

Coaching Your Own Child

An excerpt from "The Power of Double-Goal Coaching" by Jim Thompson



Historically, young people have apprenticed with their parents' business. Today there is little opportunity for this but coaching your own child can be a wonderful experience in working together. Many parents and children look back on their times together on a sports team as some of the best moments of their lives. Here are some tips for making that shared experience a positive one.

- Ask your child. "How would you feel about me coaching your team this season?" If he has reservations, it's good to know that upfront, and if they are strong ones, you may want to choose to be a supportive sports parent this season.
- Things get complicated coaching your child. You wear two hats, as parent and as coach. Explain to your child that you need to treat her like everyone else on the team when you wear your coach's hat. But when you put your parent hat on, she is the most important person in your life (along with other family members).

Some coaches have a special cap they wear only when coaching their child's team. After a game or practice, they make a point of changing hats: "I'm taking my coach hat off and putting my dad hat on."

- Be sensitive to favoring or penalizing your child. Many coaches give their child advantages (like starting games or playing favored positions) the child hasn't "earned" by effort or talent. Few things poison the well with other parents and players like a coach unfairly favoring his own child.

However, many coaches are harder on their own child. We can't be objective about our own child so you may find it useful to ask another person (perhaps an assistant coach) to let you know if you are treating your own child fairly compared to other players on your team.

- If you have an assistant coach, you might find it useful to regularly have him or her give instruction and feedback to your child while you return the favor.
- Don't talk about other players on the team with your child. This places him in a complicated situation and may color his relationships with other players. He is a member of the team, not your co-coach.
- Avoid sports overload with your child. Make sure to do other family activities unrelated to sports during the season. If doing sports at home, focus on having fun rather than on drills designed to make your child better. This way she will be fresh for practice rather than feeling she gets no respite from sports.
- PCA tools like Kid-Friendly Criticism, Asking Permission, If-Then Statements, etc. are especially helpful to parent-coaches because they enable athletes to hear and embrace criticism rather than become defensive.

Your time coaching your child will pass by very quickly. Whatever happens, I encourage you to stay in the moment and enjoy this special time.