

Criticism Transformed

Although criticism tends to drain people's tanks, it is not a bad thing. Criticism can help all of us grow and improve. But the catch is we have to be open to hearing and considering the criticism. And that is where the Emotional Tank transforms criticism into receivable feedback.

Part of being a parent is having hard conversations with our children when they are doing something that is not right or good for them or those around them. And being a consistent tank filler doesn't mean you will never have to have a hard conversation with your child. But it does mean that your child will be more likely to change in response to that hard conversation.

There are some proven ways of making it more likely that your child will hear you and consider your feedback. We call this set of techniques "Kid-Friendly Criticism."

- **Avoid Non-Teachable Moments:** There are some moments when it's harder for people to hear and receive criticism. Right after your child strikes out with the bases loaded is not a good time to discuss the benefits of resiliency. There's just too much emotional turmoil. Wait out non-teachable moments and keep your powder dry for later.
- **Criticize in Private:** It's easier to hear criticism in private than in front of others where it is easy to feel embarrassed and become defensive. Respect your child's need for dignity by talking to her privately.
- **Ask Permission:** Sometimes you can short-circuit defensiveness by "asking permission." "Emily, I noticed something about the way you were dealing with a teammate that concerned me. Are you open to hearing it?" If Emily says yes, she is more likely to consider your comment. If she says no, you create great curiosity in her by saying, "Okay, no problem. Let me know if you change your mind." If you come back with the same question later, she is likely to say yes. Of course, there are situations in which you

should not ask permission, like when your child is doing something to dishonor the game or putting her or others in danger.

- **If-Then Statements:** People are more likely to take criticism if they feel in control. If-Then Statements do this. "Clint, I noticed you jogged the last sprints in practice. If you run them all out, you'll have more stamina in the fourth quarter when the game is on the line." Notice you are leaving him in charge of whether he goes all out in the conditioning drills, while enticing him with an outcome he wants.
- **Criticism Sandwich:** By sandwiching your criticism between two positive statements, you make it more likely that it will be heard. This tool works especially well when combined with an If-Then Statement. "I like the way you hustled during the fast break drills. That's great. If you gave that kind of effort during the final sprints at the end of practice, you'll be even better in the fourth quarter with the game on the line. Oh, I also like the way you encouraged the teammates who were guarding you during the one-on-one drills."

POSITIVE SPORTS PARENTING

How “Second-Goal” Parents Raise Winners in Life Through Sports



By Jim Thompson



**BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE**

To learn more about *Positive Sports Parenting* and other PCA books visit www.positivecoach.org/our-work/our-books

For more Resources, visit: www.PCDevZone.org

For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit: www.PositiveCoach.org