



Tom Burgdorf's

April 13th, 2009

Parenting An Athlete Newsletter

Our job: to guide, influence and prepare.

Good morning. [Pass the newsletter on](#) to your friends if you think it is beneficial.

All Hands On Deck

In my writings you get the correct impression that I believe that parenting in 2009 is harder than it has ever been. The challenges are more, the time we have with the kids is usually less and the repercussions for poor child behavior today are more severe. Not a good combination of factors. That is why I believe that we have to accept a "all hands on deck" approach in our parenting.

That is, come on in Grandma and Grandpa, aunt and uncle and even family friend "Earl." We will accept, and even encourage, any help that you can give us to raise these kids we have in our family. I encourage everyone out there to include these other relatives and friends in "sending the right messages" to our kids whenever possible. I hope that when your 14 year old son hears Grandma talk about a friend who was hurt by a drunk driver that he will be influenced. Especially when Grandma looks him in the eye and makes him promise that he will never drink and drive.

**I want my
kids to be
ready for
life!**

Your kids have certain people in their lives that they trust and respect and we have to make sure that we give those people opportunities to talk about all of these tough "growing up" issues. Give your children opportunities to hear their trusted relatives and friends talk about their experiences and feelings about the tough issues. DON'T, DON'T, DON'T leave these talks to chance. I believe that we should "plan" to discuss an important issue or two at each family gathering. You don't have to tell everyone that there will be an "agenda of conversation" at the family picnic in June but create the situation yourself. Get the ball rolling. I think you will be pleasantly surprised as people step up to discuss the situations.

All hands on deck to help educate our kids.

Competition Preparation (for the parents, not for the kids)

Relax. Sure. The State Meet is approaching and your daughter has a chance to shine brighter than she has ever shined before. It is all about her. Not about you being her Mom/Dad. Let's get real. Parents compete when their kids are out on the floor or on the field. It is natural. It is not ALL about them. Heck, her success or "the other" is directly affected by the kinds of genes we gave her when she was born. It isn't just her out there, it is us, as parents, out there too. That is okay.

I have heard too many "experts" say and write that sports and activities should be all about the kids and the parents should sit quietly on their hands and act like they have no feelings or involvement. I strongly disagree. Parents have invested a huge amount into these "fun" activities. You have a right to be "slightly excited" about your child having qualified for the State Meet and now the competition she, and you, have been preparing for all year is near. You are human. You are interested. You are reasonable. You can handle it. You can be involved. You ARE NOT A ROBOT with no feelings. This is NOT all about the kids. (We, of course, conduct ourselves appropriately at all times.)

So it is okay to be a little nervous when the big game or the big competition comes along. It is okay to have trouble sleeping the night before. These are not ABNORMAL feelings. You are not being one of "those" parents. Your desire for your child to have a positive experience is strong. You are protective. You don't want them to be disappointed in their performance. You may even get a little sick to your stomach just before she goes up for her 1st event. No, this is not the Olympics but it is the biggest competition of the year. You have rights. (We, of course, conduct ourselves appropriately at all times.)

Here are a couple of my hints for you to have a good competition:

#1 Start early. That is, start motivating your child to work hard weeks before the big competition. Don't pressure them but just encourage them to work hard and try their best in practice leading up to the big competition.

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#2 Gain confidence in the abilities of your child as an athlete and competitor. If she has shown the ability to perform under a little pressure, believe that she can handle the pressure when the big competition comes.

#3 Gain confidence in your coaches to prepare your child for the “big one.” Watch them at other meets and feel good about their talents as coaches.

#4 Relax. Have fun. Some will excel, some will do pretty good and some will have to wait until next year. But be confident that they will all learn and be better because of their experiences. Besides, there is a place for sports in our lives but it is a small place in the big picture. (Have you seen President Obama bowl? Can you imagine Tiger Woods on rings? I wonder if every doctor was a state champion in some sport?) Sports are an educational tool we use to develop better young adults.

Cleaning Up

I hope you feel good enough about your team and experiences in sport to help clean up. That is, there are situations with sports teams where the coaches could use the help of the parents to clear a baseball field or help set up a gym for a meet. We don't usually ask the parents to do a lot and most coaches and managers do far more than they should so when asked, please help out a little. We can all make this a terrific situation for kids.

