

Tom Burgdorf's

Gymnet Sports Learning Library

Team Parents Section

Youth Sports - Devaluing Good Behavior

We all want what is best for the children. Accomplishment, improvement, life lessons and everything else that will prepare them for the day they drive away to college. Youth sports has a role in this education of the child. So does their schooling and parenting. It is important to concentrate on what is deemed as good behaviors and not so good behaviors. Most of the time, children growing into young adults will profit from more good behaviors than not so good behaviors.

So, are we benefitting the child if we too often use phrases like "That is okay." "No matter what, things will be okay." "No matter what, everyone gets to compete at the meet." "No matter what, you win a trophy at this next meet."

A poor practice or competition or test should not be used to run down the child but it should be used as a new starting point. It is okay for the coach to say "we practiced for this competition and you didn't quite accomplish what we wanted." The coach asks the athlete: "Do you agree?" Then they plan for making things better. There is nothing, nothing, nothing wrong with that. In fact, if we try to fake out the child and pat them on the back and say "pretty good job" after a poor competition, we are confusing the child.

No one wants to demean children. No one wants them to feel bad and no one should feel like it is good to reward poor performances or less than good behavior. Let's teach these incredible children high standards. Let's teach them, through our honest words, what the difference is between a good job and a less than good job. Let's teach them, through our words, the difference between hard work and laziness. Let's teach them that hard work gets them places. Let's teach them that the world is a competitive place and how to work and compete for what they want.

It is far more educational for a child to hear honest evaluations of their performances rather than fake praise to make sure they are "happy" even after a poor performance or effort. These children can take honest evaluations from people they respect. The honest evaluations are a new starting point for the next challenge. Faking out kids with too many comments like "you are good" when they really don't deserve the praise confuses them and devalues good behaviors. Teachers, please give honest evaluations for the purpose of growth. Coaches, please give honest evaluations for the purpose of developing better young adults. Parents, please give honest evaluations so that you are confident in the tools of that child who is driving away to their life on their own. We have to be smart about this.

Author: Tom Burgdorf

For more articles for Team Parents and Team Athletes, visit www.gymnetsports.net.

You can also follow Tom on Facebook.

For comments on the above article: e-mail tom@gymnetsports.com.