

WHAT TO SAY TO YOUR ATHLETE

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TALKING TO YOUR ATHLETE

Most parents want the best for their athlete. Pre and post-game pep talks are well meaning, but, oftentimes, instead of helping, they end up creating distance by focusing on performance instead of focusing on adversity, trust, connection and relationship. Here are a few ways you can connect and build trust with your athlete and still build resilience, grit and work ethic.

What did you work on?

This question makes your athlete think about their process. It shows you are more concerned with their process than defining them by their performance.

Resist the temptation to ask "how did you do?" or "how was it?" This makes your athlete choose between good or bad. Without knowing, you are asking them to judge their performance.

If they lose or play badly

In almost all cases, let your athlete lead this conversation. Silence is your friend. Chances are your athlete already knows what didn't go well or is privately judging their performance (or teammates or coaches). Resist the urge to place blame. Blaming stops learning and progress - two things your athlete needs to perform well.

Pre-Game pep talk

You don't have to be your kids hype man. You can show support by simply saying "do your best and have fun." That's too simple, right? Not really. Let their coaches coach and their teammates hype them.

If you are a coach or know the sport well, your kid still needs a parent first. If and when they ask for your expertise, then give it.

Post-Game talk

"I'm proud of you." It's simple, but it's still one of the most important things your athlete needs to hear. Athletes are very good at being hard on themselves and putting pressure on themselves. They might resist you a few times, but they are listening - be sure you mean it.

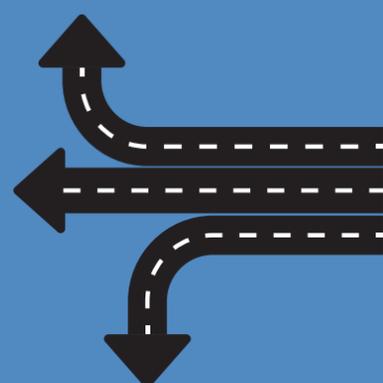


WHY PROCESS/LEARNING BASED QUESTIONS WORK & BUILD TRUST



Process questions require the athlete to recall what skill or lessons they learned in practice rather than judge how their performance as "good or bad." Polarizing their performance can stop their learning. When athletes stop learning, they stop improving.

Parent's and coaches can build trust by asking questions that focus on the process. What did you work on today? What did you learn? What did you do well? What still needs work? These allow for self-reflection and self-evaluation which builds a healthy mindset and can improve performance in the long run.



WRITTEN BY: PRISCILLA TALLMAN, M.S. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY | www.spikedr.com