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The Effects of Parenting Relationships and Sports

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The Effects of Parenting Relationships and Sports

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The Effects of Parenting Relationships and Sports

A few years ago, scientists Jellineck & Durant (2004) found that, “Youth sport participation in our society has been on the rise, with recent evidence suggesting that 90% of children take part in some form of organized sport between the ages of 5 and 17” (p. 151). With children more and more active in terms of youth sports, it puts more pressure upon parents to encourage and be active in their children’s lives with sports. It is especially imperative in the United States that our young children exercise and become active. “As more family time and resources are devoted toward sports, there is further opportunity for parents to provide feedback (both support and pressure) to encourage participation” (Turman, 2007, p. 152). Everyone remembers their childhood memories of being carefree and loving life, but few take the time to reflect upon humbling lessons learned from their parents teaching them the intricacies of life. I myself recall a particular memory playing baseball as a child, I had just struck out looking to lose the game because the pitcher threw fast and I was intimidated. In the grass behind Kereiakes Park, my Dad taught me a lesson to never let the fear of failure keep you from playing the game. In retrospect, not all children take discipline or correction the same way, but it is a parent’s job to help prepare their children for the rest of their lives. This is why I believe parental guidance is so crucial in athletics. Today I am interested in researching not only how parenting relationships affects communication with their child, but also how sports can be used as a great tool for growing youth to learn lessons about life and how to work to get where you want to be.

Literature Review

Parenting relationships made with children help build and mold the character of the children. Keeping this in mind, it is crucial to remember communication is a device that should be used the right way. According to Starcher (2015), “The distinct ways that caregivers use

language and express messages can have a lasting impression on children” (p.205). This quote really speaks volumes to me, particularly the idea that every child is at least partially demonstrating or carrying out things or values that they were taught growing up as a child. For many families, sports are a huge portion of the family schedule. This leads to a higher emphasis on athletics as a form of standard of worth, and therefore placing more pressure in that area upon one’s self. When examining parent goal orientation, Roberts (1994) found that parents with high levels of task involvement focused on elements such as hard work, goal orientation, and performing at high levels (p. 156). While many think that this could lead to tension and feelings of disappointment in one’s self if he or she doesn’t perform, I have found through personal experience and observation that even the young children that don’t win or do as well as other players, those children’s parents often just take pride in the simple act of their child playing the game and having them be a part of something bigger than themselves. Life is full of groups of people being formed together every day whether it is sports teams or an occupation, even down to the type of religion you worship. This is an example of how sports can eventually benefit people in many aspects of life. In their studies authors Ewing & Seefeldt (1996) found that, “Although athletes identify having fun and enjoyment as their primary motivation, athlete motivations for participating have been tied to the various forms of parental pressure or support they receive” (p. 153). In terms of parenting, this quote means that young athletes love playing the game itself and that their love for the game is their primary motive for playing. However, the quote also alludes to their being many additional motivational factors for children, including motivation to please their parents and make them proud. The underlying theme behind all of this is that parents must be particularly aware of how they communicate with their children, and also especially how their messages are perceived.

Athletics are definitely a great avenue for children of all ages to play and be active, but what happens when the child no longer wants to play the sport? According to Turman (2007), “Most parents indicated they would be willing to hear their child’s rationale for wanting to quit a sport, however they then planned to emphasize the child’s obligation and commitment to the team as a way to require them to finish out the season” (p. 169). In my opinion the take home point of this quote is that although a parent will normally allow their child to stop playing the sport if they don’t enjoy it, they insist that the child finish out their obligations or their respective seasons, and that is what I think is so important. In terms of differing effects due to gender, Stein, Raedeke, and Glenn (1999) established that both male and female parents were both moderately and highly involved in their child’s sport participation (p. 156). This is a reassuring point to me that in terms of gender at least, because parents are in general the same way when it comes to wanting to be involved in their children’s lives. I think that quote is very positive because I believe that the involvement of both parents would be most beneficial for their children playing sports. Embedded into the commitment you make when you join a team, you are also forming a bond, not only with your teammates but you’re your coaches and even training personnel depending on the sport. When these types of commitments are made, it is imperative that everyone buy into the idea of togetherness and wholeness. If a child was to break that togetherness by departing, it could potentially rattle the structure of the team. Another thing that parents do when they force their children to at least finish the season is they instill a sense of finishing obligations or, in other words, doing what you said you would do. In the professional world I can attest that this is very important. No matter the task or job or field, it’s like my Dad always says, “If you have a job to do, then do it”. According to Turman (2007),

“Parents who feel they should be supporters and encouragers acknowledged the important impact they had for providing the emotional and financial support that allowed their child to participate. In a similar vein, parents also described themselves as teachers/mentors who were responsible for providing education and insight into the sport that extended beyond what the coaches could provide their child. The implication of this finding is that both roles suggest parents feel they are there to provide a positive form of parental support for their child.” (p. 170).

