

Study Guide #1

Good Sporting Behaviors

Parent & Child Study Guides to Watching a Sports Event

*Association for the Advancement
of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)*

Watching a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. Within the sporting arena we see both good and poor examples of such topics as: setting and working towards goals, focusing attention, managing emotions, handling disappointment, relating to others, dealing with nervousness, etc.

In order to maximize this learning opportunity, AAASP has developed a series of study guides for parents and children to use while watching a sports event, either in person or on television. Each guide is brief and focused around a limited topic. It suggests certain observations and presents several questions for the parent and child to discuss. The study guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

We hope that these guides will promote a healthy dialogue between parents and their children about various issues that athletes face during sporting events, as well as in preparation for competition. Your child doesn't necessarily need to be an athlete to benefit from these discussions, since children experience most of these issues in daily life, such as in school. We hope that this information is helpful to you in promoting healthy ideas about sport, exercise, and human performance in general.

Discussion questions: Good Sporting Behaviors

While you watch a sports event:

1. Pay attention to individual athletes and teams of athletes. In particular, watch for examples of positive sporting behavior.
2. Do athletes shake hands before and after competition?
3. Do coaches shake hands before and after competition?
4. Why do you think it is important for athletes and coaches to shake hands before and after competition?
5. Do you see coaches and athletes questioning the officials in an appropriate manner? Or are the coaches and athletes arguing with officials?
6. Watch how the athletes and coaches interact with each other. Do they treat each other respectfully?
7. Have you ever been in a situation where an act of positive sporting behavior made you feel good about yourself?
8. Have you ever been in a situation where you were a "good sport" to someone on an opposing team? How did you think that made them feel? How did it make you feel?
9. Watch how teammates interact with each other. Do you see them giving only constructive criticism and positively encouraging each other? Why do you think this is important?

10. Think about the rules of the sport you are watching. Positive sporting behavior is exemplified by following all the rules. Do you see athletes and coaches doing this?

Lesson conclusion

Research on athletes and coaches shows that appropriate sporting behavior can be developed in both game and practice situations. Positive sporting behavior is important at all levels of sport because it aids in character development. It is also important because it impacts many areas of sport such as team cohesion, respect among opponents, emotional control, and transferring values of sport into every day life and non-sport activities. When we see examples of positive sport behavior (e.g. respectfully questioning officials, playing by the rules, congratulating your opponent, encouraging teammates), positive values are modeled and reinforced. This creates a positive sport environment for all involved.

What is critical in the discussion of positive sporting behavior is the idea that displaying positive behavior is a choice and a moral action. Once an athlete or a coach recognizes the dilemma at hand, he or she has a choice to respond in an appropriate positive manner. The more times we respond positively, the better examples we set for athletes of all ages.

AAASP encourages parents to do their part in creating a supportive youth sport environment so their child will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help your child develop a winning attitude, not only in sports but also throughout his or her life.

About AAASP

Founded in 1986, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of the psychology of sport, exercise and health. AAASP is the premier international, multidisciplinary sport and exercise psychology organization, and is the only professional organization in North America that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport, exercise, and health psychology. For more information on this and other topics, or to find a certified sport psychology consultant in your area, visit <http://www.aaasponline.org>.

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