



Supporting athletes' development

Hannah Brooks, British Triathlon Pathway psychology support
Louis Richards, Welsh Triathlon Performance Pathway Manager

Assessment Weekend, 14th April 2018



Q: Who is the most important member of a youth/junior athletes' support team?

A: You

Q: Have you ever received any training on how to be the best possible athlete parent?

Being a “sport parent”: exhibit A



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr95gBwdTRc>

“Trophy kids”

- Extreme example!
- Outcome focus
- Parent has all the control – not child
- Fear of failure due to parent response or guilt over investment
- Unnecessary expectation
- Feel valued only by outcome of sport, not as a person

Reduced enjoyment

Reduced well-being

Low self-worth

Low motivation

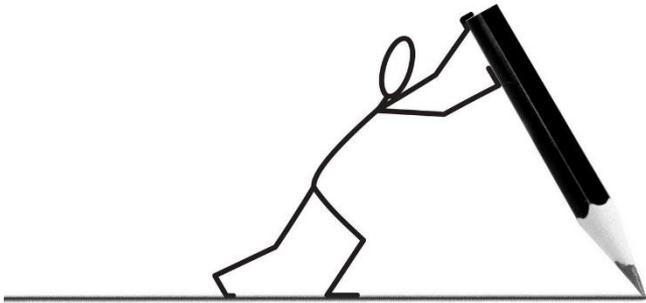
Unhelpful anxiety
over competition

Retirement from
sport...?

Pure outcome focus

Clearly these parents all care,
and want their child to
succeed, and have a successful
experience in competitive
sport...

...But where is
the line?



Being a “sport parent”: Exhibit B



<https://vimeo.com/user16923063/review/188104215/eb69526701>

“Olympic Kids”

“They need to know you’re supporting them [and] **it’s not just about PBs**. It’s about the bigger picture”

“You’re there to **facilitate**”

“They don’t need any more pressure, it’s about trying to **relieve the pressure** from them”

“Your role as a parent wasn’t to be the coach”

“Them being **happy** in what they do and **doing it for themselves** is key”

“Support them as much as ***they*** need”

Putting it into practice

In pairs/threes discuss:

1) What are the specific comments I might make or questions I might ask before a competition?

2) What are the specific comments I might make or questions I might ask after a competition?

Key messages

- **Effort, not outcome**
 - Consistent response to performance, regardless of outcome
 - Be aware of non-verbal behaviour
- **Facilitate, don't dictate**
 - Allow your child to make decisions, and have control over what they do (as much as is logistically possible!)
 - Encourage self-reflection and learning from success and failure/challenge
 - What do they need?
- **Support, don't pressurise**
 - Ask them what they would prefer you to do/say around competition

Pre-competition

- Is there anything you want to talk about right now? We don't have to chat if you don't want to.
- Is there anything you need from me before the start?
- What do you plan to focus on during this competition? Do you have any goals within the race (alongside or instead of the end result)?
- Focusing on what you can control can be helpful to reduce any unhelpful nerves. What do you think is in your control right now? What will be in your control during the race?
- You can't control the future (e.g. the outcome of the race), but you can control what you do right now in the present moment (e.g. the effort you put in).
- A race is a great opportunity to go and put in 100% effort and see how good you can be.
- A race is a great opportunity to learn about your strengths, and learn about what you can improve.
- I will be proud of you if you give it 100% effort, no matter what the result is.

Post-competition

- How do you feel?
- What can I do to best support you right now?
- Did you manage to stick to your in-race goals? Why do you think that was (or wasn't) the case?
- Do you feel like you gave 100% effort today? If so, what did that look and feel like? And if not, why do you think that is? What would help to change that for next time?
- What went well for you today? What would you do differently next time?
- What can you learn from the good bits and the bad bits about your race?
- You can't control the past or the future, but you can control the present. What can you do now to improve for next time?
- It sounds like you did the best you could today and I am proud of you for putting in 100%.

Thank you! Any questions?

