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Optimal Parental Involvement: An Action Oriented Guide For Parents of Youth Athletes

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OPTIMAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: AN ACTION ORIENTED GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF YOUTH ATHLETES

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Abstract

This paper develops a guide for improving involvement of parents and other adult contributors' in youth sport for children aged 6-12 years. The purpose of this guide is to provide practical and applied suggestions for parents grounded in research from the fields of sport psychology, developmental psychology, and parenting psychology. Monsaas (1985) and Wolfenden and Holt (2005) emphasized the importance of having a strong parental support network in youth sport. Knight & Holt (2013) noted that parents would benefit from more specific direction regarding how to show support for their children. To fill this need, the guide utilizes Self Determination Theory (SDT), which proposes that when three specific needs are met (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) athletes will be more motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). To help parents better understand the components of parenting in youth sport, the autonomy-supportive parenting style is introduced, which is closely related to SDT, postulates that children thrive when they are supported in initiating their own decisions, and that children are influenced by their overall environment and emotional climate (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, and Fox, 2009). Additionally, the guide includes a 3M structure (Manager, Meaning Maker, and Model of parenting in youth sport) as action oriented steps for parents and other influencers of youth sport. The Manager encompasses all of the physical, financial, and emotional aspects of managing a child in sport. The Meaning Maker in sport occurs as parents utilize sport experiences to teach their children the benefits of sport and the value of teamwork and individual effort. And the Model ensues when parents model their own effort, personal sport participation, and positive sporting behaviors to their children. This guide is designed to be used both individually by parents and coaches, and in group settings aided by a facilitator.

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help adults involved in youth sport learn the most productive ways to be involved in children's sport experiences. Research has noted that parents would benefit emotionally from more specific ways to best support their children (Knight & Holt, 2013). The aim of this guide is to help parents feel more informed about their responsibilities as a parent of a young athlete. Included in this work are practical and applied suggestions for parents grounded in research from the fields of sport psychology, developmental psychology, and parenting psychology. While the information in this book is aimed to support parents with a child ages 6-12, coaches and facilitators of youth sport are given practical applications for their roles as well. During this age range, children typically experience a phase of athletic development known as the sampling years (Côtè, 1999). During this phase, parents take the initiative to provide various sport experiences for their child. The goal for children during this time is to experience fun and excitement through participating in sport.

This guide provides parents with the tools necessary to deliver enriching experiences during sport participation, along with the research to ensure they know exactly why and how these tools are helpful. Throughout this guide, it is encouraged that parents communicate with their child, their child's coach, and other parents. The *Parents in youth sport* segment of this guide will help parents to understand exactly why communication with everyone involved in the sport is important. The guide is partitioned into sections to help parents understand and direct their attention to one aspect at a time. It is important to take the time to get through the beginning of the guide before applying the concepts in the end of the guide, which in turn, will help parents to understand the practical application sections when they are discussed later on. For now, the

focus of the reader should be on learning, trying new things, and being ready to provide the best sport experiences for your child!

Why parents?

Overview

Why is this guide directed toward parents? Parents should continue to play an active role in their child's sport life. Although coaches become increasingly more important for instruction and feedback in sport as children get older, parents have a tremendous influence on shaping their child's experience within sport. As a parent we know that you are already invested in your child's life. If you were not ready to do everything in your power to help your child, you would not have reached for this information. This guide, which is created specifically for parents with youth athletes in between the ages of 6 and 12, is designed to help you, and thus your child, thrive in the world of sport.

Parents spend countless hours and a considerable amount of money on their child's youth sport experience. This guide will later demonstrate that parents provide more than just a time commitment and financial support. During this stage, parents' actions are just as, if not more, important than the coach's actions, and many parents end up coaching at some point in their child's youth sport career. Parents who double as a coach are especially impactful, and the information in this guide can help parents in this dual role. Utilizing this guide will aid parents in maximizing the productivity of every hour spent as a parent or coach. This guide will help you to make every hour you spend as a parent or a coach as productive as possible.

In the research

Previous work highlights that children's success in developing talent is dependent upon the physical, mental, and emotional support they receive from people in their social surroundings

(Horn & Horn, 2007; Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011). This is largely inclusive of parents and the range of support they are able to provide to their child. This means that parents play a central role in youth sport because they provide children with opportunities and support that are required to thrive within the sport realm (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). Research conducted by Monsaas (1985) and Wolfenden and Holt (2005) emphasized the importance of having a strong parental support network in the early stages of sport, citing that a talented child may not reach his or her full potential because of the lack of support. Without parents, youth sport would not be very successful.

The actions and behaviors of parents are critical in the athletic development of children, and the results of many studies have concluded that "parents highly influence a child's motivation, competence, and enjoyment in sports… and affective responses to sport" (as cited in Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2008, p. 20). This means that the way in which parents act around their child may help to determine how motivated their child is to continue the sport. Moreover, parents can, through their actions, help their child enjoy and feel more competent in their sport. Finally, children turn to parents to learn what to do in certain situations, therefore, parents can influence how a child chooses to respond to a variety of difficult situations in sport. These parent behaviors include not only the time spent during the sporting event, but before and after as well.

As discussed in the *Purpose* section, this guide is for parents of children ages 6-12. These years are known as the sampling years, and research shows that appropriate parental behaviors during these early years are associated with many benefits for youth athletes (Côtè, 1999; Knight, Neely & Holt, 2011). There are two other stages of youth sport development which occur after the sampling years. The specializing years are between ages 13-15 and involve more

focus on the specifics of one particular activity. After age 15, youth athletes may enter the investment stage, which is the final and most specific of the stages, and involves considerable commitment to a particular sport to further refine an athlete's skills (Vealey & Chase, 2016). By adopting healthy strategies for communication and knowledge acquisition in the early years of youth sport, parents are better able to aide in the transition between stages of youth sport development. For more information about the other stages of development, you can visit the website www.momsteam.com and search for the article "Three Stages of Athletic Development: Sampling, Specializing, Investment" (Murphy, 2014).

In the *Parents in youth sport* section of this book, different strategies are presented to assist parents in developing skills associated with providing children with enriching sport experiences. Parents will learn not just how to support their child, but also why the suggested strategies work. After learning the how and why, this guide will illustrate for parents, the specific actions that can help their child succeed.

Parents sometimes assume more than just the parent role in youth sport. Gould (2013) recognizes that in the United States, youth sport coaches usually are the parent of a child within that sport program. With this information, it is important to educate parents within the youth sport world not only for their child's benefit but also because of their potential involvement as a coach and the effect they will have on other children. While the potential influence of a coach's behavior on her or his own children is quite clear, the actions and behaviors of parents may be readily observable by all children which may have an influence on them as well. The information in this guide is important for all parents, regardless of their role, as the behaviors they display will serve as a model for all children.

