

Study Guide #5

Setting Goals in Sport and Life

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: Setting Goals in Sport and Life

While you watch a sports event:

1. Do you think athletes set goals that helped them get to the level in which they are competing?
2. What goals do you think they set?
3. Do you think that they just had one goal? Or do you think that they set many smaller goals that eventually got them to the level in which they are competing?
4. Have you ever set goals in sports, school, or other performance areas?
5. Have you ever set a goal and not reached it? Did that make you feel like giving up or did you get more determined? What can you do to change a goal to make it more reachable?
6. Do you believe that professional athletes achieved every single goal that they ever set?
7. Do you ever write down your goals?
8. Do you think of yourself as successful only if you achieve the "FINAL GOAL," or do you feel successful along the way as you make steps toward your ultimate goal?
9. When an athlete or team wins a championship, ask the child: "Now that they have won a title, what do you think they will do now?"

Tips for Setting Goals:

1. Set specific goals.
2. Set realistic, but challenging goals. Aim high, yet be reasonable.
3. Set short term and long-term goals.
 - a. write a goal that is your ultimate goal.
 - b. short term goals should focus on developing specific skills needed to achieve the long-term goal
 - c. create goals to reach your ultimate goal.
4. Set goals for practice AND competition (not just competition).
5. Write your goals down. “Ink it, don’t just think it.”
6. Develop goal achievement strategies.
 - a. think about how you will develop the skills to meet your goal
 - b. create a system where you get a small reward each time you make progress toward your ultimate” goal.
7. Set goals that are measurable.
8. Set individual and, if appropriate, team goals.
9. Periodically evaluate where you are and decide if you need to change your practice routines to reach the set goals, or if you need to change the goals themselves to make them more realistic.
10. Realize that improvement and success is an ongoing and exciting process, and the “journey” can be as satisfying as the “destination”.

Lesson conclusion

Research on athletes and in business psychology clearly indicates that people who set goals, and then periodically evaluate their goals, are more successful than people who do not set goals. Athletes usually set long term goals, but they often don’t set daily practice goals that will lead them to their ultimate goals. When children set goals that are achievable and then begin to see themselves reaching these goals, they will increase their confidence and self-esteem. Being more confident then brings about more success. Unrealistic goal-setting can creates a sense of hopelessness and failure. While few athletes become Olympians or professional athletes, those who do had childhood dreams of doing so. So be careful to not dash the hopes of an aspiring professional athlete! Athletes do best when they aim high, but focus on their short-term goals. Parents can help young athletes be realistic by helping their daughters and sons develop sensible short term daily, weekly, or monthly goals.

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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