

Tips on how parents can manage sibling rivalry on and off the sports arena.



Preamble

The following resource for parents has been developed by Fiona McCarthy on behalf of the NSW Office of Sport, as a key initiative of the NSW Government's Future Champions strategy.

For more information on Future Champions, please visit www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/parents-guardians-and-carers

Getting to know the author

Fiona McCarthy is a psychologist who owns and operates Mind and Body Balance, a business she set up 25 years ago. Fiona is a registered psychologist, specialising in the area of sport and performance psychology. She is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and the Australian College of Sport and Exercise Psychologists.

Fiona lives in Newcastle NSW and is the Hunter Academy of Sport, Sport Psychology Consultant and a New South Wales Institute of Sport, Sport Psychology Service

Provider. Over the last twenty-five years, Fiona has assisted many local, state and national teams, athletes, coaches and parents in the areas of confidence, concentration, handling pressure, motivation, goal setting, time management, performance preparation and general well-being. She has worked with numerous sports assisting recreational level athletes to professional, international, Olympic and Paralympic level athletes.

Fiona recognises the valuable contribution parents make to their child's sporting pursuits.

She believes that parents want the best for their child and hopes that these resources provide parents with the skills needed to be the best sporting parent they can be so that they can best guide and support their child at all ages and stages of their sports journey.

These resources aim to provide parents with the support, encouragement and skills/tools required to assist their child(ren) in reaching their sporting potential in an environment that promotes fun, connection, success and positive well-being.

Introduction

Parents play a vital role in sport and provide valuable contributions to the sporting community. As parents, we all want to support our children as best we can and see them enjoying their sport.

The following resource aims to empower parents and guide them in playing the best role they can in their child(ren)'s sporting pursuits. Parents are role models to their children and sport is a valuable vehicle to teach life lessons.

As a parent, have you ever wondered how to best help your child deal with success and disappointment? Or what to say to them when their nerves take over and they feel pressure to perform.

Do you find yourself rushing from sport to sport, child to child and not having much time to enjoy watching them play?

Have you ever wondered whether your child is doing too much sport?

How do you help your child believe in themselves and be confident with their sporting pursuits, rather than worried about other competitors or results?

This resource will help parents find the answers to these very common questions and much more.

They will provide parents with information and practical tools and tips to ensure they play their role as a parent to the best of their ability in order to allow their child to enjoy their sport and assist them in reaching their full potential in sport and life.

Managed well, sibling rivalry can be a positive experience for all involved, however poor management can result in some negative experiences.

Some families may find themselves with all their children playing the same or different sports, while other families may have some children participating in sport whilst their siblings may pursue other interests.

Below are some tips to help parents navigate their way through this very common challenge, whilst maintaining family harmony.

1. Make sure to understand the individual, unique qualities of each child. Celebrate these qualities rather than compare qualities of each child.

Help your child identify their strengths and areas to work on and assist them in doing so.

Every person is different but remember difference is good. Imagine a sporting team had 15 players with all the same qualities. A successful team embraces differences collectively as such differences strengthens the team. Parents should promote such thinking within the “Family Team.”

2. It is not always easy, but it is absolutely necessary that parents allocate equal time to engage, watch and enjoy being part of their child’s development on and off the sports arena.

Take some time out to assess how you as a parent are spending your time and with which child. Are you just attending one child’s training and games? Are you providing opportunities to spend time with your child that doesn’t play sport?

Such assessment will help celebrate each child and minimise the opportunity for unhealthy rivalry to occur.

3. Family conversations need to be embraced by all family members.

Praising effort, encouraging each child to contribute to the conversations about what they have done in the day and what they are looking forward to is key. This not only helps parents gauge where everyone is at, it also allows siblings the opportunity to encourage and support one another.

4. Parents should try to encourage sporting siblings to leave the intensity of competition on the sports field and not bring it home.

This doesn’t mean stopping healthy rivalry at home completely. It means ensuring that a healthy perspective and appreciation of each other is developed rather than one of jealousy and resentment.

