

## Parents as good-sports: setting an example for kids



Since the senseless and violent death of one hockey dad at the hands of another in July 2000, reports of parents arrested or taken to the hospital after youth sports competitions have flooded the news.

Sports can offer many positive life lessons for children like teamwork, trying your hardest, and winning and losing with grace. However, parents taint these valuable lessons when they become unruly, negative or abusive.

The Positive Coaching Alliance. [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org) offers the following guidelines for parents on how to act sportsmanlike at their child's activities.

### Before the game:

- Tell your child before each game that you are proud of him/her regardless of how well he/she plays

### During the game:

- Praise your child and give positive recognition.
- Don't give instruction during the game – let the coach correct.
- Cheer good plays by both teams.
- Mention good calls by the official to other parents.
- If there is a bad call, bite your tongue.
- Before acting in the heat of the moment, stop and consider if you are about to do something that will embarrass your child or the team.
- Remember to have fun and enjoy the game.

### After the game:

- Thank the officials and the coaches.
- Don't give advice; instead, ask your child what he/she thought about the game, and then listen.
- Tell your child again that you are proud of him/her whether the team won or lost.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports has a code of ethics available online at [www.nays.org](http://www.nays.org) for parents, as well as a program called Parents Association for Youth Sports (PAYS) for those who want to learn more about involvement in out-of-school youth sports.

Several communities around the country have developed their own guidelines for parental behavior at sporting events. A league in West Palm Beach, Fla., requires parents to attend a one-hour ethics course. If they refuse, their child cannot participate in any of the sports available through the league. Many other cities across the United States are instituting similar standards in hope of stopping sideline rage among parents.

In cities that have not passed such restrictions on parents, it is recommended that parents police one another during competitions to help curb the problem.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that "increased involvement of adults does not necessarily enhance the child athlete's enjoyment." In fact, well-intentioned comments like "catch the ball" or "run faster" can have discouraging effects.