

Providing Social Support

A major part of the successful use of goal setting is for athletes to have good social support for achieving their goals from everyone in the sport environment. This includes the coaches, teammates, and most importantly, their parents. Certainly, this is not new information to you. Most parents go to great lengths to support their children's efforts in virtually every aspect of their life. If there is any difference, it is that not all parents are particularly knowledgeable about a wide variety of sports. Thus, parents may find it difficult to understand what goals the coaches and athletes may be trying to achieve and how they are going about doing it.

Coaches should hold a meeting with all the athletes and parents on their team early in the season to explain what they hope to accomplish during the upcoming season. Ask the coaches to explain their goals for the team and, generally, for the athletes on the team.

Talk with your own child and discuss her or his personal goals for the season. Do not set goals for them. The goals your son or daughter are trying to achieve must be their goals. This way they feel responsible for them and will work harder to achieve them. After practices and/or games, discuss how they did in terms of achieving their personal goals. Provide positive reinforcement not only for achieving goals, but also for making progress towards a goal, and sometimes even for expending notable effort towards achieving a particular goal. Note that positive reinforcement does not necessarily mean a material reward, but can be as simple as a pat on the back, a hug, "good job", or whatever. Mostly, it is important that you consistently let your children know that you care about how they are doing in their sport, even if you do not really have a clue about that sport.

This article by Dr. Richard Stratton, Health and Physical Education Program, Virginia Tech