Self-Determination Theory. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) represents a framework that works to explain human motivation and personality (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The theory proposes that individuals have three unique needs that, when met, will motivate them and help them to flourish psychologically. In sport, social interactions, experiences, and the environment can help facilitate each child to strive to his or her potential. First, individuals need to feel autonomous while taking part in an activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). *Autonomy* within sport occurs when a task is chosen by the athlete, freely pursued, and has follow through (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When sport experiences are controlled too much by either coaches or parents, it creates a feeling of little choice for athletes. The controlling aspects can be either internal or external factors, for example, parents may present as overbearing internally by demanding that their child participate in a specific sport. Externally controlling parents may say something like "you need to win this," or "your father played baseball, so you need to as well." In order to promote intrinsic motivation, parents could instead say, "Are you excited to try your hardest during this game?" or "Your father loved baseball, is there a sport you love?". Coaches and parents also can be externally controlling by rewarding outcome instead of effort. For example, parents may take the team out for ice-cream on a winning day, but not on the day of a loss. Coaches and programs are externally controlling when they give scholarships for setting personal records or winning consistently, instead of awarding scholarships for the hard work it took to get to their level of success. Examples of ways to be supportive of autonomy include talking positively and emphasizing that the best possible outcome is having fun (as opposed to winning).

In some cases, parents can be under-involved, which can promote a sense of apathy for youth athletes. When children do not receive feedback of any sort from their parents, they are more likely to feel incompetent in their skills, and therefore may lose motivation to continue.

When this occurs, it is called amotivation. In this guide, under-involved parents are not the focus because chances are, parents who choose to utilize the information in this guide are not under-involved parents.

The second need as presented by Ryan & Deci (2000) is *Relatedness to Others*, that is, feeling connected to other people within the social context. For youth athletes, it is vital to be able to relate to other teammates. Research conducted by Stuntz and Weiss (2009) suggests that friendships within the sport setting are beneficial because they help children feel connected, and friendships with teammates can promote competence within sport. One way to achieve this feeling is by working hard while in a group or team setting because it can lead to a sense of team bonding and help to develop friendships within the team (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Parents can be supportive of this by supporting team bonding experiences and emphasizing that hard work almost always has good results. Athletes also benefit when they feel connected to their coach (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004; Stuntz & Weiss, 2009). Coach-athlete connections occur through open communication, positive and consistent praise, and commitment to the relationship (Hunhyuk, Seongkwan & Jinyoung 2013; Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

Finally, the third postulate of SDT states that individuals need to feel competent. *Competence* refers to one's ability to be successful in a situation and it is closely related to motivation and individuals have different types of motivation, ranging from high (autonomous) to low (controlled) levels of self-determination (Reinboth & Duda, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals may choose to participate in sport and other learning opportunities for their own benefit, which is known as intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, athletes who feel motivated by other reasons such as parental approval, scholarships, or rewards such as ice-cream or gifts are externally motivated. Intrinsic motivation is closely related to the model of self-

determination presented here because they participate in sport for themselves, not for the rewards set forth by others (Reinboth & Duda, 2006). The way in which youth athletes are motivated is influential in shaping the way in which sport will play a role in the lives of the athlete.

It is important to have a general understanding of SDT as a parent because it provides the basis or foundation for the actions that will be beneficial for youth athletes. Youth are more likely to follow in the steps of those who allow them to be autonomous (Ward et al., 2010). This means that parents, coaches, and peers are more likely candidates to be leaders when they allow followers the autonomy to choose, and followers feel more competent and autonomous when they can follow such leaders. Along with autonomy, youth athletes seek to cooperate with those to whom they can relate and those who support them in working to feel competent (Ward et al., 2010). When parents aid in facilitating an environment where their child can feel highly autonomous, connected, and competent, the likelihood of their child remaining in sport increases (Reinboth & Duda, 2006). This framework is presented with empirical evidence that shows that some of the most successful athletes are those who have these three fundamental needs met through sport. In the latter sections of this guide, practical and applied suggestions are presented with the framework of SDT in mind. The three aspects of SDT relate in some ways to styles of parenting. Throughout the following section on parenting styles, it is important to consider the three fundamental needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) within this framework.

Parenting styles

Parents fill many roles in their child's life that go beyond their duties as a parent of a youth athlete. Parents often play the role of the nurturer, disciplinarian, care-provider, spiritual mentor, tutor, taxi driver, coach, and so on. As such, parenting style is based on a combination of factors which develop over time according to the interactions parents have with their child. To

better understand the effect of parenting styles in sport, sport psychology draws upon various disciplines, such as developmental psychology, to provide strategies that are theoretically grounded with useful practical application. This guide will provide a brief review of the literature on parenting styles to better understand what it takes to construct the best possible experience for a youth athlete.

The purpose of including this section in the guide is to further inform parents regarding the literature on parenting in youth sport. Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, and Fox (2009) discuss the need to consider parenting styles in addition to parenting practices in order to understand how to best support youth athletes. It is important to differentiate between parenting styles and parenting practices. Parenting style is the general emotional climate that parents create, and parenting practices are the specific behaviors of parents that reflect the goals that parents have for their children (Holt et al., 2009). Considering both style and practices is important because it gives a more complete picture of parenting and how it influences youth sport. For example, a parent may act one way in most domains, but could act another way when dealing with sport issues. This sort of inconsistency could be confusing for children, and therefore could affect their ability to reach their full potential in sport (or other areas of life). The sampling stage, which typically includes children 6-12 years old, is not ALL about sport, but strives toward balance and having fun. Therefore, the way in which parents act in all areas of life will impact their child's success and enjoyment in youth sport.

Harwood and Knight (2015) suggest that an authoritative or autonomy-supportive parenting style will be most beneficial for the parental demands within youth sport. Parental authoritativeness occurs when parents are responsive to and in control of situations (Baumrind, 1989). Baumrind (1989) constructed three parenting styles (Permissive, Authoritarian, and

Authoritative) to describe parent's interactions with their children. Later, a fourth style (uninvolved) was added (by other researchers) to Baumrind's original three styles. These four styles can be seen in the chart displayed in Appendix A. Permissive or uninvolved parents do not demand as much from their child, but rather are strict and controlling, offering little room for kids to choose. Authoritative parents have a tendency to respond to questions with an attitude of "let's talk about it" while authoritarian parents tend to respond with "because I said so." Both authoritative and authoritarian are demanding of children, but in the authoritative parenting style, the style we will focus on in this work, parents work to establish a more considerate way of communication (Baumrind, 1989).

An autonomy-supportive parenting style is characterized by an environment that allows children to feel that they initiate their actions as opposed to feeling coerced to act in a particular fashion (Holt, et al., 2009). Gurland and Grolnick (2005) note that authoritative parenting and autonomy-supportive parenting are closely related. Both of these styles thrive on the constructs of appropriate structure, child involvement (especially in decision making), and support. Autonomy-supportive parenting suggests that in addition to the direct parenting that occurs, the emotional climate and general attitude that parents create has an indirect influence. Parents who adopt these styles see positive differences in their child's academics, mental health, and overall choices about health (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Positive child outcomes have also resulted from teachers and coaches who have displayed autonomy-supportive behaviors (Holt et al., 2009). Throughout this guide, the term autonomy-supportive parenting will be used when referring to the optimal parenting style for this program.