As I previously stated I'm not trying to provide the implication that parents always need to be encouraging and positive, yet I feel compelled to harp on the positivity factor more because I believe that in today's world we live in we could use a little more positivity. That long quote really emphasizes that at least the majority of parents understand that they have a HUGE role in their children's lives, yet it also reflects that parent's want to do the best for their child and teach them many lessons about life and how to live it well and fully. For many parents, athletics is a common outlet that they share with their child that allows them to grow with and become more personal and connected with their children.

Many parents and grandparents are more boastful and proud of their loved ones than the athletes themselves, and I think that speaks volumes for the connection that sports can bring. A great example of this for me is my roommate and his relationship with his grandpa. My roommate played football in high school and his grandfather used to watch him play. He won a state championship in football and received a state ring for it, yet when his grandpa passed away, my roommate requested that his grandpa be buried with his ring. When I asked my roommate about that he said that having his grandpa buried with his ring was a very important thing for him because it allowed him not only to have some closure about his grandpa's death, but it also made

him happy because he knew how much his grandpa loved watching him play and how much that meant to his grandpa. To my roommate and many other athletes in general, it's not about the game or even sometimes the end result, it's about how playing that game for fun can also make people smile and will bring even the most opposite of people together by one common thing- sports.

In conclusion, in today's world now more than ever, parents must be aware of how they communicate with their children and must be especially aware with their actions when involving sports with their children. At such a young, delicate age, it is difficult to grasp the implications of one's actions upon the youth. However, it is imperative now more than ever that children today be raised adequately. To be raised adequately it is of my belief that you should first go through some trials and tribulations and learn some lessons along the way. When are some of the best lessons in life learned? When playing sports, that is.

Methods

With it being that I am so deeply passionate about parenting/child relationships and sports, I have thought about the many ways in which I myself would go out and carry out an experiment to study parenting relationships and how they intertwine in sports and require precise communication. I would execute a study that looked at parents communicating with their children in different types of sports over the course of one calendar year. During this time, I would go and sit through many different types of youth sporting events and observe not only the game being played, but more importantly the parents of the various athletes and how they communicate with their children. By sheer self-observing I would write down any observations that I saw and would then break down the data. In terms of results, the data could be grouped by

parents and by how the parents communicated with their kids. The parents could be grouped in a couple of different ways, either being hands on with their children or taking a more laid back, let's see how they do approach. In my studies, these categories would be numbered as either a 1 (hands-on) or 2 (not). After this I would then observe the athletes and how they themselves handled their parents pressure. The beauty of sports is that you either succeed or you don't, so for the purpose of this study the athletes would then be numbered similarly as their parents. Likewise in this study, if the athlete responds well to a parent's pressure they would be given a 1. If not, they would be given a 2 for my results. When interpreting the results, I believe I would find that as long as a more hands-on parent keeps a calm head, an encouraging hands-on parent would be the most effective in terms of having the best relationship overall with their child when compared to a less hands on approach.

