

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS OF ATHLETIC CHILDREN

Reprinted from the *Young Athlete* by Bill Burgess

1. Make sure your child knows that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love him/her, appreciate his/her efforts, and are not disappointed in him/her. This will allow him/her to do his/her best without fear of failure. Be the person in his/her life she can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, his/her competitive attitude, his/her sportsmanship, and his/her actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach her on the way to a game/practice 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 advise, pep talks and often critical instruction.
4. Teach him/her to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve his/her skills and attitudes. Help him/her 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. As a child, you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don't pressure your child because of pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when his/her world turns black. If he/she is comfortable with you, win or lose, he/she's on his/her way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don't compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc. with your athlete if you interfere with or berate the coach's plan or ability. Be supportive.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within his/her hearing.
8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his philosophy; attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight, but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but means doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.

The job of the parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. It is worth all the effort when you hear your child say "My parents really helped me and I was lucky in that respect."