Within sport, there are clear benefits to adopting an autonomy-supportive parenting style. For example, in a study of ice hockey players, an autonomy-supportive parenting style was

associated with enhanced sport satisfaction which in turn led to athletes obeying the rules and continuing the sport of hockey (Juntumaa, Keskivaara, & Punamäki, 2005). Research conducted by Sapieja, Dunn and Holt (2011) also found that healthy perfectionism, a healthy pursuit of excellence, in sport was associated with autonomy-supportive parenting in soccer. Autonomy-supportive parenting styles have shown better bi-directional communication between parent and child when compared to controlling parents (Holt et al., 2009). In a study conducted by Holt and colleagues (2009), an autonomy-supportive parenting style allowed children to feel empowered to make their own decisions, and therefore helped children to have personal responsibility, which children reported as a positive aspect of their lives. The autonomy-supportive parenting style thrives on supportive boundaries and positive communication, and for these reasons it has been found to be successful in youth sport.

In this guide, parenting practices that are found within the context of an autonomy-supportive parenting style will be provided. Much of the research that has been conducted pertaining to parenting in youth sport (e.g., Holt et al., 2009; Juntumaa et al., 2005; Sapieja et al., 2011) has used parenting practices related to the autonomy-supportive parenting style because its success in other domains, such as coaching, is well supported (Gagné, Ryan, & Bargmann, 2003).

For parents who are interested in learning more about general parenting styles and best practices within authoritative or autonomy-supportive parenting styles, there are resources available. For further resources regarding general parenting styles and practices, parents can visit www.parentingforbrain.com and search for the article "4 Parenting Styles- Characteristics and Effects" ("4 Parenting Styles," n.d.). For more information regarding autonomy-supportive parenting styles, please visit www.practicalresearchparenting.com and search for autonomy-

supportive parenting (Weeks, 2016). On this site parents will find a series of four free podcasts about autonomy-supportive parenting, along with written summaries of each.

Parents in youth sport

Overview

The role of parents in youth sport is complex because that role changes as kids grow older, and parents themselves need support in order to help their child. Research in domains outside of sport psychology call for strong adult support systems in order to be able to fully support a child (Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Adult support comes in different forms and is likely to fluctuate for each individual. For example, an adult may be supportive toward another adult by helping with transportation needs. On the other hand, some adults feel supported when another adult is there to provide reassurance and information. With a sturdy support system, parents can work to fill three distinct roles for their child. Throughout this guide, the three main roles for parents are called the 3M's, which stands for *Manager*, *Meaning-Maker*, and *Model*. These roles are well supported in sport psychology research (Jowett & Timsin-Katchis, 2005; Knight & Holt, 2013). Parents are a critical part of youth sport experience because they are often the initiators for participation in sport and then are the continual influencers of the youth that make up sport! Consequently, good communication is crucial throughout this process. When parents effectively interact with their child, their child's coaches, and other parents, their child's experience in sport is optimized. Hopefully this section will help parents to prepare to be in youth sport in the most productive way possible.

In the research

Research in both sport and developmental psychology have found that parents are best able to support their child when they themselves feel supported (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1989;

Harwood & Knight, 2015). This occurs because parents are more aware of how to fill their roles and they feel more confident about their role in youth sport (Harwood & Knight, 2015). For this reason, it is important to consider that the support a child receives may be associated with adults' perceptions of social support and competence. Increased feelings of support and competence in adults should contribute to an increased willingness to support youth in a variety of domains, such as sport, which is often a necessary first step to productive youth athletes.

Knight and Holt (2013) found that parents gain support from their significant other by working as a team to meet the demands of their child's sport. This type of support may look different for each family; where some parents will split the tasks evenly, others may find that assigning one parent to one type of task (driving, for example) works better for the family system. Regardless of how tasks are allocated, communication and collaboration are key in these scenarios (Knight & Holt, 2013).

Parents have reported that having friendships with other parents can be helpful, especially at larger events (Harwood & Knight, 2009; Knight & Holt, 2013). For all parents, it can be helpful to have the ability to turn to other parents in the same or similar situations. Parents can use this resource to obtain information, but it is necessary to be mindful regarding the relationship as a whole. For example, if a parent always relies on another parent to drive their kids to practice without reciprocating or fully explaining the situation, it may lead to poor relations among the parents and a decreased willingness to help in the future. Relying too much on other parents can be negatively impactful if the intentions of the parent giving information are not clear (Knight & Holt, 2013). In some extreme cases, relying too much on other parents may result in parents becoming unwilling to help or other negative situations arising (Harwood & Knight, 2009).

Finally, parents can seek out coaches who provide well-rounded experiences for athletes (Jowett & Timsin-Katchis, 2005; Knight & Holt, 2013). This includes finding a coach that is technically proficient in the sport, but also has the education and the means to communicate well with parents and athletes. When sport is a well-rounded experience, children improve their skill level, but also grow on an emotional level which is beneficial beyond sport. Youth sport starts with support and communication from family, friends, and coaches directed toward the parents. Various researchers (e.g., Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Harwood & Knight, 2015; Jowett, & Timson-Katchis, 2005) have noted that there are a few key roles that parents fill in youth sport. Parents can fill these roles most effectively when they feel supported and competent to do so. Throughout this guide, the three main roles for parents will be referred to as the 3M's.

Parents support their children through sport in many different ways, but each supportive action can be characterized to fit one of the three M's. The three roles are Manager, Meaning-Maker, and Model, and within each of these roles, there are more specific roles. Each of these roles will be further explained in the upcoming sections, but it is important to first understand why this model functions well within the realm of youth sport. Leading researchers in the field (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Harwood & Knight, 2015; Jowett, & Timson-Katchis, 2005) have different words to describe the same role concepts. Appendix B includes a chart containing some of the other terms often associated with a particular role in this body of research. If you decide to search for resources beyond this guide, you may encounter some of these different terms.

Researchers are in agreement that parents play a role as a *Manager* in youth sport. This encompasses many aspect of youth sport, from scheduling down to snacks. *Meaning-Maker*, the second role, is widely recognized as the route parents can take to teach their children about the importance of different aspects of participating in sport. As a Meaning-Maker, parents can assist

their child in understanding loss, sportsmanship, and teamwork, to name a few. Finally, parents serve as a *Model* by setting an example for their kids regarding nutrition, exercise attitudes, appropriate behavior, and having fun (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Harwood & Knight, 2015). In the following sections, each role will be thoroughly discussed and explained.

How to use this guide

The information in this guide may be used in three unique ways. First, it can be used individually by any parent who wishes to better support their child in their athletic endeavors. Secondly, this guide can be used in a workshop setting with a group of parents before or throughout a season. Finally, this information can be used by individuals who are stepping into (or considering) a role as a coach or facilitator within youth sport. Regardless, it is important to go through this information in a way that enables you to apply what you learn in everyday situations.

