



## **Should I Coach My Own Child?**

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When one hears about a professional athlete being coached by his or her parent, it sends goose-bumps down your spine. We love hearing these success stories. This same experience can occur at any level of sport – college, high school, or youth. Coaching your child can be one of the most wonderful experiences in the world. There are, however, certain things to consider for the experience to be the most rewarding possible. The list of considerations below is not exhaustive and it may not apply to your situation, but it can serve as a helpful reminder.

### **1. Transition from “Coach” to “Parent”**

You are a parent first and foremost and being a coach is just one of the roles you play in your life. Make certain that you leave the “coach” role at the door when you come home. It can be difficult when a child comes home and needs you as a “parent” and you are still in the “coach” role. This balance can be difficult, but make a special note to yourself (maybe on an index card in your car) to make this transition before you arrive home.

### **2. Treat Your Child Equally**

Maintain awareness at practice and games of whether you are treating your son/daughter as “your child” or as “one of the players on the team.” This balance is probably the most difficult. Many parent-coaches believe they are treating their own child equally, when in fact they are placing greater demands and expectations. Also, a frequent concern from other parents on the team is that the “parent-coach” is showing favoritism when it comes to playing time. Ask the second parent, assistant coach, another parent on the team, or even your child about your behaviors. This feedback can be invaluable (one potential problem with asking your child directly is that he or she may or may not feel comfortable answering directly).

### **3. Talk to your Child**

Although it is simply stated, it is important to talk with your child about being a parent-coach. If you have an open relationship with your child, these conversations are easier, but they can nonetheless still be challenging. Ask your child whether he or she is comfortable with you being the coach as well as to list the “parent-coach behaviors” that are helpful and not helpful. They can even write these down and give them to you if it is easier. Normalize any of your child’s concerns as well as some of the challenges inherent in being both “coach” and “parent” as well as “child” and “player.”

#### **4. Experience Other Coaches**

It is also important that your child experience other coaches at some point. This event can take place in the same or different sport, but it is always a good experience for children and adolescents to get exposed to different coaching styles and approaches. They can learn about their sport from different perspectives as well as how to relate with other authority figures. Thus, experience with other coaches teaches children and adolescents about both sport and life.

Coaching your child can be one of the greatest experiences ever. In fact, some of my fondest memories as a child were with my dad coaching baseball and winning the championship together. The benefits far outweigh the costs, but it is important to be aware of certain issues that can enhance you and your child's experience.

Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!