

Study Guide #2

Negative Effects of Poor Sporting Behavior

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: Negative Effects of Poor Sporting Behaviors

While you watch a sports event:

1. Pay attention to individual athletes and teams. Point out examples when athletes display poor sport behaviors.
2. Do athletes and coaches argue with opponents? Do you see them acting aggressively towards opponents?
3. Why do you think this happens?
4. Do you see coaches and athletes questioning the officials in an appropriate manner? Or are the coaches and athletes arguing with officials?
5. Watch how the athletes and coaches interact with each other. Are teammates making negative remarks towards one another? Are they arguing with each other? How do you think this behavior impacts the game or competition?
6. Have you ever been in a situation where you argued with an official? Yelled at a teammate? Disrespected your coach? What was the situation that forced you to behave in that manner? What was the end result? What could you have done differently?
7. Think about the rules of the sport you are watching. Examples of negative sporting behavior often relate to not following all the rules. Do you see athletes and coaches doing this? How does this impact the game?
8. What are the consequences of negative sporting behaviors? Does behaving in this manner undermine the positive aspects of sport and competition? What can you do to change your behavior in sport?

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 because it can affect team cohesion, respect among opponents, and emotional control. Athletes also learn important lessons in sport that will transfer to other settings, such as school and non sport activities. However, when elite or professional athletes use negative behavior in sport (e.g., arguing with officials, not playing by the rules, disrespecting opponents, yelling at teammates), it teaches these behaviors to young athletes. That is why it is so important to talk about good and bad examples of sport behavior. Young athletes need to learn what behaviors are acceptable, the impact of negative sporting behaviors (e.g., penalties, conflict with teammates). Help young athletes avoid believing that poor sporting behavior is appropriate.

What is critical in the discussion of poor sporting behaviors is that this behavior is a choice. For example, athletes can choose to walk away from a disagreement or choose to argue about it. By pointing out negative behaviors, you then can help young athletes think of positive ways to act in such situations. And remember, you are a role model for your child. When you respond positively, you set good examples 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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