As a parent

Each of the three M's (Manager, Meaning-Maker, and Model) are broken down into segments that are practical in nature. You will gain the most from this guide if you take the time to look through and understand the overview and examples sections within each of the segments.

The purpose of the overview is to give you the background information and insight as to why it is important to do certain things. It always more beneficial to know the concepts behind an action, which is why we have included research from different domains to help you understand the evidence supporting the tactics we are proposing. Examples are provided to spark your memory and help you to apply information in your own life. We hope that by providing examples, you will be able to relate to at least one of them, and you will begin to feel more confident providing the best possible experiences for youth athletes.

The execution is the fun and applied part of the guide, where you are able to use the tools we provide to put your new skills to action. This section will include a variety of sport psychology techniques created specifically for parents of youth athletes. Perhaps the most important section is the progress check area because this is where you can find out if what you are doing is working. Kids can be tricky because their minds work differently, so something that may be helpful for us as adults could be distracting or anxiety provoking for younger ones. There is no way to know for sure what is working without feedback, and these sections were specifically developed to ensure you are on the right track. Finally, the last part of each segment has a checklist, or cheat-sheet, if you will, that can be used on the go. It can be stressful to be in youth sport settings, so the idea to have simple specific reminders was created with the busy and well-intentioned parent in mind.

Each segment will take time to get through and practice to feel comfortable with the new tactics you will learn. We suggest that you pick one of the three segments to focus on until you feel comfortable with the tactics in that area. Choose the area that either interests you most, or that you feel most unsure about. Moving on will seem natural and all of the segments are somewhat intertwined, so, with practice, by the last segment you will feel like a well-oiled machine!

It can be difficult to take something from words to actions, so this guide gives suggestions of how to bring these ideas to life. You can and should practice these techniques with your child whenever possible. Remember to get creative and find things that work for your family.

As a group facilitator

For groups of parents we recommend focusing on one of the three M segments. This approach will be effective in giving parents some information and providing them with a sound resource (this guide) without overloading them too much. This information can be presented in a variety of situations, and some are suggested below.

Create time for this information to be presented during a mandatory pre-season parents meeting

Offer this information is a three-day workshop, with one day dedicated to each topic

Run a series of workshops during tournaments so that parents can attend these sessions while their child has downtime between games or matches.

Regardless of the situation, it is wise to provide childcare for the time of these sessions to make them more accessible for parents who may bring along other children.

As a facilitator, your goal is to give information, help parents understand the emotional impact of the information given, and provide tools for parents to refer back to in the future. Parents should all have a copy of the guide in order to provide them with tangible information. As the group facilitator, it is important to share information from the "Why parents" section of the guide before beginning the session. This lets parents know why the information they are about to hear is important. You could go over this either by giving a brief talk about the information or by giving them time to read this section then allowing time for discussion. You should provide the group with the information presented in the overview section of whichever topic you will focus on.

In order to involve parents, you may choose to work as one large group or break off into smaller groups to brainstorm examples from personal experiences. For example, if you are focusing on the *Manager* segment, allow parents to talk about times they served in this position.

Encourage parents to share about the many aspects of managing (e.g., tangible, emotional, informational) before sharing the examples provided by the guide with the group. This will help parents to understand the emotional importance of the presented information.

From there, you can introduce the execution section to parents by either going over it as a group or allowing parents to discover it for themselves in small groups. In this section, you could role play situations and allow parents to try out the new techniques, or you could lead group discussion to help parents grasp the tools that are provided in this section.

If the group you are facilitating is a group of parents with children all on the same team, you could ask parents to pair themselves with another parent for the progress check section. This would provide a way for parents to remain accountable and follow through with the progress check throughout the season.

If at all possible, it is beneficial for you as a facilitator and for your program to use a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the season. The information collected should be able to help you understand what parents knew before the workshop, what they learned during the workshop, and how they used the information throughout the season. An example of a questionnaire is provided in Appendix C.

As a coach

Parents who have already taken or will take on this dual role should consult both the parent and the facilitator sections. As a parent-coach, you are in a unique and empowering position to share the information within this guide with the parents of your young athletes. As you play both roles, it is important to remember, first and foremost, that the kids you are working with will benefit most from the sporting experience if the number one goal is to experience fun!

This guide will help you and other parents to foster that fun environment that is so important in youth sport. By becoming informed yourself as a parent and a coach, you are well on your way to being a great leader. You can inspire and empower others by sharing the information you know informally through conversation and formally through workshops (or having someone else host workshops for you) for the parents of your athletes. You can share this information by holding mandatory meetings where information in this guide is presented. You could offer this guide as a suggested tool for parents throughout the season. The best tool you have is to use the skills you have learned with your child and the other children you will be coaching. Actions speak louder than words, and with the tools from this guide you will be ready to put your knowledge into action with your team.

Manager

Overview

Within the Manager role, parents are responsible for providing support in multiple ways. Parents already manage the lives of their children, but there are three specific areas that parents can focus on within the context of sport. Children need tangible, informational, and emotional support, and children benefit when parents are able to manage those three areas (Harwood & Knight, 2015). By filling the role of Manager, parents are able to provide the structure needed to allow kids to thrive in sport.

Managing children in youth sport crosses between being the parent of an athlete and being the parent of a child. It is vital in this position to make sure that the well-being of your child comes before their success as an athlete. It is easy to forget that your young athlete is still just a child, especially when they "take-off" and exceed expectations in their sport. This section will give you hands-on examples and direction regarding how to fill the role of Manager for your child.

Examples

Managing tangible aspects often includes things parents physically do.

As a parent you:

Pay for sport

Find teams and coaches

Drive or find rides

Without managing the tangible aspects of sport, it is impossible for children to be athletes.

Informational aspects of sport are equally important for parents to manage.

As a parent you:

Manage information about practice schedules

Inform you child about competition schedules

Manage health and nutrition information

When the informational parts of sport are well in hand, having a child in sport is less stressful.

The emotional piece of fulfilling the Manager role is intended to help young athletes handle their emotions as they have new and difficult experiences.

As a parent you:

Support your child after a loss or a poor performance

Deal with emotions children have due to issues within their control (poor sportsmanship) or outside of their control (cheating, bad calls)

Help support your child through injury and recovery.

While some aspects of the Manager role make things physically possible, the emotional side of being a Manager is the aspect that can help children learn to love sport and gain self-confidence. When children find themselves in new situations, they look for adult support to learn how they should feel and react. By supporting your child emotionally in this way, they are able to grow as an athlete and as a person.

Execution

Filling the shoes of Manager can help to determine the success of athletes down the road. Many parents and coaches already do some of the things managers should be doing. Utilizing the information in this guide and providing the guide to parents is both a tangible and informational aspect. Moreover, the application of the strategies in this guide will positively influence the

emotional aspects associated with being in the Manager role. Both parents and group facilitators (coaches, organizations) can work to implement this information.

