

# Advice for Sporting Organisations on how to work **B.E.S.T** with parents to build the **bridge of connect** rather than widen the **gap of disconnect**.



# Preamble

The following resource for parents has been developed by Fiona McCarthy on behalf of the NSW Office of Sport, as a key initiative of the NSW Government's Future Champions strategy.

For more information on Future Champions, please visit [www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/parents-guardians-and-carers](http://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/parents-guardians-and-carers)

## Getting to know the author

Fiona McCarthy is a psychologist who owns and operates Mind and Body Balance, a business she set up 25 years ago. Fiona is a registered psychologist, specialising in the area of sport and performance psychology. She is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and the Australian College of Sport and Exercise Psychologists.

Fiona lives in Newcastle NSW and is the Hunter Academy of Sport, Sport Psychology Consultant and a New South Wales Institute of Sport, Sport Psychology Service Provider.

Over the last twenty-five years, Fiona has assisted many local, state and national teams, athletes, coaches and parents in the areas of confidence, concentration, handling pressure, motivation, goal setting, time management, performance preparation and general well-being. She has worked with numerous sports assisting recreational level athletes to professional, international, Olympic and Paralympic level athletes.

Fiona recognises the valuable contribution parents make to their child's sporting pursuits. She

believes that parents want the best for their child and hopes that these resources provide parents with the skills needed to be the best sporting parent they can be so that they can best guide and support their child at all ages and stages of their sports journey.

These resources aim to provide parents with the support, encouragement and skills/tools required to assist their child(ren) in reaching their sporting potential in an environment that promotes fun, connection, success and positive well-being.

## Introduction

Parents play a vital role in sport and provide valuable contributions to the sporting community. As parents, we all want to support our children as best we can and see them enjoying their sport.

The following resource aims to empower parents and guide them in playing the best role they can in their child(ren)'s sporting pursuits. Parents are role models to their children and sport is a valuable vehicle to teach life lessons.

As a parent, have you ever wondered how to best help your child deal with success and disappointment? Or what to say to them when their nerves take over and they feel pressure to perform.

Do you find yourself rushing from sport to sport, child to child and not having much time to enjoy watching them play?

Have you ever wondered whether your child is doing too much sport?

How do you help your child believe in themselves and be confident with their sporting pursuits, rather than worried about other competitors or results?

This resource will help parents find the answers to these very common questions and much more.

They will provide parents with information and practical tools and tips to ensure they play their role as a parent to the best of their ability in order to allow their child to enjoy their sport and assist them in reaching their full potential in sport and life.

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## Parents play a vital role in supporting their child in sport. Most parents have good intent of how to provide such support.

However, just like some athletes, parents can lose their way and become overwhelmed, confused, and anxious. This can in some cases, lead or contribute to poor communication both verbally and non-verbally and poor patterns of behaviour.

To help manage and provide support for parents in sport we need to see them as a **vital piece of the sporting jigsaw**. We need to provide a **clear system and pathway for parents** to grow and

adapt to their child's growth and participation in sport similar to the pathway we provide their children.

We need to **connect, include, and value their input** and the **role they play**. We need to **build the bridge of connect** rather than widen the **gap of disconnect**.

When we engage with parents in an inclusive way, we may realise that a **teamwork** approach is a valuable one to take.

Just like athletes we have to accept that we can't assist, help and connect with all parents but we must continue to provide the **B.E.S.T.** approach and give them and their children the best opportunities to be the best they can be and enjoy being able to watch and guide their children on their sports journey.

**The B.E.S.T. approach is outlined below.**



### Belong.

Provide parents with a sense of belonging, make them feel part of the team by helping them feel supported.

Try to establish a parent network group amongst the parents where they can develop friendships and share ideas and concern they may be experiencing with their child or themselves.

Make sure to establish clear roles for parents, players, coaches, and officials. This will help establish boundaries and feelings of belonging.

### Engage.

In order to connect with parents, they need to be engaged. This can be achieved through various channels.

Some may include providing information about training sessions,

competitions, selection processes, expectations.

Providing positive role modelling from clubs, coaches etc. can also be a way that parents may feel engaged with the club or organisation.

Remember what they see is what you may get! Acknowledging and thanking them for their support and contribution is also a valuable step towards engaging the parents in a positive, productive way.

