



## **"How to encourage excellence without becoming the proverbial 'pushy parent'?"**

A - give AFFECTION regardless of performance outcome. Children need to know their failures and successes don't affect parental support or acceptance. Unconditional parental love gives kids a safe haven from which to launch lofty dreams and ambitions.

Conversely, children who believe their worth to Mom or Dad increases with every ribbon and trophy will most likely buckle under the weight of unrealistic expectations. You can express unconditional love by communicating to your children that your love is based on who they are rather than what they accomplish. The pursuit of excellence is then transformed from a daunting task to a realistic goal.

F - be FOCUSED but don't coach. It is the parents' job to develop the child and the coach's job to develop the champion. So stay away from detailed, technical discussions about performance. Instead encourage your children to establish good goal setting habits.



F - be FLEXIBLE - At the first sign of success, single minded parents place their budding athletes on the fast track to the Olympics without taking time to find out their goals and objectives. (And without discussing the time frame with the coach!) Allow your agenda to be set by what is best for your children's long term health and well being, not short term goals. Being flexible enables both you and your athlete to enjoy the journey more fully.

I - INTERACT without dominating the conversation. A supportive parent listens more than talks. Parents provide great comfort for children by creating a safe environment in which children know it is acceptable to express true feelings of loss and disappointment. A key element in establishing that safe environment is learning to listen with your ears and not your mouth. Listen for descriptive words that express how your children feel about themselves and their performances. By listening to your children, you communicate to them that their thoughts and feelings are worthy of expression and you respect their sport experience.



R - REFRAME - It's the parents role to provide perspective. Remind your children of the bigger picture, which includes long-term goals, and other aspects of their life such as academics, friendships, family and spirituality. Your guidance and feedback affirms sport is only one aspect of a multidimensional life. This truth serves as a valuable balance to the pressures of competition.

M - MODEL- Parents are some of the most powerful role models for children. Kids learn valuable coping skills watching Mom and Dad deal with difficult situations. Live your own life with integrity by insuring that your actions correspond with your values and beliefs. When you make mistakes, admit your errors, and explain to your children the more appropriate response. Your personal life experiences can provide powerful learning opportunities for your children.