

# A Coach's Letter to Parents

*by Dr. Darrell J. Burnett*

Dear Parents,

Here are some hints on how to make this a fun season, with lots of positive memories for your kids and your family.

1. Make sure your kids know that, win or lose, you love them. Be the person in their life they can always look to for support.
2. Try to be completely honest with yourself about your kids' athletic capability, their competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their level of skills.
3. Be helpful, but don't coach your kids on the way to the game or at the breakfast table. Think how tough it must be on them to be continually inundated with advice, pep talks, and criticism.
4. Teach your kids to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be out there trying, to be constantly working to improve their skills, to take physical bumps and come back for more. Don't tell them that winning doesn't count because it does, and they know it. Instead, help them develop a healthy competitive attitude, a "feel" for competing, for trying hard, for having a good time.
5. Try not to live your life through your kids. You've lost as well as won, you've been frightened, and you've backed off at times. Sure they're an extension of you, but don't assume they feel the same way you did, want the same things, or have the same attitude.
6. Don't push them in the direction that gives you the most satisfaction. Don't compete with your kids' coaches. A coach may become a hero to your kids for a while, someone who can do no wrong, and you may find that hard to take. Conversely, don't automatically side with your kids against their coaches. Try to help them understand the necessity for discipline, rules, and regulations.
7. Don't compare your kids with other players on their team - at least not within their hearing - don't lie to them about their capabilities as a player. If you are overly protective, you will perpetuate the problem.
8. Get to know your kids' coaches. Make sure you approve of each coach's attitude and ethics. Coaches can be influential, and you should know the values of each coach so that you can decide whether or not you want them passed on to your kids.
9. Remember that children tend to exaggerate. Temper your reactions to stories they bring home from practice or the game about how they were praised or criticized. Don't criticize them for exaggerating, but don't overreact to the stories they tell you.
10. Teach your kids the meaning of courage. Some of us can climb mountains, but are frightened about getting into a fight. Some of us can fight without fear, but turn to jelly at the sight of a bee. Everyone is frightened about something. Courage isn't the absence of fear. Courage is learning to perform in spite of fear. Courage isn't getting rid of fear. It's overcoming it.
11. Winning is an important goal. Winning at all costs is stupidity.
12. Remember that officials are necessary. Don't overreact to their calls. They have rules and guidelines to follow representing authority on the field. Teach your kids to respect authority and to play by the rules.
13. Finally, remember, if the kids aren't having fun, we're missing the whole point of youth sports.