

P.A.R.E.N.T.I.N.G

tips to help you

CONNECT with your child



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 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.



P.A.R.E.N.T.I.N.G tips to help you CONNECT with your child.

Too often children participating in sport get overwhelmed, burn out, become anxious and fail to reach their full potential. This can result in poor self-identity, being unhappy and having a sense of not meeting certain expectations placed upon them, either by themselves or others around them like parents, coaches, teammates.

Unfortunately, if the above concerns aren't addressed early, many children exit sport feeling frustrated, exhausted and confused about their self-worth. No parent wants this for their child. So how can parents foster and encourage a **healthy connection** with their child and their sporting pursuits?

Below are some tips to help sports parents stay connected with their child and help them enjoy sport for life and be happy.

Patient and Proud.

All children develop at different rates. Encourage your child to be patient with their progress.

As a parent be proud of your child no matter what result they achieve in sport. Remember to praise their progress, hard work, effort, and positive attitude.

Affirm and Accept.

Giving your child a hug and affirming your love for them speaks volumes, especially when they have had a 'tough' day at school or on the sporting field.

Accepting them for who they are rather than what they have achieved, is important in connecting with your child and ensuring their confidence and self-worth is high.

Role Model and **R**espect.

Understanding the role you play in your child's sporting journey can help set boundaries, limit confusion and aid in positive communication.

Discuss with your child how you can best support them, by getting their point of view and what things they don't want you to do.

Be a positive role model on and off the sporting field.

Encourage your child to develop friendships as well as you establishing friendships with other parents.

Respect the coaches, officials, other parents and competitors.





Engage and Enjoy.

Allowing yourself to engage with and enjoy your child's whole sporting journey is invaluable.

As parents it is a privilege to be able to sit back, relax and watch your child do something they love.

Be in the moment and encourage them to do the same.

Notice and **N**on-Verbal.

Be mindful and notice any changes in your child's body language (i.e., non-verbal communication), verbal communication, behaviour and attitudes towards sport and their school/work. Negative changes in the above may indicate something isn't quite right.

Additionally, ensure that as parents your verbal and non-verbal communication channels are positive and open so as to provide support and a safe haven for your children to connect with you, especially if they are feeling lost and overwhelmed.

Time and **T**rust.

The road to success and happiness is filled with ups and downs, all of which help develop us.

Encourage and reassure yourself and your child that they have time to achieve their goals, one step at a time.

Trusting the process and trusting oneself is an important check point to instil in our daily habits.

Independence and **I**dentify.

Inspire your child to be independent as they grow.

Inspire them to develop a positive self-identity that doesn't depend on what they have or haven't achieved in sport and life, in general.

Having a strong positive self-worth and image, along with a sense of independence, are great ingredients for building a happy, healthy, confident child.

Navigate and **N**urture.

Establishing a positive set of life values for your child to adhere to, is a gift you can give them.

Practicing the values yourself and letting them see and feel what such values look like, is of immense benefit to your child.

Eliminating excessive expectations (either from yourself or others) is a key component to allowing your child to feel nurtured, loved and valued. Thus, helping them navigate their way on their sporting journey.

Grow and **G**auge.

Learning how to 'grow' with your child is vital. As they grow mentally, physically, and emotionally their needs and wants change.

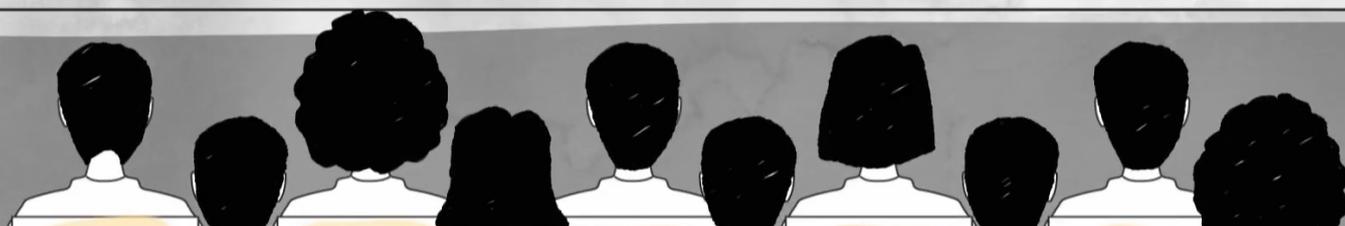
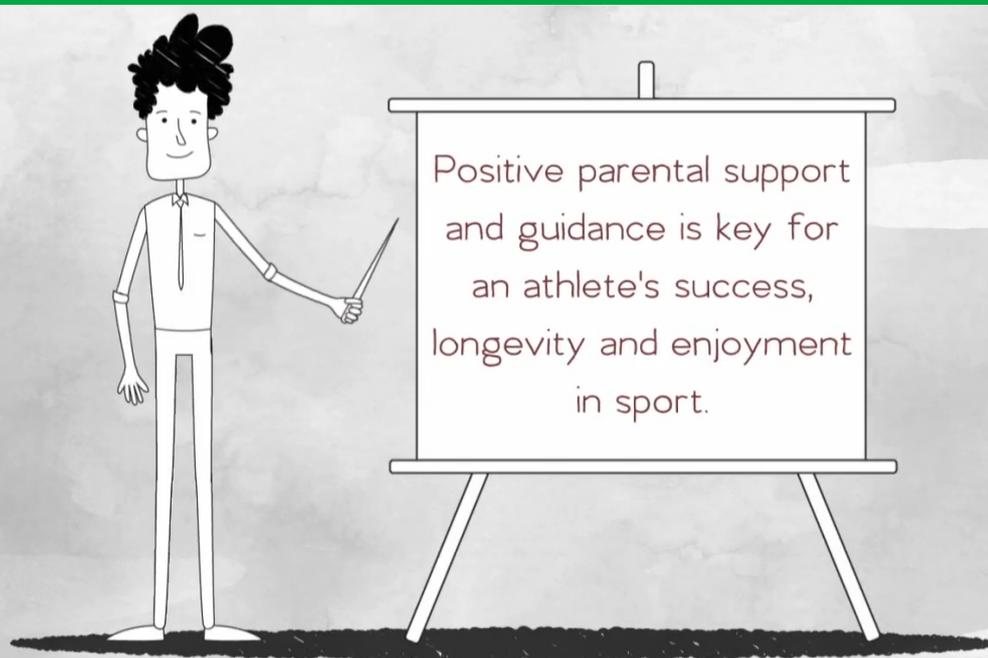
Parents need to allow this growth to happen and adjust their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours accordingly.

Parents should regularly gauge how this is going and reassess how they are, or aren't, meeting their child's needs as they grow.

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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