

GOLD MINDS

DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

BY WAYNE GOLDSMITH AND HELEN MORRIS

Here are 50 things you can do as parents to help your children achieve in sports.

parenting

1. Love them unconditionally.

2. Support their coach.

3. Accept the fact that they cannot win every time they compete.

4. Allow them to be a kid and to have fun.

5. Help them to develop as a person with character and values.

6. "Turn off" as a sporting parent—don't make sport the one and only topic of conversation at the dinner table, in the car, etc.

7. Don't introduce your child as, "This is my son, the swimmer, or soccer player." Their sport is just something they do—it does not define them.

8. Don't do everything for them—teach them responsibility and self-management.

9. Reward frequently for success and effort, but make them small, simple, practical and personal things. Kids don't need a CD or \$20 just for playing sport.

10. Best of all, reward them with what they really love—your time!

11. Be calm, relaxed and dignified at competitions and games.

12. Accept the fact that progress in any sport takes a long time—it takes at least



7-10 years *after* maturation in most sports for any athlete to achieve his full potential.

13. Believe it or not, kids can learn to pack and unpack their training bag, clean their own training and competition clothes, fill their own water bottle, etc. Teach them and encourage them to take control over their own sporting careers. A little manual work and helping out with household chores are important lessons in developing independence.

14. Don't reward champion performances with junk food!

15. Skills and attitude are the important things for success. Don't waste money buying kids the latest and greatest equipment, hoping that will provide a short cut to success.

16. Encourage the same commitment and passion for school and study as you do for sport.

17. Avoid relying on "sports foods" or "sports supplements." Focus on a sensible, balanced diet that

includes a variety of wholesome, healthy foods.

18. Allow your kids to try many sports and activities.

19. Don't specialize too early! There is no such thing as a champion 10-year-old professional golfer or World Cup soccer player or tailback.

20. Junk food is OK...occasionally. Don't worry about it.

21. Praise qualities like effort, trying hard, attempting new skills, the execution of a new skill in a game and similar values—rather than winning.

22. Love them unconditionally. (See #1. *This is worth repeating.*)

23. Have your “guilt gland” removed. This will help you avoid phrases such as, “I’ve got better things to do with my time,” and “Do you realize how much I have had to give up for you to play football?” *Everyone* loses when you play the guilt game.

24. Encourage activities that build broad, general movement skills like running, catching, throwing, agility, balance, coordination, speed and rhythm. These general skills can then have a positive impact on *all* sports.

25. Encourage the occasional “down time”—no school or sport—just time to be kids!

26. Encourage relationships and friendships away from training, competition and school work—it’s all about balance.

27. Help and support your children to achieve the goals they set. Take time to relax, celebrate and enjoy their achievement as a family.

28. Never use training or sport as a punishment (i.e., more laps, more training).

29. Do a family fitness class such as yoga, martial arts or another sport unrelated to their main sport. Everyone benefits.

30. Car pool! Get to know the other kids and families on their team. Also, allow them to become more independent by having them do things with other (trusted) adults.

31. Attend training regularly to show you are interested in their effort and the process rather than just their winning or losing.



32. Help raise money for the team, club and kids—even if your children are not involved in the target of the fund raising.

33. Tell your kids you are proud of them for being involved in a healthy activity.

34. Volunteer your time to serve on committees.

35. Volunteer your time to help out at training and competition...*but*...try not to work directly with your own children. This helps teach your kids the importance of “team”—where working together and supporting each other are important attributes.

36. Even if you were an athlete or a player, and even if you are a trained coach, resist the temptation to coach your own child. It rarely—if ever—works.

37. Be aware that your children’s passion for a particular sport may change.

38. Regarding #37, also be aware that skills learned in one sport can often transfer to another sport.

39. Accept “flat” spots—times when your children do not improve. During these times, encourage participation for fun, focus on learning skills and help them develop perseverance and patience—two life skills that will help them throughout their lives.

40. Believe it or not, kids are unlikely to die from drinking tap water!

41. Cheer for your children—*appropriately*. Don’t embarrass yourself or them.

42. Make sure each week includes some designated family time in which you do



family things and talk about family issues—not about sport.

43. Take a strong stand against smoking and drug use (both recreational and performance-enhancing).

44. Set an example with sensible, responsible drinking of alcoholic beverages when you are with your kids.

45. Don’t look for short cuts like “miracle sports drinks” or “super supplements.” Success in sport comes from consistently practicing skills and developing an attitude in which the love of sport and physical fitness are the real “magic.”

46. If one of your children is a sporting champion and the other kids in the family are not so gifted, make sure you spend just as much time, energy and enthusiasm for whatever they are doing.

47. Eliminate the use of the phrase, “Well, what we used to do when I was playing your sport....”

48. Encourage your kids to find strong role models, but try not to let this decision be based on sporting ability alone. Look for role models who consistently demonstrate integrity, humility, honesty and the ability to take responsibility for their own actions.

49. Encourage them to learn the qualities of leadership and concepts like sharing, selflessness, teamwork and generosity. Sport teaches life lessons.

50. Don’t compare the achievements of your kids to any other kids—good or bad. It only creates barriers and resentment between young people ♦

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