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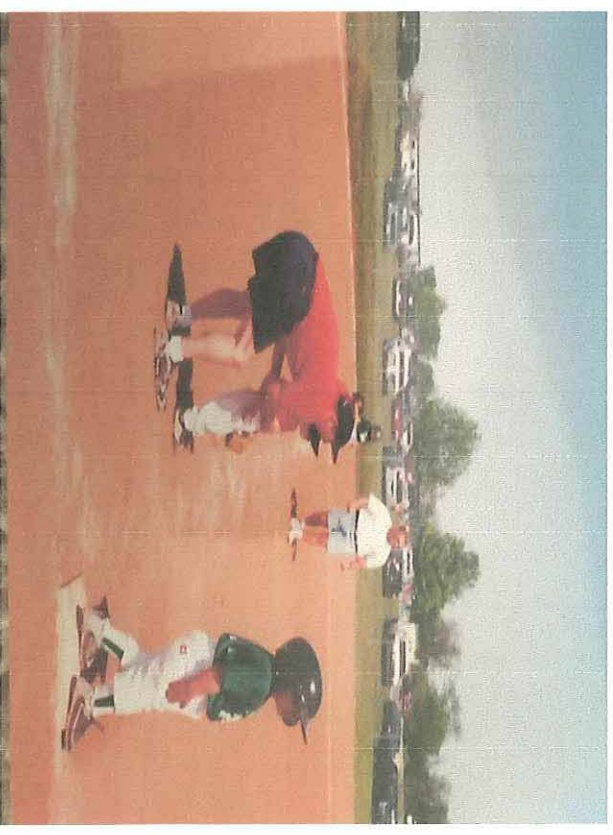
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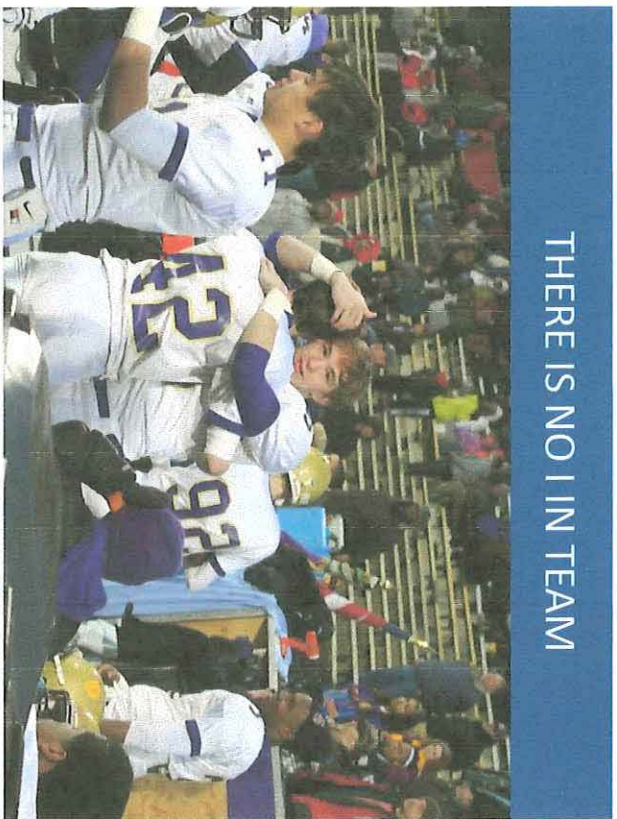
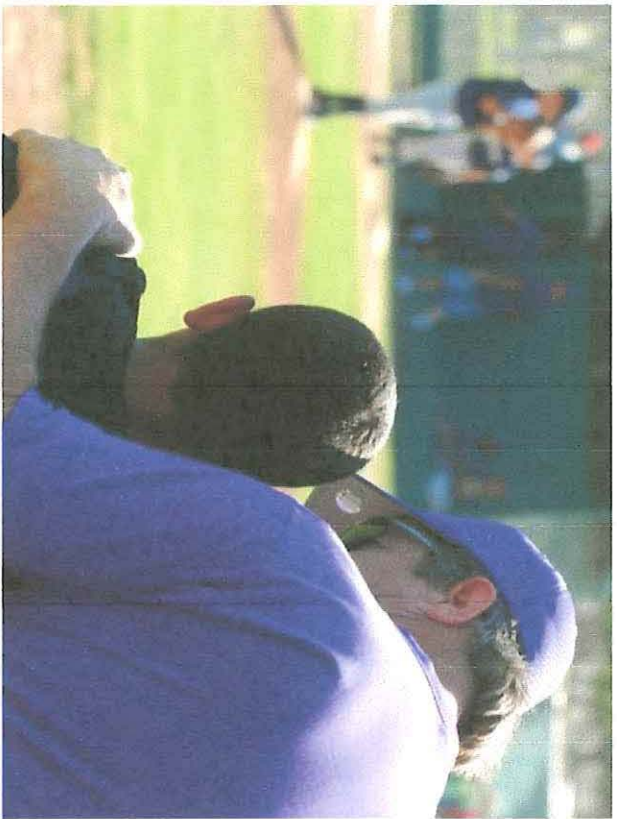
With sports being placed on such a pedestal, parents must be careful in how they communicate as this leads to a higher emphasis placed on athletics for ones self-worth.



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By: Carder Dallas (Research completed for Dr. Helen Sterk, Department of Communication)





THERE IS NO I IN TEAM!

Conclusion

1. Always listen to your parents
2. "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." – Babe Ruth

