

# HOW PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN HELP ATHLETES BUILD CONFIDENCE

Sports offer powerful opportunities for young athletes to face challenges and build essential life skills. Parents and caregivers play a vital role in that growth. By focusing on your athlete's development, helping them learn from mistakes, strengthening their skills, and recognizing their unique strengths, you can nurture their confidence. Use the tips below to help your athlete believe in themselves:

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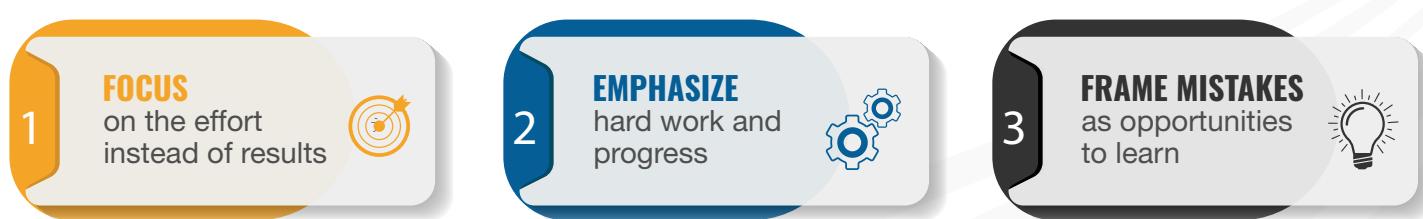
## ✓ ESTABLISH S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

Goal setting is a great way to boost athletes' confidence. When you and your athlete set clear, growth-focused goals, you make it easier to track progress, celebrate successes, and plan adjustments to overcome challenges. Collaborate with your athlete to set **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Achievable**, **Realistic**, **Time-based** goals using PCA's [Goal Setting Worksheet](#).



## ✓ SHIFT THE FOCUS OF CONVERSATIONS

Talk about sports with your athlete in an intentional way. Focus on the effort they put in as opposed to praising results. Emphasize their hard work, their progress toward goals, and their persistence to help foster an [improvement mindset](#).<sup>(1)</sup> Frame mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve next time.



## ✓ LET YOUR ATHLETE LEAD

Begin by ensuring that your athlete is ready to talk. When they are, give them the space to lead conversations, especially when you sense that their confidence is low. During the conversation, avoid the urge to fix their situation. Instead, help them engage in self-reflective thought and collaborate on solutions. Avoid the urge to fix their situation yourself. Help them engage in self-reflective thought and collaborate on solutions - i.e. "Next time you come across that challenge, how could you handle it?"

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## ✓ PROVIDE UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT

The number one responsibility of any sports parent/caregiver is to provide their athlete with unconditional support, regardless of the outcome. Especially after a tough sports moment, allow your athlete time to process and let them know you are there for them when they need to talk. Validate their feelings and experiences by listening to understand their perspective and confirming what you hear them expressing. Avoid comparing them to other athletes or siblings and help them recognize that their identity is more than just an athlete.<sup>(2)</sup>

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- 1 **ALLOW TIME** to process and offer support 
- 2 **VALIDATE** their feelings and experiences 
- 3 **AVOID COMPARING** them to other athletes 

## ✓ CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Let the coach give your athlete corrective feedback to improve their sports skills. The role of the sports parent/caregiver is to focus on celebrating their successes with truthful, specific praise. Highlighting your athlete's strengths and effort can lead to better self-esteem, confidence in their ability to grow, and better performance overall.<sup>(1)</sup>

## ✓ REDUCE PRESSURE

Sports inevitably present pressure situations. Prepare your athlete to deal with these instances by teaching them strategies that help reduce stress. These strategies could include breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, or pre-game routines. Avoid adding any pressure - a parent/caregiver's steady, unconditional support provides the foundation athletes need to build confidence and define success on their own terms.



1. <https://www.nationalsportsid.com/raising-confident-young-athletes-7-principles-every-parent-should-adopt/#:~:text=Decades%20of%20sports%20psychology%20and,positive%2C%20growth%2Dfocused%20mindset.>
2. <https://www.excelexportpsychologylc.com/how-to-build-a-childs-confidence-in-sports/#:~:text=Validating%20your%20child's%20experience%20means,Go%20Ahead%2C%20Have%20the%20Talk>