As a parent. When considering tangible support, parents already facilitate this in many ways. Parents can ensure that their children arrive on time and arrive with the proper attire and equipment (Harwood & Knight, 2015). This sets up the sport experience so that children are fully ready to participate. Parents also can serve appropriate meals and snacks to help their child receive proper nutrition. Another way parents act as Manager during the younger years is by finding appropriate coaches and programs for their child (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Finding a coach or program that is a good fit for your child can be a taxing and frustrating process, and the process of getting in contact with coaches may vary by sport. The best way to find a program or coach for your child is to use the resources available to you to learn what options are out there.

There are a variety of resources available to help find a coach, and these resources would be categorized in the informational aspects of managing your child's sport experience. Depending on the sport and the program that your child is involved in, there will be different outlets for resources. Some places you can reach out to as a parent include your child's sport governing body, the local YMCA, local club programs, other parents, or the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP). Parents can use the search tool on the AASP website (www.appliedsportpsych.org) to find local certified sport psychology consultants.

The informational aspect of this role is important because it helps to direct the tangible tasks. For example, parents can reach out to coaches or other child specialists to determine what healthy nutrition looks like. For information about nutrition and finding a nutritionist near you, visit the American Nutrition Association at www.americannutritionassociation.org or talk with your child's coach for recommendations. With proper nutritional knowledge, parents can better

fill their role providing food for their child. Other information parents should reach for may include practice and competition schedules (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). By being informed, parents can better plan for the demands of the sport. Parents will help themselves and their child by finding coaches who are informative as well as emotionally supportive of the athletes on the team.

Emotionally, providing consistent and positive encouragement to their child for participating in sport is of the utmost benefit to the child (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Brustad (1996) has found that when parents encourage their children in sport, both boys and girls reported higher attraction to sport and reported higher levels of perceived competence. Emotional support occurs in both rewarding and challenging times. During moments of victory and defeat, parents can praise their child based on effort instead of outcome. Children may feel uncertain about their performance, especially after a loss, and parents can emotionally support their child during these times by praising effort over outcome (Harwood & Knight, 2015).

Youth athletes rely on their parents to fill the Manager role. As a parent, the tangible, informational, and emotional aspects of managing your child's youth sport experience are all equally important. When parents work in this capacity, they are able to more easily fill the other roles (Meaning-Maker and Model) because they are all interconnected.

As a group facilitator. Facilitating a group for parents of youth athletes can be both challenging and rewarding. First and foremost, it is important to reinforce that parents are doing the best they can, and this information is provided as an aid to improve the youth athlete experience. With this in mind, facilitators can provide tangible services such as childcare (if the budget allows) for the children of parents, and hard and/or digital copies of the information from the meeting. Offering a sheet with a brief overview of the information from the meeting is a great

way to recap the main points and leave parents with a resource that can help them fill all of their duties as a Manager.

The nature of a parent meeting is informational to begin with, but facilitators can reach beyond traditional formats to share their knowledge. As you share information, it is important to also share how they should use their new knowledge. You can do it in part by using skits or examples to show situations and the best way in which to handle them. You also should refer to the "As a parent" section to make sure you are giving parents as many suggestions as possible. Finally, you can serve in this role by providing parents with an avenue to this guide.

Emotionally, you can be a sounding board for parents. The path of each family is unique, but every parent is attending your meeting or workshop in hopes of becoming a more supportive parent. You can also be present during practice and competition. Sometimes facilitators will also fill the coaching role, which will make it easier to be a familiar face for parents, but those facilitators who are not coaching may consider being present at practice and competition sometimes for follow-up concerns.

As a coach. Coaching allows for the opportunity to watch young athletes grow on both physical and social platforms. Coaches naturally provide their knowledge and tangible assistance, often times on a volunteer basis. Beyond the time commitment it takes to coach, you can provide for the team in tangible ways by arriving on time and being ready to go.

Tangible support can come in the form of written and concise information regarding schedules, fees, fundraisers, or changes to information previously presented. Depending on the situation, this could be a printed paper, or it may be a mobile app. Bridging the tangible and informational duties is often times a great way to provide information. Another way coaches can fill both of these roles is by clearly explaining the goals and expectations for the season, and by

sharing hard copies of them with parents. Expectations and goals should both be shared at the beginning of the season, and if there is an opportunity post-season, it is good to follow through by coming back to the goals to show the progress throughout the season. There can be separate goals and expectations for you as the coach, parents, and athletes, but all should be explained and provided in some written format.

As a coach, you will fill the emotional aspect for both athletes and parents. You can adopt a coaching style that aligns with Self-Determination Theory, and you can be a consistent and positive influence by giving positive feedback to your athletes. The feedback you give should focus on the things your athletes have control over. For example, you should praise a strong kick over a "good goal" because the strong kick helps to build confidence and competence. While in this role, you can support youth athletes through losses and other negative experiences.

Checklist for Manager

Tangible support

Are you driving your child to practice and competition on time?

Is your child receiving proper meals and snacks throughout their sport experience?

Is your child in a program or working with a coach that is appropriate for his or her level?

Informational support

Are you learning new information and sharing the information you know?

Are you keeping up to date with practice and competition schedules?

Emotional support

Are you are working with your child to manage their emotions in new situations?

Are you giving praise regarding aspects of sport that your child has control over?

Meaning-Maker

Overview

Parents are able to fill the role of Meaning-Maker by helping their children develop their own thoughts about sport and physical activity. The beliefs that parents have regarding sport and exercise has been shown to impact the beliefs of their children regarding the same matter (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004). Children look to the adults in their life to learn how to respond to new situations. As the Meaning-Maker, parents, coaches and facilitators work to encourage effort over outcome, show and explain the values that revolve around sport, and encourage teamwork and sportsmanship (Fredricks & Eccles, 2004; Harwood & Knight, 2015). Serving in this role helps children to enjoy sport for more than just the physical activity; it brings the lessons learned from sport to the everyday world of children. When this role is filled, children are put in the position to love and appreciate sport for many reasons, and understanding the full picture can encourage the continuation of sport (Harwood & Knight, 2015). This section will give you examples and specific tips regarding how to best fill this role.

Examples

Meaning-Makers provide a space where children can learn to understand the importance of effort over outcome.

As a parent you:

React to effort instead of wins and losses

Give your child positive feedback

Encourage a positive attitude

When this aspect of sport is understood by children, they are able to more fully enjoy and learn from sport.

There are a range of benefits associated with sport.

As a parent you:

Teach your child about the physical benefits of sport

Provide opportunity for social opportunities through sport

Talk about the value of the life skills that sport teaches such as following directions and working as a team

When children learn about the benefits of sport, they are able to understand why sport is a good aspect of their life.

The final piece of serving as Meaning-Maker includes encouraging sportsmanship.

