

What Every Parent Should know about “Teaching Life Lessons Through the Game of Baseball”

District 9 Little League Tournament Goal:

To have Managers and Coaches who will instill “Life Lessons” in their players by teaching Leadership, teamwork, discipline, sportsmanship, dedication, good citizenship and fair play, through the game of baseball & Softball

We know All-Stars can be a stressful time:

Baseball & Softball are a great way for kids to have fun, stay fit, improve skills, and make friends. But it's not always fun and games out on the field. The pressure to succeed especially during All-Stars can be overwhelming — and that can lead to a lot of frustration and tears.

In some cases, sports pressure is self-inflicted. Some kids are natural perfectionists and are just too hard on themselves when things don't go their way. But more often than not, the pressure is external: Kids try to satisfy the demands of a parent, coach, or other authority figure and end up feeling like winning is the only way to gain the approval of the adults they respect.

Either way, how kids learn to cope with sports pressure — and what the adults in their lives teach them about it, either directly or indirectly — not only affects their performance and enjoyment of the sport, but can have a lasting impact on how they deal with similar challenges throughout life.

Positive stress comes from taking part in something that's enjoyable yet challenging. This type of stress provides energy and pumps us up and keeps us on our toes, providing a healthy spark for the tasks we undertake.

Negative stress comes from having to face too many unwanted demands. If your child had a fight with a close friend, missed the bus, *and* forgot his or her homework, it can be pretty hard to get in the right frame of mind for the afternoon game.

How to Help

Parents can probably spot the difference between their child's good and bad stress simply by noticing kids' game-time interactions. For example, is your child focused and ready for action or is nervous energy getting the best of him or her? How does your child handle mistakes? Is he or she a good sport or do emotions get out of control? Of course, some of this has to do with your child's personality. Like adults, some kids are naturally more adept at remaining calm under pressure.

What may be a little harder to spot, though, is the role you and other trusted adults might play in your child's handling of stressful situations. For example, parents who place a lot of weight on their kids' sports accomplishments run the risk of adding to a child's stress.

Of course it's good for your kids to see you taking an interest in their activities, but there's a fine line between encouraging a child and pushing too hard. Overzealous parents tend to overreact to mistakes, game losses, and skipped practices, which often causes kids to do the same. And when kids beat themselves up over mistakes, they're missing an important opportunity to learn how to correct problems and develop resiliency.

Similarly, check your sideline behavior. Words have incredible power, so use them carefully, especially when you disagree with coaches and umpires. Praise specific good efforts by your child and other players, even after a loss. Make sure your child knows you understand that a game is just a game.

Playing sports can impart many wonderful life lessons — valuing teamwork, overcoming challenges, controlling emotions, taking pride in accomplishments — but only if you stay out of the way and let your kids learn them. In fact, by taking a step back, you're showing your kids that you trust them to handle situations on their own.

Sports are about enhancing self-esteem confidence overcoming adversity while riding the highs and lows that are a natural part of competition.

If you teach these lessons now you can rest assured they will be deeply rooted in your child for their future sports or non-sports endeavors.

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Cheering Guidelines for Parents and Fans

The below examples are offered to help parents and fans enjoy the District 9 All-Star Tournament experience and to provide a greater understanding of the Little League Un-Sportsmanship [Rule 4.06(3) and 9.01(d)].

Appropriate cheering Examples

Ata Boy Tommy

You can do it Tommy

Go Tommy

Go Team Name Go

You got this Tommy

Way to Go Tommy

Screaming and yelling excitable is great as long as it is not coaching or putting another player down.

Inappropriate cheering (Coaching) Examples

Move up in the box

Swing straight through

Watch for the change up

Watch the runner

Choke up on the bat

This kid has nothing you can hit it

Bend your knees

Tag the runner

Basically anything that sounds like coaching or telling a player what to do during the game is not acceptable.

Also don't say anything that puts down another player... Like - **This pitcher has nothing you can hit his stuff.**

Remember this is your child's game... NOT YOUR'S