



“ Now what happens when these trophy kids arrive in the workplace with greater expectations than any generation before them? ”

High School

By this stage, it's usually only the successful high-school athletes who play both school sports and outside competitive-league sports. There are just so many positions to be filled on competitive teams. And what about kids who still love to play sports but can't because of their demanding academic, social, and work lives? Parents need to remind these kids of the fun they had playing these games and help them to find time to play them with family members and friends. Helping your kids stay connected to the sports they love now can encourage them to remain physically active throughout their lives.

Support The Coach

When your child is involved in sports, particularly in youth leagues, his relationship with the coach becomes important, and so does yours. There are many ways you can support the coach, and doing so benefits your athlete, physically and psychologically.

- Introduce yourself-get off to a good start and continue to compliment the coach when he/she does something you appreciate/admire.
- Offer to help-the coach made a huge commitment, usually for little or no pay. Ask what you can do during practices or at other times to help lighten the load. Let the coach do his/her job, he/she is the teacher, and you are the cheerleader.
- Honor the game-According to the Positive Coaching Alliance this means showing respect for the rules of the game, your team's opponents, the officials, your child's teammates and your child.
- Follow the rules- be sure your child arrives on time for practices and games, with all required equipment and complies with the policies the coach has set forth. Show your child that you respect the coach's authority, as they should.
- Handle disagreements appropriately-don't put your child in the middle or presence of complaints about the coach. If you have a question or issue regarding a call or decision take it up with the coach during a private meeting or phone call. If your child plays sports they are going to encounter disappointments. The good news is that dealing with disappointments can be a significant learning opportunity, especially with your help and guidance.

“Self-esteem is not about being able to say, I'm good at such and such sport,” says child psychologist Tamar Chancky, PhD, “they need to figure out their strength, and their own solutions, that's really how they learn resilience and feel proud of themselves”.

A Me Generation of “Trophy Kids”

What about trophies, are they necessary to instill a sense of achievement? Well I think it depends upon the age of the child. We all like

tangible validation, but I believe that we have started to over do it. Younger children certainly benefit from these concrete motivators, but as kids get older and more competitive the motivator for success should become more intrinsic and be about actual personal achievement and success of the team.

In April 2007 *The Wall Street Journal* published a long article about the negative effects of the ‘me generation’; specifically the ‘trophy kids’ who are now in their 20s and in the workforce. This generation is being termed “the millennial generation” and is defined as children born between 1980 and 2001. This age group is resistant to the fact that there actually IS a pecking order and a corporate ladder to climb—you don't just take a helicopter to the top as soon as a college degree is earned!

Millennials are truly "trophy kids," the pride and joy of their parents. The millennials were lavishly praised and often received trophies when they excelled, and sometimes when they didn't, to avoid damaging their self-esteem. Along with their parents, they have placed a high premium on success, filling résumés with not only academic accolades but also sports and other extracurricular activities.

Now what happens when these trophy kids arrive in the workplace with greater expectations than any generation before them? "Their attitude is often what are you going to give me?" says Natalie Griffith, manager of human-resource programs at Eaton Corp. "It's not necessarily arrogance; it's simply their mindset."

As parents we have the responsibility to establish healthy habits in our children. Sports can be a very positive asset in many areas of development, but we need to reevaluate how we are structuring our children's experiences at all levels of participation. The way we handle things can have definite ramifications later in life when not everyone is selected for the “team”, or the job/ promotion as the case may be.

The purpose of this column is to provide you with some “tools” that can be used in a variety of households and situations. I encourage you to adapt what you have learned to meet your needs and the needs of your individual family. If you have any questions about this topic, or have a suggestion for another article, please contact me:

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DO YOU HAVE THE “WRITE” STUFF?
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