I want my children to be capable of being self sufficient.

High School Sports

Our secret weapon. Activities that we use to keep our kids busy and away from the “dark side.” I don't think there are too many people who would not agree that boredom can lead to problems and friends who are equally bored. If the kids are busy and focused on projects, sports and other organized activities they will have less time to think up other things to do. And experiment with.

Let's see, would I rather have a 14 year old boy at home alone or at baseball practice at the high school? Let's see, would I rather have a 15 year old girl strolling around the mall with her friends or getting sweaty at her high school volleyball practice? Let's see, would I rather have my 16 year old son flipping hamburgers because he has given up on his grades and college or a high school track coach motivating him to keep his grades up so he can finish the season and maybe get looked at by a college coach?

To get these kids to OUR finish line, which is prepared to try and make it in the world, we need all of the helpful factors we can put together. High school sports are one of those “helping” factors. A lot kids in high school get lost because of many situations they find themselves in. If we can keep them energized and excited about dedicating themselves to some goals and organizations, we have a better chance of making it to the finish line.

I am close to saying to parents that kids HAVE to be involved in something during their high school years. Sports, chess club, anything to keep them motivated and on the right track. Sitting on the street corner? Walking the mall? “Hanging out?”

And the kicker to all of this? You were a pretty good person in high school and look what you got into? Look what you tried. Look how close you came to making a life altering mistake. Can you imagine your 15 year old doing some of the things that you did? Will she be as fortunate? The point is it is extremely hard for the “good kids” with “good peers” to make it through high school and all of the challenges. And it is harder now. And you were in high school how many years ago?

Prepare your children for an active high school career with lots of organized activities and/or sports.

Parenting is tough. You are not alone. Have a great week!

Tom B.



I need to tell my parents how important they are to me!

Hi, hope you are having a good week.

Learning Is Fun

Sure it takes a lot of work to learn but it is fun when you challenge yourself and work hard for the coach and then you learn something new. Everyone needs to continue to learn more and more. Don't ever stop trying to learn. It is just too much fun.

Please Teach Me

When was the last time you walked up to your coach and said "please teach me to turn the double play better." How about "coach, do I have the talent to learn a back tuck on floor?" And she says yes and then you say "would you please teach it to me?"

Your coaches are just waiting for their athletes to say those kinds of things. They have been waiting and waiting and waiting. Will you be the first one in the past year to give the coach something they have been waiting for? Most athletes just wait to be told what to do. Special athletes decide what they want, realize that the coach can help, and then go ask for help. What kind of athlete are you?



This "teach me" idea isn't just for sports either. Ever wanted to learn how to make a cake all by yourself? I wonder who could teach you that? Have you ever wanted to learn to use a drill? Change a light bulb? Have you ever asked your class room teacher how to do something that you are confused about? Have you ever looked into your math book, gone 3 chapters ahead and asked your Mom or Dad to help you get a little ahead of the class? Can your Mom or Dad or Grandma or Grandpa do something that you would like to learn to do? Say "would you please teach me" at least 2 times in the next week.

Money and Sports

Some, or all, of the sports you are in cost money. This is money that your parents could spend on other things. They choose to spend it on you and your sports because they think sports are helping you and they are fun. No one wants you to pay for all of the money it costs for your sports but we would like to see you help out a little. Think about helping out around the house as a small way to help pay your parents back for all that they are doing for you.

Quick story - a 16 year old gymnast in New York had her parents tell her that they couldn't pay for her gymnastics and they wouldn't even drive her to the gym anymore. Instead of quitting gymnastics, she got a part time job at a grocery store on the weekends to pay for her gymnastics and she rode her bike 2 miles to the gym and 2 miles back home 3 times a week. Do you think I like that kind of athlete? I wonder if she is going to do good in life?

How are you doing with the puzzles? I am making them harder and harder.
Puzzle This Week - unscramble the following words to make a phrase.

K	O	W	R	H	D	R	A	N	I	S	H	C	L	O	O	E	T	H	X	T	E	N	T	O	W	O	N	T	H	M	S

Have a great week!
Tom B.