As a parent you:

Reward your child for their positive attitude regardless of score

Encourage your child to help other teammates

Reinforce the importance of being a team player by conversing about the good feelings associated with helping a team and other players

Successfully fulfilling the role of Meaning-Maker joins the benefits of sport with other activities of daily life.

Execution

Parents work as a Meaning-Maker in order to show their children the true value of sport and how it can influence life outside of sport. Coaches and facilitators are able to embrace their role of Meaning-Maker when they encourage their athletes to work as a team. The application of

the strategies in this guide will allow adults involved with youth sport to support the experiences of athletes in order to bring forth the many benefits of sport.

As a parent. Parents already are Meaning-Makers for their children, regardless of whether they know it or not. This is because kids are constantly looking toward their parents for information about how to react and respond both physically and emotionally to situations. This means that as a parent it is especially important to be aware of your own reactions toward your child's activities (Babkes & Weiss, 1999). Within youth sport, parents should be praising effort over outcome. This allows children to feel good about things they can control, like giving their best effort to be a fast runner, listening to the coach, kicking to the correct teammate, and staying focused. Outcomes, such as a wining a contest, is not in the control of the child, or even the team, which is why it can be so frustrating for children to be praised over something they have little control over. For example, your child's team could play their best game against the best team in the league and lose, but there is still a lot to be proud of. Another way parents act as Meaning-Maker during the younger years is by sharing the many values associated with sport with their child (Harwood & Knight, 2015).

Children should learn from their parents that sport helps them physically improve, but it also helps them learn to work in a group, follow directions, stay physically fit, and build friendships. Going to a sport practice or competing in sport has many different benefits, and those benefits reach beyond sport. It is important that your child learns that working on a team is important not only in their sport, but also in life. When children see the various ways sport impacts their life, they can enjoy sport differently. For example, when your child builds friendships on the team, practice and competition becomes not only a physical outlet, but also a social outlet, which can make sport more attractive overall to your child.

In order to promote each of these benefits, and to express that effort really is the most important aspect in sport, you can encourage sportsmanship. As a parent you can praise your child for having a positive attitude in various situations (Knight & Holt, 2014). When your child collaborates with other teammates, you can reinforce this positive interaction with praise and positive feedback. On top of giving feedback regarding positive behaviors, parents can also talk about why being a team player is so important. You can explain that teamwork is something that will benefit them throughout life, and you could even give an example from your personal life. You could share a sport example, or a work life example to help them understand that their attitude toward teamwork will help them in more than just the sport setting.

Youth athletes constantly look to parents to help them make meaning of the world around them. As a parent, these three aspects of being a Meaning-Maker can help your child progress in sport and understand the connections outside of sport. As parents begin to function with ease in this role, children are able to see sport for all that it has to offer, which is a powerful tool to help children decide to stay involved in sport (Fredericks & Eccles, 2004).

As a group facilitator. In this role, facilitators are responsible for sharing with parents just how important the three roles of Meaning-Maker are. Facilitators can reinforce effort over outcome by making it one of the standards of the team or organization, if possible. In this position, you can encourage parents to reward effort over wins or high scores by explaining that children should be rewarded for things they can control.

Facilitators can ensure that parents understand the various benefits of sport by creating handouts or writing the benefits out as a group. In order for parents to facilitate their child's understanding, they must first understand, which is why it is important to touch on the many benefits of sport. Facilitators can introduce the different benefits by reminding parents that

children who understand the range of benefits are more likely to continue in sport (Harwood & Knight, 2015). It is wise to refer back up to the parent portion of this section, but facilitators can outline the benefits based upon physical, social, and emotional benefits. Finally, facilitators can help parents to connect the dots by describing the importance of the life lessons sport teaches children. By the end of their time spent with a facilitator, parents should be able to tell their child how the various benefits of sport can be applied in their everyday life.

Facilitators can encourage parents to rally over sportsmanship as opposed to expecting their child to be the star of the team. A written list reminding parents that they should praise their child for having a positive attitude, being a team player, and bonding with the team may be beneficial (Knight & Holt, 2014). Facilitators can share personal examples of how teamwork from sport transferred into life, and parents should be encouraged to do the same.

Youth athletes will turn to their parents to help them make meaning of the world around them, and as a facilitator, you can help to inform parents as to how to be effective for their child.

As a coach. Coaches are Meaning-Makers for their athletes in a similar way to parents. You can reinforce effort over outcome by enforcing it as a team standard, and by praising their efforts, regardless of the outcome. Your efforts as a coach to live this example will be meaningful to the athletes because they will see that you not only talk the talk, but you can also walk the walk.

You get to help your athletes learn the various benefits of sport by working in practice and during competition to bring skills and drills into the real world. For example, you may say something like, "alright, now just like at the grocery store, where everyone lines up to take their turn checking out, we will do the same for this drill." This allows children to see why their participation in sport mimics life. You can talk in practice about the physical, social, and

emotional benefits of sport. You may have conversation with your athletes about how they are using what they learn in practice in their everyday life.

Finally, coaches are in the unique position to not only encourage, but also demand the use of teamwork. Coaches can develop games and drills in practice that require team communication. This helps athletes progress in sport, but also reinforces the importance of teamwork. Coaches should also verbally praise an athlete's actions when they set an example of being a good team player.

Coaches give meaning to the sport they coach, but you are in the position where you can give your athletes so much more. Creating practice and competition that praises effort, promotes teamwork, and encourages the many benefits of sport is part of your duty as a coach.

Checklist for Meaning-Maker

Effort over outcome

Are you reacting to your child's effort similarly and positively to wins and losses?

Are you giving positive feedback consistently?

Are you rewarding your child for their positive attitude regardless of game result?

Sport has many benefits

Is your child aware of the physical benefits of sport?

Is your child aware of the social opportunities that sport brings?

Are you sharing the value of the life skills that sport teaches (teamwork, following directions)?

Encouraging sportsmanship

Is your child being rewarded for their positive attitude?

Are you promoting teamwork?

Are you having regular conversations with your child regarding the importance of being a team player?

Model

Overview

In every aspect of life parents are a Model for their children. In youth athletics, parents model their own effort, personal sport participation, and positive sporting behaviors (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Adults involved in youth sport are in the position to teach young athletes, through actions, what it means to be a model athlete themselves. Coaches, parents, and facilitators can model physical and social behaviors by participating in sport and displaying good behavior toward other teams as well as their own. The strategies below highlight some important actions parents should take in order to effectively fill this role.

Examples

Models exemplify effort over outcome in their personal lives.

As a parent you:

Put maximal effort into your own physical activities

Show a positive attitude regardless of the outcome

When children see this this aspect of sport in action, they are able to use it in their own life.

It is important to be physically active and participate in sport.

As a parent you:

Learn about the many aspects of sport both physically, through actions, and mentally, through outlets such as books or websites

Engage in sport in your own life

When children see their parents involved in sport, they are able to see how it benefits their own life.

