

## Parents as Coaches?

### Talk with Child to Avoid Conflict

Volunteering to coach their children's summer sports team may sound like fun and games to parents but may initially create problems.

Sharing can be a big struggle for children. Seeing their parent pay a lot of attention to another child, can be difficult.

Another struggle is the difference in the nature of authority. It is one thing to be a parent and set limits and rules for your home and your relationship with your child. But coaches have a very different kind of authority. The coach's children have to make that adjustment as well. And the younger the children are, the more difficult it is for them to adjust to a parent's dual role.

Children are used to being the center of a parent's attention. When a parent is coaching his or her own child, the coach's child should not be the center of attention. For a coach to focus on his or her child, could be very distracting to other players on the team.

Parents should explain the rules and limits of their coaching relationship with their child beforehand. When a coach/parent corrects his or her child's athletic play, the child needs to know that it is not parental discipline.

It is very hard for a child to adjust from the parent as coach back to regular parent the moment they get in the car to go home. The child may think: "My Dad yelled at me in practice today." However, the drive home may be the right time to communicate with your child. You invite the child to respond, to help him or her make the transition back into "Okay, now you're my parent." That's important for children at all age levels.

Parents who coach their children's teams may fall into a trap of either being too strict or showing favoritism. Both can be difficult for parents and children alike.

Sometimes the parent just wants to have eye contact with the child or give that child a special smile as he or she sits among the rest of the team. But if you give

your own children too much special attention, the other children and parents notice. That could undermine a coach's effectiveness.

Many children will admit, however, that "it's pretty tough" when a coach/parent is more strict with them than with other team members. If you're the head coach and you have a child on the team, it's very important that you have a good assistant coach who might take some responsibility for teaching and supervising the play and practice of your child. This will take some of the pressure off the child.

The difficulties of coaching one's own children shouldn't discourage parents from volunteering. It's great to have parents involved in coaching, so, no parent should hold back from volunteering to be a coach simply because it's going to pose a problem for the child. Children can make the adjustment if you establish open communication with them.

*Pat Melgares*

### "Ground Rules" for Eating Fast Food

The "Super Size" phenomenon at many fast-food restaurants may be a good marketing tactic, but it's not so good for people's diets.

Larger-sized meals often contain a higher amount of calories from fat and sugar than most people should have in one day, not to mention in a single meal.

Families must establish ground rules. Adults may wish to order kid's meals for themselves, or split one order of french fries with others. Many restaurants also offer lowfat milk as an alternative to pop, and consumers can request that butter, cheese or salad dressing be provided "on the side," so they can control the amount that goes on a potato or salad.

At a buffet, try starting with salad or soup which takes the edge off your hunger before you look at the higher-calorie items.

*Sandy Procter*

## PARENTS CORNER

### The Need to be Active

Children in the 5- to 7-year age range enjoy active, boisterous games with unrestrained running and jumping. This “active” stage helps ensure normal physical and emotional development. Parents and teachers who understand this important need will encourage active interests. Opportunities to play in the mud, wade in puddles, fall in snow, climb, use a balance board and walk on all fours (which develops back and abdominal muscles) are all important.

The use of skates, wagons and bicycles is recommended to develop leg muscles and fulfill their need for speed.

When organizing group events for young children, plan short play periods of both high- and low-level activities such as simple group play, skipping and dancing, and dramatic and rhythmic activities.

*Chuck Smith*

### I Love You ... and You ... and You

There are as many different kinds of love as there are people in the world. Each is unique. However, in families it can sometimes feel like there is only one kind of love, and that we're not getting enough of it. A little boy feels less loved when he sees how much his single mother enjoys the man she is dating. When parents show tenderness and care for a newborn, a 3-year-old sister becomes confused because she thought her parents reserved those feelings for her. A stepmother feels left out when her husband and his kids burst into laughter about something that happened to them when he was married to his first wife. These feelings are natural, but they can be less painful if the one who feels left out is assured that love does not come from a limited supply. Time and attention may indeed need to be limited, but not the value and affection we have for our loved ones.

*John Merritt and Charlotte Shoup Olsen*

### Lead—The Silent Enemy

Lead affects the health of one in 11 children in America. Once lead was a common ingredient in paint, gasoline, water pipes and other products. Many older homes may contain lead-based paint that chips and creates dust as it deteriorates. Small children have a tendency to put everything in their mouths. As they play on the floor, they may breathe lead-contaminated dust making them susceptible to its harmful effects. These effects include learning disabilities, decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing and even possible brain damage.

The Center for Disease Control recommends that children be treated for lead poisoning by their first birthday, and every few years thereafter. Children who live in homes built before 1970 have an increased risk and should be tested by six months of age, then yearly.

*Marilyn Bode*

### Protect Your Time

Learn to say “no.” If you are involved in many activities, you may tend to “spread yourself too thin.” You need to know your limits, so you can perform all of your responsibilities to the best of your abilities. This may mean that you can not commit to all opportunities presented to you.

It is important to plan time to enjoy yourself. Plan to read a book, go to the pool or dine with friends. Maintaining a positive outlook will help you to be more productive.

Delegate as many tasks as you can. Ask someone else to help you. Children enjoy sharing in household tasks and learn responsibility in the process.

*Megan Mayo and Katey Walker*

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