

A coaches guide for helping  
parents create an environment  
of excellence for their child in  
soccer.

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# 2 things today

1. What things make up an environment of excellence:
  1. For coaches
  2. For parents
2. How can we as coaches work with parents to ensure they get their part right



- What makes a great environment for kids in sport?



- The environment for a youth soccer player is any physical or social setting where they are learning or developing.
- This “environment” is created by coaches, teammates, and of course parents.
- Everyone's role is different



# Different roles are critical

Think

- Parenting
- Governments
- Schools
- Teams



# Coaches role

A coaches role in creating an environment of excellence is first to create opportunities for learning and development

Also, as I write in my book *Coaching People in Sports* an Environment of excellence is made up of 3 things

- Setting and Ensuring Standards and Expectations
- **Developing and Nurturing motivation and confidence**
- Creating thinking players



# Teammates role

This one is all based on

- Coaches expectations
- Age
- Level
- Gender



So what is the parents role in this  
“environment”?





# Environment of Excellence

- An environment is help kids thrive in their sport experience by
  1. Ensuring Motivation
  2. Enhancing Persistence
  3. Building Confidence
  4. And Communicating Effectively
- These same constructs are used by coaches to improve player performance but when used (differently) by a parent **nurture potential as opposed to teach it**



# As you can see...

The purpose is really two fold

1. To educate parents and give them the “What to do” ...and as a result...
2. ...let you/help you do your job of developing players



# For each construct

We will

1. Explain it
2. Coaches role in building it
3. How coaches can help parents do it



# 1. Ensuring Motivation



# 2 types of motivation

Extrinsic motivation - refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some benefit as a result of participation.



# Intrinsic Motivation

- Refers to performing an activity for the sake of the activity itself.
- Better for persistence, especially when failures are involved
- Made up of
  - *Competence* - the child feels that he or she is good at the skill.
  - *Autonomy* - how much *choice* the child feels he or she has in regards to the task.
  - *Relatedness* – part of the group



# Coaches role

## Extrinsic

- Based on self referenced improvement
- Lots of praise (augmented feedback)
- Let them know they have earned playing time

# Coaches role

## Intrinsic

### *Competence*

- Relative to self
- Lots based on process

### *Autonomy*

- Choice when can

### *Relatedness*

- Part of the group





# Coaches for parents

Best to do just intrinsic ...Extrinsic ever ok?

- When parents reward w \$ for goals = bad
- What/when should they reward concretely?
  - For effort
  - For attitude
  - For personal accomplishments
  - With praise



# Coaches for parents

## Competence

- Have parents ask kids how they feel they did
- Have parents build this up
- Have parents get in the ears of kids at key times -
  - car rides, after practices, etc.
- Keep parents apprised of progress throughout the year
  - Don't not communicate
  - Must keep in their ears often



# Coaches for parents

Autonomy - Instruct parents to...

- Provide opportunities for breaks
- Provide opportunities for more and harder work



# Coaches for parents

- Instruct parents to ensure they are making their child part of their team
  - Keep parents posted on perhaps things that aren't going well
  - Instruct them to just be there ....not coach or anything...just be there

## 2. Persistence

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# Persistence

- When someone is described as persistent there is usually an immediate thought about how hard that person is working, or has worked, to obtain what they were going after.
- To persist it literally means to “continue steadfastly or firmly in some state, purpose, course of action, especially in spite of opposition”.
- Persistence = competitive



Kids think in two ways.

- Process oriented = focused on improving and learning and judge success relative to their own improvement.
- Product oriented = focused on winning and beating others and judge that they are successful when they beat others; and conversely feel like they are a failure if they lose.
- The best athletes in the world are both.
- But if kids are too much *product* and not enough *process* then when the going gets tough, they quit as they get anxious and have no coping skills or desire to improve or to learn what it takes to win...in other words they do not persist.



# Persistence

Parents and coaches create climates that reward success during competition in one of two ways.

Some parents (and coaches) create a product environment and stress winning/beating others above all else

Or a parent creates a process environment when they stress working/trying hard and where success is measured relative to themselves vs. others.



# Persistence

...The important link here is that the parent that is constantly stressing the product environment to a product child is saying to the kid yes, winning is the most important thing.

This is fine, as long as the child keeps winning...but they don't. And when they don't, you guessed it, they enjoy it less and don't persist...they quit.