The final piece of working as a Model is holding a positive attitude and outlook.

As a parent you:

Remain positive about your sport

Encourage your child to help other teammates

Reinforce the importance of being a team player by conversing about the good feelings associated with helping the team and other players

Successfully fulfilling the role of Meaning-Maker joins the benefits of sport with other activities of daily life.

Execution

In the role of Model, adults are a living example of how children should act physically, emotionally, and socially. Modeling consistent participation in physical activity and working to consistently gain knowledge about sport, in general, demonstrates to athletes that sport is and will remain important. Adults should model effort over outcome in their own sport and physical activity. Finally, parents, coaches, and facilitators are able to fully embrace the spirit of being a Model by keeping a positive attitude themselves. Models in sport set the pathway for youth athletes. Applying the strategies in this guide will allow adults involved with youth sport to act as a Model for the physical, emotional, and social aspects of youth sport.

As a parent. Parents are Models for their children in all aspects of life. Kids look to their parents to learn how to behave physically, socially, and emotionally. As a parent, you can be aware of the impact your actions and responses have on your children. You can make the choice to actively work to be the most productive Model for your child in sport and in other areas of life

as well. Babkes and Weiss (1999) found that the reactions parents have in new situations is especially impactful for children. For example, kids reported higher levels of enjoyment and perceived competence when they simultaneously reported that their mother was a good role model of exercise behavior (Babkes & Weiss, 1999). Knowing that, parents can model their own effort and praise their child for good effort over a given outcome. Parents can reward consistent engagement in a practice or good kicking with desert. This reward should replace a reward for winning a game. Children can only control their own effort, so praising their effort helps them to feel competent in sport (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Children are watching your every move as a parent, which is why it is important to be engaged in sport yourself. For some parents this may involve joining a recreational sport team or participating in a neighborhood kickball game some weekends. Parents can also be engaged in sport by seeking new information about sport in general. Parents can reach out to the community and can engage in conversation about sport.

Finally, parents should model a positive attitude and outlook toward sport. As a parent you can praise your child for having a positive attitude in various situations (Knight & Holt, 2014). You also can Model a positive attitude toward your own sport and toward your child's sport. You can be a Model by having a positive attitude regarding participation, teamwork, hard work, and the outcome of games. Your attitude in sport reflects the value you associate with sport, so remaining positive about the various aspects of sport will show your child that sport is important to you.

Youth athletes constantly look to parents to help them understand what to do in situations that arrive in sport. As a parent, you can Model effort over outcome, sport participation, and a positive attitude in order to convey the importance of sport.

As a group facilitator. In this role, facilitators are responsible for helping parents and coaches to understand their role as a Model. Facilitators can reinforce all of the aspects of Model by creating organization or team standards that align with the duties of the role. Effort over outcome, sport participation, and a positive attitude can be reinforced as pillars of parenting and coaching within the program.

Facilitators can use role playing to help parents understand how to enforce effort over outcome and to help parents understand the importance of having a positive attitude. For example, facilitators can ask parents to play an imaginary sport game, and "lose" the game. One set of parents can display what it looks like to be proud of their hard effort and good work despite the score, and one group can focus only on the outcome of the loss. From there, you can facilitate a discussion of what kids may think of the two different responses. Creating handouts for parents to remind them of Model behaviors provides parents with take-home tools. As a group, you could facilitate conversation and write down ideas about how parents already serve in this role of Model. When parents understand the impact their action have on their child, they are better able to understand why they should act a certain way.

To promote parental involvement in sport, facilitators can provide external resources so that parents can learn about their child's sport on their own. You could also talk about opportunities within the community for parents to participate in sport. Finally, to encourage parental sport involvement, if your program allows, you may facilitate a parent-child day race, or event, to get the whole family out and moving.

As a facilitator, you can help parents to understand the role as Model. Youth athletes constantly turn to adults around them for information about how to act and respond in situations.

You as a facilitator can share the importance of modeling good behavior, and you can share the types of behaviors parents should model.

As a coach. Coaches are Models for their athletes in a similar way to parents. You can be enforcing effort over outcome as a team standard, and you can put all of your effort into showing drills and skills. When you put effort into the skills you do, your athletes will see that you are serious about effort being a team value.

You already participate in sport just by coaching, which helps athletes to understand the importance of remaining active in life. As a coach, you can learn new information and share it with your athletes. This may include learning new drills, sharing sport resources, or informing parents of new resources that are helpful. You may, for example, talk about how in your own recreational league team you practiced a particular drill. You may also consider warming up and stretching with your athletes. These behaviors remind athletes that sport practice is important, and it gives you as a coach a point of connection with your athletes because they feel they are following in the steps of someone they trust in sport.

As a coach you have the opportunity to model a good attitude. Some coaches may have a "leave your problems at the door" rule, and coaches can adopt and follow the rules they set forth. As a coach you set the tone of practice, and you can demand a positive attitude, positive feedback between teammates, and cheering at practice and in games. You as a coach can communicate the importance of a positive attitude by having a positive attitude yourself. This leaves room for fun and growth, and helps athletes to see what it looks like to have a good attitude in sport.

Coaches model actions and behaviors in sport, and they are trusted sources that athletes will turn to for information about how to act within sport settings. You are a model for physical

and mental aspects of sport, but your Model role will impact your athletes beyond practice and competition, you are a Model for youth athletes in their lives in general. As a coach you get to model appropriate behaviors in sport that translate into life beyond physical activity.

Checklist for Model

Effort over outcome

Are you putting all of your effort into your sport activities?

Are you modeling appropriate behavior after a loss?

Sport participation

Are you engaged in sport?

Are you active in your life?

Are you learning about sport via books, the internet, TV, etc.?

Positive sporting behavior

Do you remain positive at sporting events?

Are you congratulating opponents for their effort?