### Share.

The sharing of resources to parents can assist and empower them in understanding the vital role they play. Such resources may include guest speakers or articles on player or athlete well-being, burnout in children, how to manage an anxious child, early specialisation, how much sport is too much and many more.

Maybe ask them what they would like to explore so they can build their knowledge base and grow in parallel with the growth your program provides their child.

Providing valuable, current and sought after information can empower knowledge and limit assumptions, which in turn may decrease stressors for all involved.

### Take time.

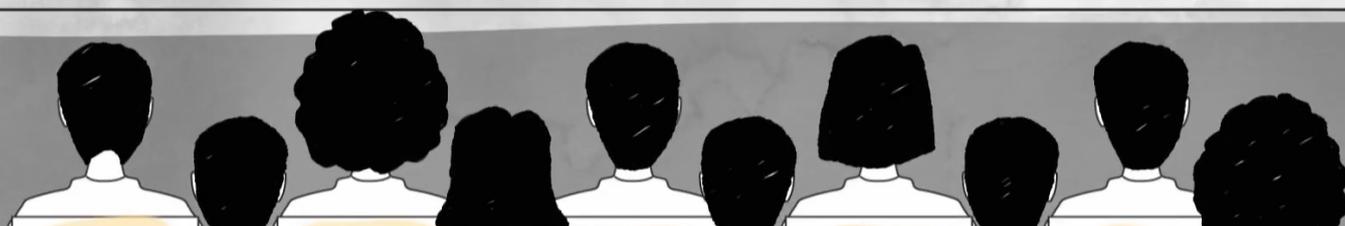
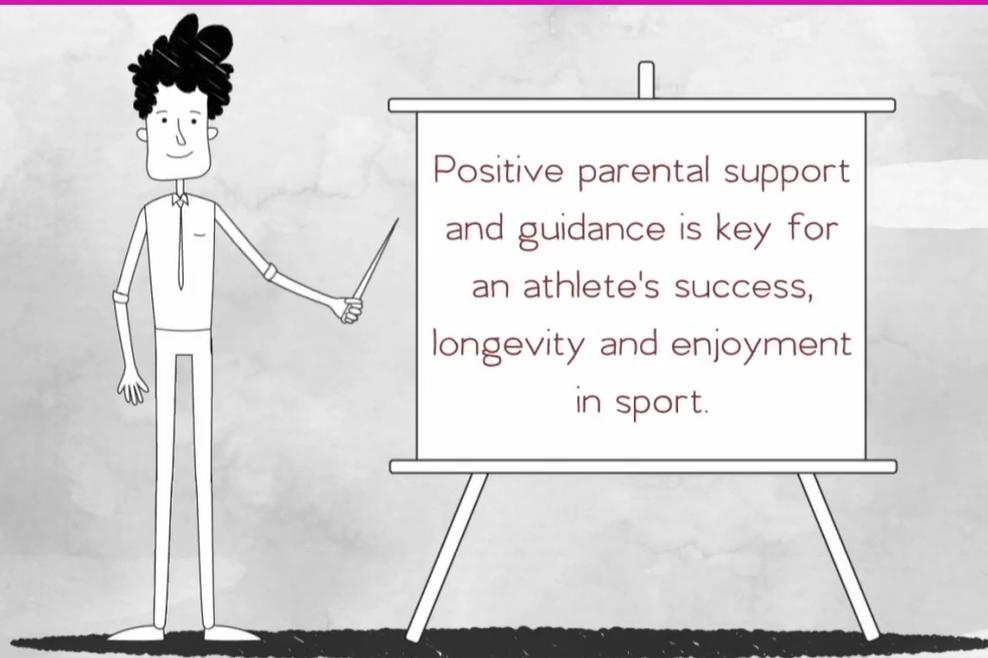
It is important to take time to get to know the parents in your team, squad, or organisation.

Try to organise scheduled opportunities throughout the program or season to have meetings with them and their child. Everyone wants to be heard and allowing for formal or informal 'chats' provides a safe, appropriate, positive platform for this to occur.

# We hope you enjoyed our tips!

You might like to check out our animated video, ABCs for Parenting on the NSW Office of Sport website.

Go to <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/parents-guardians-and-carers> to access this video and other parenting resources on offer by the NSW Office of Sport.



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