

## Ten Things To Remember When Your Child Loses Or Doesn't Play Her Best

*By Brooke de Lench*

Chances are you've probably heard the phrase "You win some. You lose some. Some get rained out." In a few short sentences, it captures the essence of the youth sports experience. No matter how talented your child may be, there are going to be days when he doesn't play his best, or when, despite his best effort, his team loses. How you manage both the ups, and the inevitable downs, will play a large role in whether your child has a successful youth sports experience.

Here are **ten things to keep in mind** after your child's team loses or he doesn't perform up to his expectations:

1. Realize that, with time and your **continued support**, your child will **improve**.
2. Recognize that youth sports are not **exclusively about winning**; define success in terms of performance qualities instead of outcomes.
3. Give your child the **respect** he deserves; if achieving athletic success were easy, athletes wouldn't be so admired and respected, be proud of his persistence.
4. Emphasize the **friends** your child is making through her involvement in sports.
5. Remember that, many times, all your child needs is your **love and understanding** and your being there for them. Make your child feel **important and accepted**, no matter whether he wins or loses, plays well or poorly.
6. Accept your child for **who he is**, not for what he has achieved; acceptance must never be dependent on a good performance or winning.
7. Take a **positive approach**, develop and maintain **open lines of communication** with your child, even when your points of view on a given subject differ; talk things out, give him the benefit of your point of view; don't simply say yes or no; let the final decision be your child's; giving your child the right to express his opinions fosters self-reliance, self-responsibility, and ultimately the ability to think for himself.
8. Always take the time to help your child **re-evaluate his involvement** (reasons, values, goals, and commitment); this helps your child gain a sense of self-control and self-direction and fosters increased self-motivation.
9. **Practice careful listening techniques**: show through posture, facial expressions, and gestures that you are really paying attention; employ "active" listening: paraphrase what you feel or understood your child has said; this allows your child to reinterpret if he or she feels that the point has been misunderstood, or re-state the last portion of what was said; use bridges, such as "I see," "yes," or "uh, huh" to show that you are listening and understand.
10. Savor the **opportunity** that sports provide to **get to know your child**.