



# 4 WAYS PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR YOUNG ATHLETES

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If you are raising young athletes, the best thing you can do to help is to support them. Any sport will benefit your child as it teaches leadership, patience, discipline, and coordination. It also builds mental and physical strength.

But as a parent, how does one support a young athlete? What role should you play in their sports life? Here are some of the ways you can help your young athlete and become a winning parent.

## 1. Emotional support

Young athletes are naturally competitive, so most of the time they want to win and they want to be the best. But it is inevitable that they may sometimes lose or feel that someone else is better than them at their sports. This is where you can come in to encourage and motivate your child. Motivation and encouragement don't mean you have to tell them they're the best or console them by bad-mouthing their opponents. Motivation means saying your child that losing is part of the game and there is no shame in defeat.

Motivation also means helping your child accept failures by guiding them to focus on what they can improve. You can encourage them to practice more. You can also take them to classes or to a sports coach who can better help them improve their performance.

Here are some do's and don'ts in emotionally supporting your child:

### Do's:

- Be there for them during competition.
- Watch them practice.
- Cheer for them during competition.
- Tell them that you love them and you value them for who they are, regardless of they win or lose the competition.
- Don't hesitate to give them a hug when they lose or make a mistake.
- Give them a pep talk before and after the competition.
- Be nice to their teammates.
- Work with their coach.

### Don'ts:

- Scold them when they make a mistake.
- Compare them to other children who perform better than them.
- Overreact when they are called out for foul actions.
- Fight with the referee, their coach, or their teammates.
- Blame people for your child's defeat in the game.
- Blame your child for losing.
- Show your disappointment or express disapproval whenever they lose a game.
- Try to coach your child, unless you are a professional athlete yourself.

**Behind every young child who believes in himself is a parent who believed first.**

Matthew Jacobson



## 2. Nutritional Support

Athletic children need all the best nutrition they can get to nourish their minds and bodies for optimal performance. That's because no amount of training and practice will be useful unless the child has a healthy body that will be able to meet the physical demands of the sport.

As a parent, you have the power to influence the food they eat. This is a little bit tricky though, especially if the child has not been introduced early on to healthy foods and eating habits. If you force your child to eat only nutritious foods that they don't like, he may feel deprived. The solution is balance and moderation. Let them what they want once in a while, as long as they consistently eat healthy, balanced meals composed of nutritious foods majority of the time.

Another thing you can do is make nutritious food attractive to children. There are many recipes online on how to cook nutritious foods in the form of snacks children love. Changing some ingredients with nutritious food does the trick. Also paying attention to how you present meals can help. Fun bento boxes, for example, make vegetables and fruits more appealing to children who don't usually eat these.

Here are the do's and don'ts and when nutritionally supporting your athletic child:

### Do's:

- Find recipes online of children snacks that use nutritious ingredients.
- Let them have a cheat day or a little bit of what they want while giving them actual nutritious foods.
- Focus on building healthy eating habits, instead of just eliminating unhealthy foods from their diet. When you develop healthy eating habits, they will naturally turn away from junk food as their taste buds become accustomed to nutritious food.
- Help them understand how nutritious foods will help them improve their game.
- Prepare fruit juices or smoothies instead of soda for their drinks.

### Don'ts:

- Deprive them of the food they want.
- Force them to eat a lot of food they don't like at once just because they're nutritious.
- Put them on a diet that's meant for adults.
- Scold them for eating sweets and junk food.
- Give them tons of supplements without guidance from a doctor.

## 3. Financial Support

Provide them with financial support. Young athletes may want to have gears that help improve their performance. They may want to sign up for sports clinics or workshops. It will also help them if they train under the guidance of a sports coach.

Here are some do's and don'ts when providing financial support:

### Do's:

- Ask them what they need.
- Offer them private training sessions with different type of coaches.
- Try looking for second-hand sports gear, if you cannot afford brand new gears.

### Don'ts:

- Dismiss them automatically when they ask for something.
- Make silly excuses when you can't afford what they're asking for. Be transparent and honest.
- Promise something you can't fulfill.



#### 4. Don't be a Helicopter Parent

Provide them with financial support. Young athletes may want to have gears that help improve their performance. They may want to sign up for sports clinics or workshops. It will also help them if they train under the guidance of a sports coach.

Here are some do's and don'ts when providing financial support:

- Fighting the coach for not letting their child in the game.
- Fighting other parents from another team.
- Fighting the children in the other team.
- Fighting the referee.
- Fighting the other team's coach.

The above behavior does not support a child athlete; in fact, those behaviors may push your child to quit sports. Support your child by consoling them when they lose, letting them understand that you are still proud of them even when they fail. Tell them they can still improve and win next time.

Simply put, just be a cool, supportive parent that an athletic child will be proud to have. Love and accept your child for who they are and what they can do. Use sports as a means to teach them values that will help them in the future, such as integrity, discipline, humility, and courage, and not as a means to fulfill your own dreams for your child. Your child will thank you for the love and support you have given him.