

Bolstering Resilience Through Sport

High Performance sport is full of highs and lows, familiarity and uncertainty. As a parent or guardian, you play a crucial role in helping your child accept that setbacks and uncertainty are part of the journey. Whether your child is struggling with injury, hit a training plateau, not performing at their peak, or nervous about an upcoming training camp, they will learn important coping strategies and build resilience in both sport and life if given the right space and support.

Here are some traps and tips to consider:

TRAP (to avoid)

Rescuing your Child

It can be tricky as a parent to watch your child struggle with discomfort. In fact, parents will often feel the discomfort too! Understandably, you want the best for your child and don't want to see them in physical or emotional pain.

In response, you may **fall into the trap** of:

Taking Over Tasks - like booking appointments, packing food, or doing the things your child.

Being Overly Positive - like highlighting all the positive things without acknowledging the difficult things.

Blaming Others - like blaming external factors for an athlete's performance (e.g., opponents, coach, referee)

Whilst your intention is well-meaning and comes from a place of love and protection, these actions can limit your child's opportunity to build resilience.

Allowing your child to cope with small discomforts now, will set them up for greater success on their journey ahead.

TIP (to consider)

Acknowledge & Nudge

Instead of jumping in to rescue, take a deep breath and provide the space for your child to process their emotions or the situation and then gently support and nudge them to move towards their goal.

Here are some **tips to consider**:

1. Stop – reflect on your own emotions, take a deep breath and remember the value of life lessons (within reason).

2. Acknowledge – with your child that you understand it is tough/tricky at the moment.

3. Praise – them for the effort and determination they have demonstrated so far.

4. Remind – them that you are here when they need and you love them no matter what.

What to say:

"Hey, I imagine this is tough for you right now."

"I want you to know that I'm proud of you."

"I am here if you need help or just want a hug"

TRAP (to avoid)

Overemphasising Sporting Success

While it's natural to want your child to succeed, one of the traps is placing too much emphasis on success. When athletes focus solely on sporting success, they can lose sight of broader skills, values and personal growth.

Things to avoid:

ONLY celebrating and talking about sport.

Praising talent over effort – "you're such a natural talent; you were born for this!"

Defining your child as a footballer, basketballer, swimmer etc. This is something they 'do', not who they are.

TIP (to consider)

Celebrate Effort & Other Areas

Instead of focusing on sporting success alone, remember to celebrate success and effort across all areas of life - study, work and hobbies. Encouraging a balanced view helps them to see sport as one part of who they are, not their entire identity.

Tips to consider:

Celebrate success AND effort across all areas of life

Praise effort – "Hey, I've noticed how much time/effort/energy you put into that skill/race/event. Well done!"

Defining your child as a person who PLAYS sport, studies, works etc.