5. Parents should be very mindful of ‘playing’ favourites or making comparisons with their children.

Our children can be our best teachers so try to learn from them. This can be especially relevant when one child participates in an activity that you may not know too much about. Try to avoid ‘escaping’ this because you have a better understanding or interest in an activity/ sport that another child participates in.

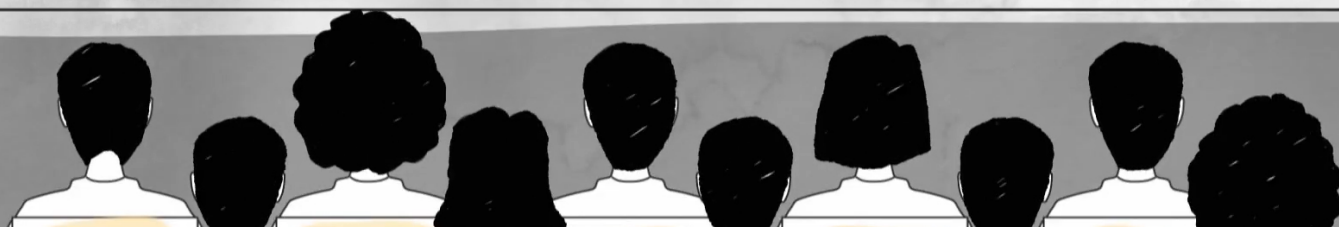
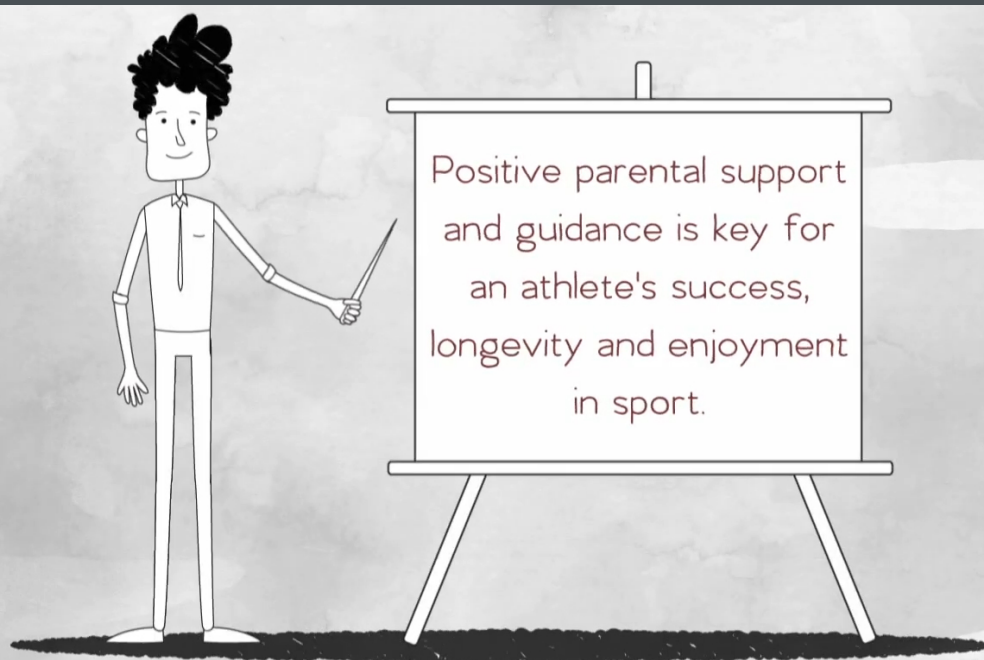
Sharing the knowledge and love can help minimise ‘playing favourites’ and help promote learning and connection for all involved.



We hope you enjoyed our tips!

You might like to check out our animated video, ABCs for Parenting on the NSW Office of Sport website.

Go to <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/parents-guardians-and-carers> to access this video and other parenting resources on offer by the NSW Office of Sport.



Formal permission is required from the NSW Office of Sport to reproduce any of this information. Formal permission should be directed to the Office of Sport, 6B Figtree Drive, Sydney Olympic Park, NSW 2127. You are required to acknowledge that the material is provided by this document or the owner of the copyright. © State of NSW 2022