

## **Be the Parent Who Is Part of Their Good Athletic Memories:**

### **Release Your Child to the Whole Experience as Soon as Possible**

We learned this from our athletes who have gone the furthest. One of the things they attributed to their success was that they had parents who “released” them to the team, the sport and the coach. As soon as you know that your child is physically and emotionally safe, one of the best gifts you can give them is to let the activity become theirs by taking small shifts of responsibility. *Releasing is trusting their athletic destiny to them instead of trying to control it.* All the successes and all the struggles that come with sport participation are theirs. Be there to support and encourage but by taking a step back, it allows athletes to take more responsibility and accountability for their experience. Developing healthy and positive relationships with other adults outside your family helps their growth and confidence. Be thankful for those adults outside our families who walk along side of our kids with us.

### **Model Behaviors We Expect Them to Exemplify**

“Young people need models, not critics.” John Wooden.

Consistently demonstrate the behaviors you want your child to learn from this experience. Respect others. Win and lose with equal grace. Be a model of poise and confidence. *Be the face your athlete needs to see during competition.* When parents blame or complain about officials or coaches they are probably raising an excuse maker. Although it may help you to vent, remember it is never good for the athlete when parents are critical of coaches or officials. Whether you agree or disagree, learn to accept the judgment of the officials and coaches. Accept the results of each game. Do not make excuses. Also be an example by staying physically active throughout your life.

### **Be Aware of Your Words, Reactions and Body Language**

Your child should never look at you for approval when they are competing but if they do, what will they see? The last thing any young athlete needs during a game is worrying about their parents being upset or stressed about their performance. Anything we do that would make them feel like their value to us is somehow tied to athletic performance or outcomes of games (good or bad) has long term negative effects on most kids. Winning or performing well does not mean we are better parents or that they are guaranteed a more successful life. *There is a fine line between involvement and interference and between encouragement and pressure.* The athlete can feel it.

### **Stop Hovering and Wanting Everything to Go Perfectly**

There is only one guarantee in any sport season... it will not be perfect. Let go of perfection and trying to save them from every problem. Difficulties are either opportunities for them to persevere and grow or opportunities for us to “rescue them”. Let them be responsible for their own bag. If they forget their shoes or jersey, it will probably never happen again. Athletics provides a place where we can “cut the cord”. Don’t try to smooth out all the bumps in the road. Let them grow by giving them a chance to figure things out. By solving everything for them the message to them is that you don’t think they can handle difficult situations. Give them the tools and then let them become a problem solver. There is not a better place than athletics to learn to take healthy risks and to fail. Let them take the natural risks involved in sport without worrying. Teach them that failure is part of

the experience and it doesn't mean they are a failure. Encourage healthy risk taking and then let them live with the results. Over scheduling and over managing can create more stress and anxiety, hurt performance and take the fun out of the game. Also avoid the natural tendency to critique the game. Demonstrate respect by giving the athlete time and space after competition. *The less you give advice, the more likely they are to ask for it.*

#### **Four Roles – Choose One**

In every athletic competition there are only four roles – players, coaches, spectators and officials. Before you get to the game, it is better for the athlete if everyone just chooses one of those roles. Trying to get the team to perform well is the responsibility of the coaches and the players. It is the job of the official to make the judgment calls. The parent can contribute by being encourager and confidence builder. It is not your responsibility to try to win or influence the outcome of the game from the bleachers.

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One athlete of character improves your team - One team of character changes your school - One school of character impacts your community - It all begins with a coach of significance.

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