

**Case Study 7: Your child was very excited at the beginning of the season. Now it seems like every practice he comes home a little more down. You are worried about his morale. As a Second-Goal Parent, what should you do?**

Your objective in this situation should be to find out what is draining your child's enthusiasm and enlist his coach in trying to reverse it so your child will want to keep playing sports.

There are two general possibilities here. Either the coach is generally a benign influence or he isn't. In either situation, it would be helpful to see if you can get any insight from your child.

"Gordon, it seems like you aren't as excited about soccer as you were at the beginning of the season. Do you think that is true?" If he agrees, "What about soccer this year makes you not like it as much?" Then listen carefully. If he is willing to share his thoughts on why he isn't enjoying his sport as much, then you can use that in your conversation with the coach. If he doesn't agree, it doesn't necessarily mean that there isn't a problem. It may simply be that, for whatever reason, he isn't willing or able to articulate what the problem is.

Let me now address both coach situations.

**Generally Benign Coach:** I encourage you to seek out the coach and tell him the situation as you see it. "Gordon seems to have lost a lot of his enthusiasm for soccer. I wonder if you have any thoughts about what we can do to get him excited again?"

If you approach this in a non-blaming manner, it is much more likely that the coach will be open to working with you on this. Even if you believe the coach's style or approach is responsible, you will get further if you don't go into the conversation in an aggressive posture.

**Harmful Coach:** It may be that your child's coach is the problem. Further, it may be that he isn't open to changing his approach in any way. I still recommend that you approach the coach as above. When it becomes clear that he

is not going to be helpful, you have a couple of options. You can go to his supervisor to raise your concern. You will usually get a much more receptive audience here if you have already approached the coach.

Even if you don't ultimately get satisfaction about this coach, by raising your concern you are making it more likely that there will be change in the future. Many administrators are reluctant to take action during a season, but if there are enough complaints, it may result in action after the season. Your effort here may also cause the coach to take stock of himself and become more positive and encouraging with his players.

Finally, if the situation is harmful to your child, you always have the option of taking him out of this situation and finding another one that is more likely to be a positive one.

But what do you do if you aren't able to make changes in your child's sports experience? Encourage your child not to give up on the sport over one bad experience. "Gordon, I know you aren't having as much fun with soccer this year as last. Sometimes things in life don't work out the way we hope they will. I just hope you will hang in there and not give up on the sport. We'll see if we can't find a better situation for you next year."

# POSITIVE SPORTS PARENTING

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



By Jim Thompson



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