

How can I help my child achieve their potential in sport?

Your child is heavily reliant upon your support and guidance to succeed in sport. However, it is not always easy to know what to do to help your child reach their potential because there is lots of conflicting advice and many unexpected demands and challenges associated with sport. Below are a few strategies that you might find useful to help guide your involvement.

- **Communicate with your child:** Ask them what they like, what they enjoy, what they want to achieve, and most importantly how you can help them.
- **Develop a strong relationship with your child's coach:** Take time to learn about their philosophy and what they are trying to achieve. Seek to support them as much as possible.
- **Engage in independent learning:** Sport is constantly changing, so it can be useful to learn about your child's sport and what is required as they progress.
- **Keep sport in perspective:** Sport is just one part of a child's life. If sport becomes too consuming it can be challenging for you and them.
- **Focus on the multiple benefits of sport:** Most children will not become elite athletes but they can still gain a range of benefits from participating in sport. For instance they can gain physical, psychological, and social skills. As you invest time and money into sport, remember you are investing in these skills not just whether your child becomes an elite athlete.
- **Learn about your child's competition needs:** Talking to your child about what will help them before, during, and after competition can be really useful.
- **Understand your child's perceptions of your behaviours:** Sometimes we can do things with the best intentions, but to a child these actions may be interpreted entirely differently. Try and understand your child's perspective.
- **Foster independence:** As your child progresses in sport it is important that they can cope alone. Wherever possible, enable your child to take responsibility for their sporting development.
- **Hold children accountable for their behaviour:** Competitions can be really challenging for children but this doesn't mean they can behave inappropriately. Ensure they demonstrate good sportsmanship when competing.
- **Enjoy the experience:** If you can enjoy your child's sporting journey, it will be much easier for you and your child. Try and remember all the positives that you and your child are gaining from their sport participation.

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.