

How can I help my child stay motivated?

In order to feel motivated in sport, your child will need to feel a sense of autonomy (i.e., that they have a sense of choice in their sport), relatedness (i.e., close relationships with coaches and other players) and most importantly competence (i.e., feeling good at their sport). However, the extent to which your child is able to maintain their motivation over a long period of time is dependent on how they deal with success and failure.

Why do some children deal with success and failure differently?

Children learn different ways of viewing what competence is, and this leads them to see success and failure in different ways. A child who is highly **task-orientated** gains feelings of competence from personal progress, improvement, and effort. Alternatively, more **ego-orientated** children gain feelings of competence from outperforming others, winning, or showing off skills with minimal effort.

How do task orientated athletes behave?

Task-orientated athletes tend to have more stable perceptions of their competence and consistently display high levels of effort and persistence, enjoyment, satisfaction, and performance. As they tend to focus on improvement, they are more likely to select and try more challenging tasks that will stretch their current skills.

How do ego orientated athletes behave?

Ego-orientated athletes cope well when they are performing well, but struggle with uncertainty. Under pressure or when not performing well, they will avoid challenging tasks, withdraw effort, and are more prone to cheating, anxiety, and lower enjoyment of sport. These athletes can also struggle to transition to higher levels of sport when they come up against stronger opposition.

How can I help my child be more task-orientated?

Many children are likely to have an elevated ego-orientation in competition as they are usually focused on outcomes. It is important to help your child develop a high task-orientation as this will act as a 'safety net' for their motivation if they go through a period of poor performances or struggle to progress. Parents can help to develop a task orientated environment by emphasising that success in sport is about personal progress, self-development, and learning through consistent competitive effort. Parents should avoid comparing their child with other players and value persistence by reinforcing that mistakes are an important part of learning.

Based on:

Harwood, C.G., & Swain, A.B. (2002). The development and activation of achievement goals within tennis II: A player, parent, and coach intervention. *The Sport Psychologist*, 16, 111-137.