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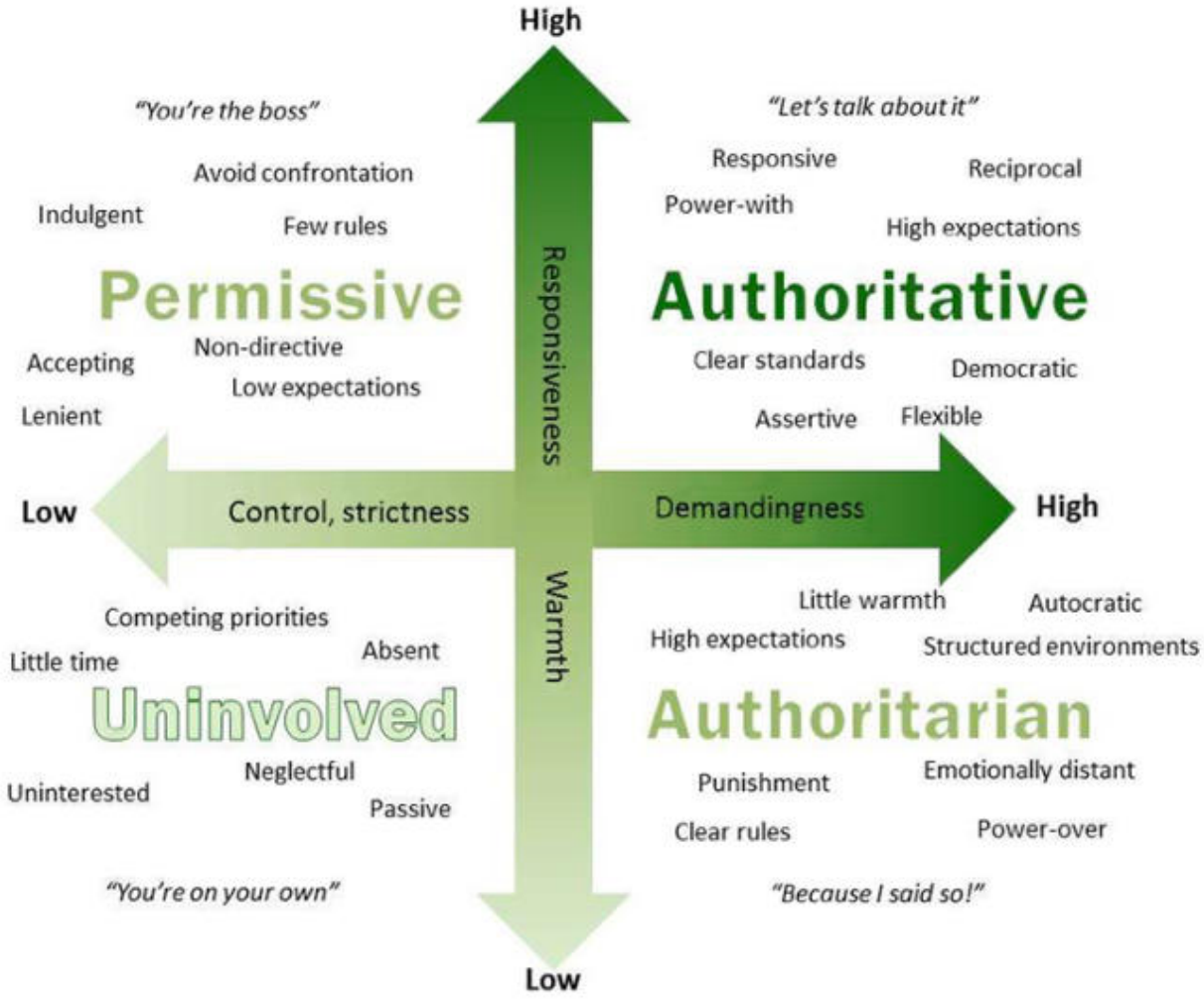
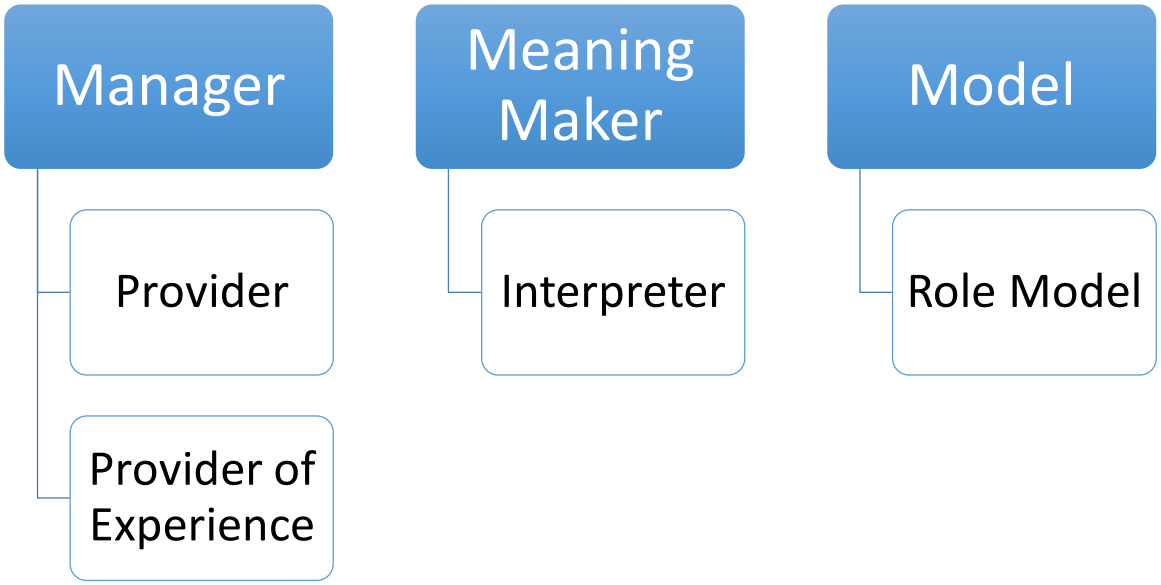
Appendix A

Baumrind's Four Parenting Styles



Appendix B

Alternative Titles for the Roles of Parenting in Youth Sport (Vealey & Chase, 2016)



Appendix C

This example of a pre and post test can provide feedback to the facilitator (trainer in this example) while allowing parents to think critically about what they have learned.

Pre and Post evaluation forms

PRE - COURSE EVALUATION

(Course Title & Date)

Name: (Cllr Name)

Why do you want to attend this course?	
Which part of the training course do you think will be particularly valuable??	
How will the skills you learn benefit you in your role?	
What do you hope to do differently when you have completed this course?	
How would you rate your level of knowledge/skill/ability on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very good **before** you attend this course?	

POST- COURSE EVALUATION

(Course Title & Date – this to be completed as soon as possible after the course is completed**)**

Name: (Cllr Name)

Before the session you stated the following:

Why do you want to attend this course?	*NB – on the post evaluation feedback this section will be completed by Democratic Services*
Which part of the training course do you think will be particularly valuable?	
How will the skills you learn benefit you in your role?	
How would you rate your level of knowledge/skill/ability on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very good?	

Following the course please answer the following questions:

Which part of the training course did you find particularly valuable?	
Are there any aspects of the course which you feel require improvement?	
Did you have to participate in any role	

play? If so, was it beneficial?	
How effective were the audio-visual materials?	
How useful were the documents/training materials provided?	
How relevant was the training?	
Was the course timing and duration acceptable?	
In your opinion, was sufficient material covered?	
In what ways have you increased your knowledge of the subject?	
How will the skills that you've learnt benefit you in your role?	
How would you now rate your potential ability on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being very good since attending the course?	

THE TRAINER

How clear was the trainer in stating the objectives of the course?	
How effective was the trainer in presenting the subject matter?	
Was there enough trainer/participant interaction during the course?	
Was their knowledge of the subject adequate?	
Did they pitch at the right level?	
Were they organised and structured in their approach?	
Did they keep your attention?	

Are there any further comments you would like to make regarding this course and what you have achieved?	