

50 Things to Help your Child Achieve

By Wayne Goldsmith and Helen Morris (found at <http://www.usaswimming.org>)

1. Love them unconditionally.
2. Support their coaches.
3. Accept that they cannot win every time they compete.
4. Allow them to be kids and have fun.
5. Help them to develop as people with character and values.
6. Turn off as a sporting parent: don't make sport the one and only topic of conversation at the dinner table, in the car, etc.
7. Don't introduce your child as "This is my son/daughter the swimmer." Their sports are something they do, not who they are.
8. Don't do everything for them: teach responsibility and self-management.
9. Reward frequently for success and effort but make the rewards small, simple, practical and personal. Kids don't need a CD or \$20 just for playing a sport or getting a ribbon.
10. Reward them with what they really love: your time!
11. Be calm, relaxed and dignified at competitions.
12. Accept that progress in any sport takes a long time: at least 7 to 10 years after maturation in most sports for the athlete to reach full potential. A little manual work and helping out with household chores are important lessons in developing independence.
13. Believe it or not, kids can learn to pack and unpack their training bags and fill their own water bottles: teach and encourage them to take control of their own sporting careers.
14. Don't reward championship performances with junk food.
15. Skills and attitude are most important. Don't waste money on the latest and greatest equipment or gimmicks, hoping to buy a short cut to success.
16. Encourage the same commitment and passion for school and study as you do for sport.
17. Avoid relying on or encouraging "sports food" or "sports supplements"-focus on a sensible, balanced diet which includes a variety of wholesome foods.
18. Allow kids to try many sports and activities.
19. Don't specialize too early. There is no such thing as a 10 year old Olympic swimmer.
20. Junk food is OK occasionally. Don't worry about it, but see #14 above.
21. Praise qualities such as effort, attempting new skills and hard work rather than winning.
22. Love them unconditionally (worth repeating!!)
23. Have your "guilt gland" removed: this will help you avoid phrases like "I've got better things to do with my time" or "do you realize how much we give up so that you can swim?" Everyone loses when you play the guilt game.
24. Encourage activities which build broad, general movement skills like running, catching, throwing, agility, balance, co-ordination, speed and rhythm. These general skills can have a positive impact on all sports.
25. Encourage occasional "down time"-no school or sport-just time to be kids.
26. Encourage relationships and friendships away from training, competition and school work-it's all about balance.
27. Help and support your children to achieve the goals they set, and then take time to relax, celebrate and enjoy their achievements as a family.
28. Never use training or sport as punishment- i.e. more laps/more training.
29. Do a family fitness class-yoga or martial arts or another sport unrelated to the child's main sport. Everyone benefits.
30. Car pool. Get to know the other kids and families on the team and in turn you can allow your child to be more independent by doing things with other trusted adults.
31. Attend practice regularly to show that you are interested in the effort and process, not just in the win/lose outcome.
32. Help raise money for the team and kids, even if your own child does not directly benefit from the fundraising.

33. Tell your children you are proud of them for being involved in healthy activities.
34. Volunteer your time for the team.
35. Teach your child the importance of “team”-where working together and supporting each other are important attributes.
36. Even if you were an athlete and even if you are a trained coach, resist the temptation to coach your own child, it rarely works.
37. Be aware that your child’s passion for a particular sport may change.
38. Be aware that skills learned in one sport can often transfer to another.
39. Accept “flat spots” or plateaus-times when your child does not improve. During these times encourage participation for fun, focus on learning skills and help develop perseverance and patience.
40. Believe it or not, American kids are unlikely to die from drinking tap water!
41. Cheer for your child appropriately. Do not embarrass yourself or your child.
42. Make sure that each week includes some family time where you do family things and talk about family issues-not about sport.
43. Take a strong stand against smoking and drug use (both recreational and performance enhancing.)
44. Set an example with sensible, responsible alcohol use.
45. Don’t look for short cuts like “miracle sports drinks” or “super supplements”-success comes from consistently practicing skills and developing an attitude where the love of the sport and physical fitness are the real “magic.”
46. If one of your children is a champion athlete and the others in the family are not so gifted, ensure that you have just as much time, energy and enthusiasm for their activities.
47. Eliminate the phrase “what we did when I was swimming.....”
48. Encourage your children to find strong role models but try not to let this decision be based on sports only. Look for role models who consistently demonstrate integrity, humility, honesty and the ability to take responsibility for their own actions.
49. Encourage your children to learn leadership and practice concepts like sharing, selflessness, team work and generosity.
50. Don’t compare your child’s achievement to another other children-good or bad. This creates barriers and resentment and we don’t need any more of that!