

PARENTING FOR RESILIENCE

GROWTH VS FIXED MINDSET

A growth mindset encourages resilience, inner motivation, and overall enjoyment of the sport which is crucial for long term development and mental wellbeing. A fixed mindset, on the other hand, can lead to fear of failure, burnout, anxiety, and a decrease in performance.

DO THIS (Growth Mindset)

- Encourage efforts over outcomes
- Praise behavior, strategies, and perseverance rather than talent
- Emphasize that mistakes are a way to grow
- Highlight improvement over time to help athletes see how their work is paying off
- Model a growth mindset in your own actions and language

AVOID SAYING (Fixed Mindset)

- "You are naturally gifted." This can lead to feelings of entitlement and the belief that hard work doesn't matter
- "You may have peaked too soon this season," suggests that the athlete may as well give up
- "You're my winner!" ties performance to the child's sense of acceptance
- "Don't try that position if it's not your strength" is discouraging and stunts growth

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Some student athletes feel an immense amount of worry about their abilities to perform well. Signs may include sweating, shaking hands/legs, shortness of breath, or stomach ache/nausea prior to athletic competition. Psychological signs include self doubt, worrying about making mistakes, and overthinking. Techniques to reduce performance anxiety include:

- Having pregame talks. Be positive and encourage healthy ways to destress like breathing techniques and visualization
- Talking after the game with the focus on praising effort and how much the child enjoyed the experience
- Helping them set realistic, small, achievable goals to build confidence
- Emphasizing enjoyment and the learning process over winning
- Modeling your own healthy coping skills
- Becoming a safe outlet for your child. Be part of the support system where they can express emotions in a judgement free zone

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DEALING WITH FAILURE

WHAT YOUR CHILD MIGHT EXPERIENCE

- Shame, sadness, fear of disappointing others, frustration, anxiety
- Negative self talk, black and white thinking
- Drop in effort, motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence
- Acting out
- Avoidance

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Manage your emotions** – If you show disappointment or anger, the child may internalize the idea that failure equals loss of parental approval or love.
- **Set aside your ego** – Your child's performance is not a reflection on you or how you parent
- **Create a safe space** – No toxic positivity and no judgment. Listen and acknowledge feelings.
- **After a cool down, reframe thoughts** – Failure will happen, but it creates an opportunity to identify areas for growth

BUILDING IDENTITY BEYOND SPORT

Student athletes who overemphasize their sport as their identity can struggle emotionally if performance drops, an injury comes along, or their participation ends, such as after graduation. How do you help your child see themselves as more than an athlete?

- No matter how proud you are of their athletic accomplishments, avoid introducing them or identifying them to family and friends solely based on athletics. ("our baseball star," "my soccer girl," etc.)
- Encourage and celebrate non-sport achievements and interests
- Support their friendships outside of sports
- Be open to talking about future roles and aspirations beyond sports
- Help them see ways to stay involved in athletics, if interested, after their time on the team ends (coaching or assisting younger players, playing with city rec leagues, etc.)