

As a parent, what influence am I likely to have on my child's sporting career?

A big one! Through the support and encouragement you provide to your child you can help them to participate, enjoy their participation, and achieve their potential. As a parent you can influence your child in a variety of ways, including as a role model, a provider, and an interpreter of their sporting experience.

Parents as Role Models

Your child will learn a lot from watching you. If they see you participating in sport, enjoying learning new skills, and responding positively to challenges or losses, they are likely to replicate these behaviours. Similarly, if they see you maintaining control on the sidelines, being respectful of the referee and other parents, cheering on both teams, and promoting positive sportspersonship, they are also more likely to demonstrate these behaviours.

Parents as Interpreters

Through your comments and responses to your child, you help them make sense of their sporting experiences. For instance, when you talk to your child about winning and losing you are emphasising the outcome of a performance and a child is likely to judge their success based on whether they won or lost. In contrast, if you focus on the different skills that can be gained from sport and emphasise enjoyment and making friends, children will be more likely to judge their experience in this way.

Parents as Providers

The most obvious way in which you will impact on your child's sporting experience is through your provision of opportunities, information, and support. Specifically, as a parent, you are responsible for providing:

- Tangible support – paying for equipment, coaching, competitions, and travel, committing time to taking children to training and events, ensuring children are fed, clothed, and ready to go!
- Emotional support – being there to pick up the pieces when it goes wrong, supporting your child whether they are winning or losing, and helping your child to navigate the bumps in the road they will inevitably face.
- Informational support – giving your child important information about their training and competition schedules, helping them communicate with their coach, and keeping them informed about their sport.

Through this support you are enabling your child to engage in sport. Without your support, their sport wouldn't be possible!

Based on:

Fredricks, J. A. & Eccles, J. S. (2004). Parental influences on youth involvement in sport. In M. R. Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 145-165). Morgantown, WV: FIT. Wolfenden, L. E. & Holt, N. L. Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 17, 108-126.