# Coaches for parents

- Coaches – remind parents to stress one over another we are potentialing because we are creating an environment of persistence in the face of adversity or competition.
- Remind them that sometimes (many yimes) kids will be wound up about a game...they don't need ot hear it form the parents
- Send out a well timed email before a big game/tourney to
  - Get them to express how excited they are to watch their kid play
  - That they have been doing these 3 things well
  - Other stuff



# 3. Confidence



# Building Confidence

- Can confidence be built or is it innate?
- Most will say it is a combination of both
- For us as coaches/parents – it can be built...and it takes time and must be hit by both parties



Confidence is built from actual sources

Think

- Bricks in a building – brick by brick
- Words in a sentence – word by word
- Liquid in a cup – ounce by ounce

4 items as its foundation are relevant here



# Coaches for parents

1. **Create successes** – *#1 source of confidence is if kids feel like they have done it before/had success*
  - *Have parents get in kids ears at certain times to build up successes*
    - *after/before big games or moments*
    - *after kids have gone through a tough period*



# Coaches for parents

2. Verbal feedback – #2 = they build confidence when they get feedback from a trusted leader
- Have parents
    - Stay positive toward improving not perfection
    - Be there when its bad and good
    - Say what you say (feed them lines)



# Coaches for parents

3. Emotionally and Physically ready – when a child feels he or she is ready they feel confident
- Feelings are hard for kids to define
  - Coaches
    - Feed kids lines for Self talk (mental)
    - Provide touchable tangible physical gains – more fit, more muscles, better than that team, etc...



# Coaches for parents

Have parents

- Point out specific physical improvements
- Point out that it looked like they were thinking this – feed them lines
- Tell their kids that they looked mentally in the game and that looked like this

# Coaches for parents

4. Self perception that is accurate – *can they learn who they are?*
- Cultivating an honest self-awareness is very important. It promotes
    - Self-referenced vs. other references assessments
    - An opportunity to be who they are vs. who they aren't

# Coaches/Parents

## Coaches

- make sure kids know what they are good at
- Know what needs improving

## Have parents

- Help their kids revisit things that they are good at
- Make lists and set goals to improve



# Be a Role Model

Reminder confidence is - “Belief in ones self or ones abilities” or “full trust, or trustworthiness or reliability of a person or thing.”

A couple of things in this definition should jump right of the page, namely “belief in self”, “trust” and “reliability”.

For a child to really get at these core components in confidence they will need to start with a quality role model.



# Role Model – when they aren't watching

If kids see the parent as a person they can “trust”, that they can “rely” on and that “believes in their self” they are setting the tone for them and by the very definition they are building their confidence.

Have the parents

- Be calm in the storm
- Be there with a hug when things are bad



# 4. Communication



- In order to drive an environment that creates confidence, persistence and motivation there must be communication. This truly is what it all comes down to.



Communication defined literally means - “the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs”.

3 items





# Listening

Have parents listen to (not just hear) their children

- It requires that they are consciously paying attention to what they are trying to communicate.
- This is difficult as the science is to listen but the art is the timing of when/how to listen and impart knowledge.

# Verbal feedback

Have parents

- Be positive supportive feedback (described below) directed at the person.
- A positive atmosphere motivates children to accept a challenge and risk errors or failure.

# Positive feedback

## Have parents:

- Give Positive feedback about the person vs. the performance is vital.
  - “I really enjoy watching you play”.
  - This says to the child no matter what happened or happens with this game, watching you play is a great joy.
- Reward trying - If performance is discussed the parents lead comments regarding the child's performance should NOT be corrective (discussed below) but rather what they enjoyed about something they tried.



# Positive feedback

- **When praising a performance that the child did well be sure to praise effort vs. ability.**
  - When a child hears the parent say “Wow you scored a great goal you are a natural born soccer player”, what they are praising is their ability.
  - When a child hears the parent say “Wow you scored a great goal you really worked hard to get around that defender with that move”, what you are praising is their effort.
  - When the parent praises the effort they are telling them this is what is most important about what you did well. When they hear this they will persist in the face of all things difficult – because they know this is what is important (effort).
  - But when the parent praises the ability by saying he/she is naturally gifted what you are really saying to the kid is that being great is what is most important.



# Constructive Feedback

- ***Constructive/corrective feedback – is feedback that is aimed at providing the child with information that will help them improve their behavior or game.***
- Younger children may look for and even accept corrective feedback. The corrective feedback, if the parent is going to give it, should be on effort vs. quality.

# Constructive feedback

- Older children will engage in a conversation about their play.
- This is a time to let them self correct with their own feedback.
  - As they engage the parent with a “what did you think of my performance”. They can answer “I don’t know what did you think?”
  - The goal is to have them critically and honestly think about their performance.
  - This gives them control in the analysis, this control fosters real intrinsic motivation (choice, competence, part of your group) and confidence (perceived success).



***Positive nonverbal feedback* – believe it or fake it but no matter what do it.**

- Sometimes kids do things on the field that we cannot believe both for the good and the bad.
- When they do something for the good we likely clap, nod our heads up and down with a smile and generally express satisfaction.



## ***Negative nonverbal feedback – be aware!***

- The parent may have built up massive amounts of good will with positive feedback only to have it undone with a poorly timed shake of the head and eye roll that sends the message I can't believe you did that.
- This happens, but parents must work to ensure that they minimize how often they show displeasure.
- Kids watch for what parents do during times that they “lay themselves on the line” during their sport.





# The environment is key

Remember coaches this starts with us

Have parents

1. Ensure Motivation
2. Enhance Persistence
3. Build Confidence
4. Communicate Effectively

This takes time, effort and your involvement

