

5 TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

Among the most important, impact things you can do as the parent of a Little Leaguer is to forge effective partnerships with your children's coaches. Here are five tips.

1. Don't Put the Player in the Middle: Imagine a situation around the dinner table, where you are complaining in front of your children about how poorly their math teacher is teaching fractions. How would this impact your children's motivation to work hard to learn fractions? How would it affect their love of mathematics?

That may seem farfetched, but when we move from school to youth sports, it is all too common for parents to voice disapproval of a coach with their children. This puts a young athlete in a bind. Divided loyalties make it hard for children to do their best. Conversely, when parents support a coach, it is easier for children to put wholehearted effort into their sports. If you think your child's coach is not handling a situation well, don't share that with your player. Rather, seek a meeting with the coach to discuss the matter privately.

2. Don't Give Instructions during a Game or Practice: You are not one of the coaches, so do not give your child instructions about how to play. Hearing someone other than the coach yelling instructions during a game can confuse children. If you have a tactical idea, share it with the coaches when they are open to hearing it (likely not during a game). If the coaches decide against using your idea, recognize they have earned that privilege by making the commitment to coach.

3. Fill Your Child's Emotional Tank: Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to be there for your child. Competitive sports are stressful to players, and the last thing they need is a critic at home. Be a cheerleader for your children. Focus on the positive things they're doing and leave correction of mistakes to the coach. Let your children know you support them regardless of how well they play.

4. Fill the Emotional Tanks of the Entire Team: Cheer for all of the players on the team. Tell each of them when you see them doing something well.

5. Encourage Other Parents to Honor the Game: Show respect for opponents and umpires, and if a parent of a player on your team starts berating an umpire, gently tell the parent, "That's not honoring the Game". That's not the way we do things here."

Positive Coaching Alliance