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# Do's and Don't's for Sport Parents

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USA Gymnastics  
**Athlete  
Wellness  
Program**

## **Do for Yourself:**

1. Get vicarious pleasure from your children's participation, but do not become overly ego-involved.
2. Try to enjoy yourself at competitions. Your unhappiness can cause your child to feel guilty.
3. Look relaxed, calm, positive and energized when watching your child compete. Your attitude influences how your child feels and performs.
4. Have a life of your own outside of your child's sports participation.

## **Do with Other Parents:**

1. Make friends with other parents at events. Socializing can make the event more fun for you.
2. Volunteer as much as you can. Youth sports depends upon the time and energy of involved parents.
3. Police your own ranks: Work with other parents to ensure that all parents behave appropriately at practices and competitions.

## **Do with Coaches:**

1. Leave the coaching to the coaches.
2. Give them any support they need to help them do their jobs better.
3. Communicate with them about your child. You can learn about your child from each other.
4. Inform them of relevant issues at home that might affect your child at practice.
5. Inquire about the progress of your children. You have a right to know.
6. Make the coaches your allies.

## **Do for the Children:**

1. Provide guidance for your children, but do not force or pressure them.
2. Assist them in setting realistic goals for participation.
3. Emphasize fun, skill development and other benefits of sports participation, e.g., cooperation, competition, self-discipline, commitment.
4. Show interest in their participation: help them get to practice, attend competitions, ask questions.
5. Provide a healthy perspective to help children understand success and failure.

6. Emphasize and reward effort rather than results.
7. Intervene if your child's behavior is unacceptable during practice or competitions.
8. Understand that your child may need a break from sports occasionally.
9. Give your child some space when needed. Part of sports participation involves them figuring things out for themselves.
10. Keep a sense of humor. If you are having fun and laughing, so will your child.
11. Provide regular encouragement.
12. Be a healthy role model for your child by being positive and relaxed at competitions and by having balance in your life.
13. **Give them unconditional love: Show them you love them whether they win or lose!**

### **Don't for Yourself:**

1. Base your self-esteem and ego on the success of your child's sports participation.
2. Care too much about how your child performs.
3. Lose perspective about the importance of your child's sports participation.

### **Don't with Other Parents:**

1. Make enemies of other parents.
2. Talk about others in the sports community--instead talk to them. It is more constructive.

### **Don't with Coaches:**

1. Interfere with their coaching during practice or competitions.
2. Work at cross purposes with them. Make sure you agree philosophically and practically on why your child is playing sports and what they may get out of sports.

### **Don't with Your Children:**

1. **Expect your children to get anything more from their sport than a good time, physical fitness, mastery and love of a lifetime sport, and transferable life skills.**
2. Ignore your child's bad behavior in practice or competitions.
3. Ask the child to talk with you immediately after a competition.
4. Show negative emotions while watching them perform.
5. Make your child feel guilty for the time, energy and money you are spending and the sacrifices you are making.
6. Think of your child's sports participation as an investment for which you expect a return.
7. Live out your own dreams through your child's sports participation.
8. Compare your child's progress with that of other children.
9. Badger, harass, use sarcasm, threaten or use fear to motivate your child. It only demeans them and causes them to hate you.
10. Expect anything from your child except their best effort.
11. **Ever do anything that will cause them to think less of themselves or of you!**



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