

Preventing and Overcoming Athlete Burn-out



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

Getting to know the author

Fiona McCarthy is a psychologist who owns and operates Mind and Body Balance. A business she sent 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.

Preventing or Overcoming Burn-out

There are several positive steps involved in preventing and overcoming or recovering from burnout that parents can help their child with. Encourage them to:

- 1. Understand and identify aspects that cause them stress on and off the sporting area.** Do not let these stressors accumulate and teach your child to recognise and be aware of these stressors and how they make them feel, think and behave. When you/ they 'catch ' these stressors early and intervene with some positive coping strategies, burnout can be prevented and overcome.
- 2. Identify and evaluate your child's capabilities and demands.** Make sure their workload in life and sport and their expectations from themselves and others is regularly checked and balanced.
- 3. Adopt and regularly use relaxation, mindfulness and 'mental pit stops' or time outs from sport and other stressors.**
- 4. Openly, actively and regularly communicate. It is important that this type of communication is encouraged, and you talk with your child about how they are feeling.** Watch for non-verbal cues as sometimes emotions and stress can be expressed through behaviour. Pay particular note to uncharacteristic behaviours, which could be a warning sign that something may be troubling your child. e.g., anger may be what is surfacing but the core problem may be something to do with a fear, frustration or feelings of hurt they may be experiencing.
- 5. Set daily process-oriented goals for sport and life in general.** For example, to accomplish a certain skill, to be organised or to finish an assignment. Encourage your child to set aside time for hobbies and activities unrelated to sport that they may be interested in. Balance is the key! Step by step process. Remind them they have time, and their sporting journey takes time.
- 6. Develop and maintain a balanced, healthy and positive lifestyle.** Remember healthy body, healthy mind-clear mind, calm body.
- 7. Develop variety in training sessions.** For example, train at different venues, as well as undertaking different types of training (physical, technical, psychological), also make sure they have a balance between hard and easy sessions, have regular rest days and adequate time between competitions.

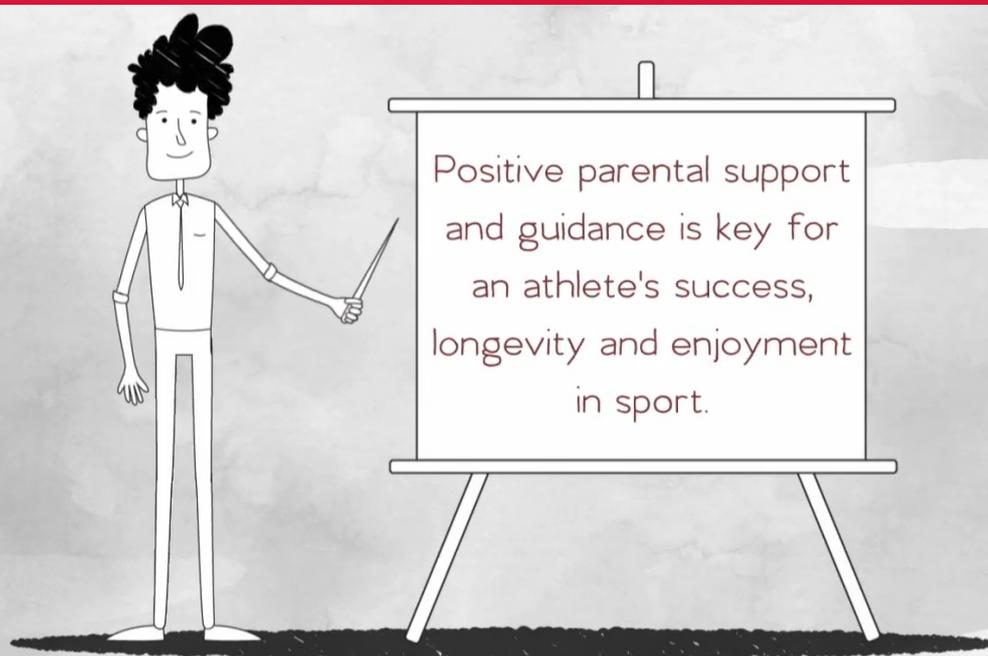
Remember a happy, successful journey in life and sport for your child takes time, maturity and it requires a lot of learning, evaluation, active communication, feedback and a commitment to always have FUN!



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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