

How to establish rapport with your athletic child.

Here are some golden rules.

1. Make sure your child knows win or lose, scared or heroic, that you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them.
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 don't coach on the way to the track, diamond, or court, on the way back at breakfast, and so on.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, trying, working, improving their skills, and attitudes taking the physical bumps and coming back for more. Don't say winning doesn't count, because it does. Instead, help them develop the feel for competing, trying hard and having fun.
5. Try not to re-live your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. Remember, you fumbled too, you lost as well as won, were frightened, backed off at times, and were not always heroic. Don't pressure them because of your pride.
6. Don't compete with the coach. The young athlete often comes home and chatters on about coach says this, coach says that. This, I realize, is often hard to take, especially for a father or a mother who has had some sports experience.
7. Don't compare the skill, courage or attitudes of your child with that of other members of the squad or team, at least not in front of them. And if your child shows a tendency to resent the treatment they get from the coach, or the approval other team members get, be careful to talk over the facts quietly and try to provide fair and honest counsel. If you play the role of the overly protective parent who is blinded to the relative merits of your youngster and their actual status as an athlete and individual, you will merely perpetuate the problem. Your youngster could become a problem athlete.
8. You should get to know the coach so that you can be assured that his or her philosophy, attitudes, ethics and knowledge are such that you are happy to expose your child to them. The coach has a tremendous potential influence.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reactions to the tales of woe or heroics they bring home. Don't cut your youngster down if you feel they are exaggerating-just take a look at the situation and gradually try to develop an even level.
10. 10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. There are different kinds of courage. Some of us can climb mountains, but are frightened to get into a fight; others can fight without fear but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas-nobody escapes fear and that is just as well since it often helps us avoid disaster. Explain to your youngster that courage does not mean an absence of fear but rather means doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.