

Parental Expectations

Kids need to know that their parents are making a commitment to the season (or the training schedule). The children should be appreciative and willing to make a similar effort to see things through to the end of a season. Parents should also expect their kids to pay attention, be respectful and develop some perspective when it comes to losing or not getting the amount of playing time that they want.

Remember the Fun

In "Why Most Kids Quit Sports," Michael Pfahl, the executive director of the National Youth Sports Coaches Association, says that, "The number one reason (why they quit) is that it stopped being fun." Most kids start playing a sport in the backyard, driveway, school playground or neighborhood just because it's fun. The article says this idea is particularly important when kids reach their high school years and the available spots on teams are dominated by the top athletes. Teens who still love sports should be encouraged to grab some friends and just play.

Living Vicariously

One of the most common parenting blunders, particularly by competitive or frustrated dads, is projecting their own athletic dreams on their kids. Just because you were or wanted to be the star quarterback in high school doesn't mean your son has the same aspirations. Instead, introduce a variety of sports to your kids and let them find the ones they want to pursue (or let them find non-athletic activities that they love instead, like music or art). If parents can follow their kids' interests, rather than forcing things the other way, everyone is bound to be happier.

Bonding

Sports doesn't have to be just about sports when it comes to parents and kids. Parents demonstrate their love for their children by driving to practices, cheering in the stands, celebrating big victories and consoling after losses. Moms and sons, as well as dads and daughters, can form deeper connections when they have shared the emotional highs and lows that come with sports. In the end, it's the arm around the shoulder in the parking lot that matters more than the numbers on the scoreboard.

By James Roland