

How can I help my child develop confidence?

Confidence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to be successful in a particular situation (i.e., sport competition) or at a specific task (i.e., taking a penalty kick).

Where do athletes get their confidence from?

- Mastery (i.e., developing and improving their skills)
- Demonstration of ability (i.e., beating others or showing superior ability)
- Experiences of engaging in quality mental / physical preparation
- Self presentation (i.e., looking and feeling good, clean kit, well-prepared)
- Social support (i.e., support and encouragement from parents and team-mates)
- Coaching (i.e., trusting their coach to make the right decisions)
- Innate factors (i.e., superior talent)

Why does my child's confidence fluctuate so much?

Sport is difficult and challenging because there is always a sense of uncertainty about what is going to happen in competition. No athlete feels confident all of the time, and your child's confidence will fluctuate and have natural dips. This is often because they base their sport confidence on a relatively small number of usually uncontrollable sources (i.e., demonstrating their ability over others). The key to developing more robust or stable sport confidence is to gain confidence from a wide range of controllable sources (i.e., perceptions of thorough preparation, or mastery and improvements in training). This is important because if your child is unable to gain confidence from one specific source then they have a number of other sources to fuel positive self-beliefs.

How can I help my child develop robust confidence?

Provide your child with a range of opportunities so they can find a sport they are good at. In addition, encourage your child to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to practice these skills. As part of this process, praise progress and effort, and reinforce that mistakes are part of learning. As confidence may naturally fluctuate in some sports (e.g., due to the scoring system, structure), always encourage persistence if your child finds certain situations challenging. Make sure you enter your child into appropriate levels of competition based on their current level of ability and ensure they are mentally and physically prepared to compete.

Based on:

Thomas, O., Lane, A., & Kingston, K. (2011). Defining and Contextualizing Robust Sport-Confidence, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 23:2, 189-208.