

How can I ensure I am involved in my child's sport in the best possible way?

Every child is an individual and it is really important that you understand that the best way to be involved in your child's sport will be unique. No two children will want exactly the same thing from their parent, so it is really important that you talk to your child to find out what behaviours they like. However, there is some evidence to indicate that certain types of involvement are likely to be more beneficial than others; these are described below.

Strive to understand and enhance your child's individual sporting journey

As a parent it is important that you recognise that your child's sport is a journey, that could take a number of years. Over this time, the demands and requirements on you and your child will change considerably. Ensuring that you are always engaged in a way that demonstrates an understanding of this journey and that is aiming to improve your child's experience is key.

Ensure you and your child have the same goals for sport and communicate about these goals frequently

If you and your child have different ideas about why your child is involved in sport or what they want to achieve it is likely to cause conflict and difficulty down the line. Ensuring that the two of you are starting on the same page, and remain on the same page over time, will help to ensure your support matches your child's needs.

Develop an understanding emotional climate

How you support and engage with your child at home, training, and competitions will all influence your child's perception of your involvement. Striving to demonstrate that you understand the challenges associated with competing in sport, the complexity of succeeding, the influence of factors outside of sport, and also the importance your child places on sport will all help to demonstrate an understanding of your child's experience.

Engage in enhancing parenting practices at competitions

What you say and do at competitions can have a large impact on your child. As such, identifying and then attending to your child's competition needs will be really helpful. Also, helping your child to develop strategies to cope with the various challenges associated with competition is useful. However, perhaps most importantly, ensuring that you develop strategies to manage your own competition emotions is vital to optimise involvement.

Based on:

Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2014). Parenting in youth tennis: Understanding and enhancing children's experiences. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 15, 155-164.