

Psychological strength and well-being: Seven pieces of advice

The development of mental strength is a complex process and parents play a key role, particularly during childhood and adolescence. With this in mind, we offer seven pieces of advice for sport parents that will help their child's mental development and well-being.

Find a knowledgeable & supportive coach	Find a coach who will create an enjoyable environment, continually challenge your child (in terms of continual self-improvement) and gradually expose them to stressful situations (i.e., simulation training).
Involve your child in decision making about their sport	Increasingly involve your child in decision making as they get older as this will help facilitate ownership and encourage them to start taking personal responsibility for their development.
Install a hard work ethic and commitment to performance	Agree goals and expectations with your child in relation to core performance values that are central in training and competition (high effort, commitment, concentration, learning) and morals (sportsmanship; teamwork) which will help your child maximise their potential in sport, and other domains.
Recognise and praise progress	Help your child develop strong and stable feelings of confidence by recognising and praising their progress, improvement, and consistency of effort. Help them to experience enjoyment in sport and learn that this comes from striving to improve themselves regardless of the result.
Encourage your child to reflect on their areas for improvement	Help your child to reflect on their performances and identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Once areas for improvement have been identified, encourage your child to communicate them with their coach and work on them both within and outside of training.
Reinforce that mistakes and setbacks are an important part of learning	Help your child to maintain perspective and to perceive difficulties (i.e., deselection, injury, poor form) as challenges and opportunities for personal growth rather than threats. Mistakes and setbacks are inevitable in sport so it is important to view them as learning opportunities.
Introduce your child to basic psychological skills and strategies	Help your child to develop basic psychological skills through trying out some simple strategies (i.e., positive self-talk, simple breathing, mindfulness, imagery) . These can be a foundation to coping with the challenges and pressure in modern youth sport environments.