

## What can I do to minimise the issues I might face as a sport parent?

We want all children and all parents to have the best possible experience in sport. The first step in doing this is knowing what issues might arise so that you can plan for these and hopefully minimise any impact. However, even with the best planning it is likely that some challenges might still arise. Fortunately, other experienced sport parents have provided some strategies to help navigate some of the difficulties and challenges you may encounter.

### Detach from sport

At times sport can seem all-consuming. Sharing tasks with partners, family or friends, developing a support network, and maintaining some balance in your life, encouraging your child to be independent, and keeping sport in perspective can all help you to detach from sport and reduce stress.

### Normalising experiences

It is easy for you or your child to feel like you are the only ones who are encountering issues. Talking to other parents and athletes can help you realise you are not alone. Also, remembering that some of these issues would exist even without sport can help minimise the impact they have on life.

### Committing to Learning

The more you know the better prepared you will be to manage challenges. Take time to talk to others and learn about the sport, the challenges they faced, and what they did to help their child; talk to coaches to learn about the sport; and reflect on your own experiences to make changes for the future.

### Managing emotional reactions

Youth sport is an emotional environment and even parents with the very best intentions can find themselves caught up in this. Developing strategies such as positive self-talk, relaxation strategies, breathing techniques, distraction, and avoidance techniques are all useful to help manage emotions that arise.

Based on:

Burgess, N. S., Knight, C. J., & Mellalieu, S. D. (2016). Parental stress and coping in elite youth gymnastics: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise, and Health*, 8, 237-256.

