

Raising an Athlete



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Sports!! From fall to winter, spring to summer, I have always loved the cycle of sports. It is extremely exciting to watch a family member play in competitive sports. Being an enthusiastic follower of my daughter as an all-star softball player, I really had to let go of my instinct to be a mom-coach. I quickly learned how to become a silent and compassionate partner when my daughter competed in championship games. I discovered that the stakes were high. And maybe a bit too high for my daughter and her team to relax, focus, and enjoy their sport.

As a typical parent, I initially tried to encourage my child while being positive. This strategy failed, however, when my daughter and her team felt the pressure during the playoffs. Suddenly, the pressure was so great that the joy of the sport was lost. The team froze and became exacerbated. Then our talented team lost their focus. Finally, they lost the win of their championship game.

What I Learned as a Parent

When I reflect back on what happened, this is what I learned about parenting an athlete:

It is my job to stay present and supportive regardless of how my child is responding to the coach and her team.

When the game becomes tense, I must diffuse my energy with a calming smile and be there as a positive force of energy for my child and the team.

I must remember that the most important lesson for my child is not the outcome but the process. She is there as part of a team. My job is to encourage positive teambuilding through support, compassion, and concern for every team member.

When there is tension, it is important to refocus the team with a timeout of support and positive energy.

My job is to give my daughter the space she needs to regroup and find her center of focus. Healing happens through individual choice.

After a major game upset, it is important to give my daughter the space she needs to regroup and relax.

Some athletes need to vent about what went wrong during the game. Others need the space to self-reflect. That is when I need to be quiet and take the cues from my daughter.

Showing up matters!

What I Learned from the Coaches

Once a team member makes an error, it is past history. The coach must restore motivational energy

among team members.

No good is ever generated from shame discussions.

Players are aware of their limitations. Each needs their own reinforced coping skills when they fail.

Players rebuild their skills and potential through acknowledged growth and full potential of the team.

An effective coach is a reservoir of inspirational strength and skill development strategies for every team member.

Much success as a parent who supports their child athlete and team to their next victory of self-growth as an effective team member.