



5 Tips for Sports Parents

Parents/Caregivers are an integral part to helping create a positive youth sports experience for their athletes. Providing athletes the support they may need to overcome challenges, feel comfortable on their team, and connect with others can make the difference in their enjoyment of the sport.

- 1.** Get involved in the team. If the coach has a snack schedule or needs extra hands at practice, consider helping out if your athlete is open to it. Being more connected to the team will give you a better understanding of what your athlete experiences.
- 2.** Before a game, help your athlete prepare with the right rest, good nutrition/hydration, and encouragement.
- 3.** If you feel the need to advocate for your athlete with their coach, consider helping them self-advocate. Support them in privately bringing up issues to the coach.
- 4.** If self-advocacy does not work and you still feel the need to advocate for your athlete, do so by asking the coach to set up a private meeting. Calmly ask for the coach's point of view and, once you understand the coach's perspective, keep a calm conversation until the issue is resolved or until you politely excuse yourself to consider next steps towards a resolution.
- 5.** Keep your athlete in multiple sports if they enjoy them and avoid pressure towards specialization. In most cases, specialization before 12 is not a good idea and athletes may not only miss the fun and connection of playing other sports, but the sport skill benefits as well.

At every possible turn, let your athlete know that you love them unconditionally (by saying it!), regardless of their athletic performance. Enjoy your athlete's time in youth sports. It is fleeting, and you will want to look back, in conversation with your grown athlete, on the good old days.

