your kids on the way to the game or at the breakfast table. Think how tough it must be on them to be continually inundated with advice, pep talks, and criticism.
4. Teach your kids to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be out there trying and to be constantly working to improve their skills. Don't tell them that winning doesn't count because it does, and they know it. Instead, help them develop a healthy competitive attitude, a "feel for competing, for trying hard, and for having a good time."
5. Try not to live your life through your kids. Sure they're an extension of you, but don't assume they feel the same way you did, want the same things, or have the same attitude.
6. Don't push them in the direction that gives you the most satisfaction. Don't compete with your kids' coaches. Try to help them understand the necessity for discipline, rules, and regulations.
7. Don't compare your kids with other players on their team - at least not within their hearing - don't lie to them about their capabilities as a player.
8. Get to know your kids' coaches. Make sure you approve of each coach's attitude and ethics. Coaches can be influential, and you should know the values of each coach so that you can decide whether or not you want them passed on to your kids.
9. Teach your kids the meaning of courage. Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage is learning to perform in spite of fear. Courage isn't getting rid of fear. It's overcoming it.
10. Winning is an important goal. Winning at all costs is stupidity.
11. Remember that officials are necessary. Don't overreact to their calls. They have rules and guidelines to follow representing authority during the game. Teach your kids to respect authority and to play by the rules.
12. Finally, remember if the kids aren't having fun we're missing the whole point of youth sports.

The Coach

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Dr. Darrell Burnett is a clinical psychologist and a certified sports psychologist specializing in youth sports. He has been in private practice in Laguna Niguel, California for 25+ years. He is a member of the Little League International Board of Directors. He was listed among the "Top 100 Most Influential Sports Educators in America" by the Institute for International Sport. His book, **IT'S JUST A GAME!** (*Youth, Sports, & Self Esteem: A Guide for Parents*), and his Sportsmanship Card Game, **GOOD SPORT!** are described at his website, www.djburnett.com, along with his other books, booklets, and CDs on youth sports and family life.

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