

5 strategies to help manage the sport parenting experience

1. Learn about the sport. Find out as much information about your child's sport as you can before you make a big commitment; talk to other more experienced parents, coaches, and read as much as you can on the national sport federation website. The more information you have in advance the better prepared you will be. For example, how much time does training take up as children progress? How much is it likely to cost? What might be expected of you and your child? Use this information to anticipate any challenges you might face in trying to support your child in this sport.

2. Talk to your child. Sport provides an excellent opportunity for you and your child to develop a strong relationship, to face and overcome problems together, and to share in success. Making time to talk to your child about how they are doing, what they are enjoying, and any difficulties they are facing, can help you to anticipate and prepare for challenges that you and they may encounter in the future.

3. Develop a support network. Sport can be time consuming and emotional. Having people around you who can help out in a variety of ways can be useful. For instance, other parents can help with lifts and other family members may be able to look after other children. Other parents, coaches, and support staff can be valuable sources of information and help you to identify opportunities for your child.

4. Practice basic coping skills. Youth sport competitions can be hugely emotional environments, anticipating how you might react to different situations can help you to develop a plan to manage these reactions. Basic emotional coping skills such as taking deep breaths, counting to 10, listening to music, and talking to people around you may be useful when you feel your emotions rising.

5. Focus on your child's individual sporting journey. It can be easy to get drawn into comparing your child to others and thinking that you have to do what other parents are doing to help your child succeed. All children start at different ages, develop at different rates, and need different things. There's no one way of doing things, what works for you and your child might be different to what works for others. If you can keep focused on your child and what you and they are trying to achieve, it can make the whole experience a little easier.