



What Do I Say After a Loss?

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One of the hardest things for any athlete to deal with is a loss. There are certain athletes, however, that regardless of a win are still disappointed because of their own personal performance. A team win makes poor personal performance a bit easier to swallow, but it is still challenging for great athletes when they do not perform to personal expectations or potential.

But how do you handle the situation where your son or daughter loses a game and/or has a sub-average performance? This question is one of the more frequent topics when speaking to parents, high school leagues and/or youth organizations. Below are some simple points to keep in mind when you are driving home with your son or daughter after a loss and/or sub-par performance:

1. Do Not Give Technical Feedback Right After the Game

In most cases, do not give your son or daughter technical feedback about what they should or should not have done. Emotions are high after a loss and your kids will probably not want to be corrected right at this moment. There is a good chance that they have already received this feedback from the coach. Feedback is important, but right after the game is usually not the most ideal time for parents. When upset after a loss, your son or daughter will probably not hear you anyway because of the intense emotions. Put yourself in their shoes – what if you did poorly on a project or presentation at work – would you want someone immediately correcting all the things you did not do?

2. Let Your Son or Daughter Guide the Conversation

The ride home after a loss can be quite uncomfortable, but it does not have to be that way. One guide for parents is to simply say to your child, “I know that the loss is tough and I want to help. Let me know what I can do right now – stay quiet, talk about something else or talk about the game?” Your son or daughter can then try to communicate what they need at that moment.

3. Calm Yourself Down Before Getting into the Car When your son or daughter loses a game, it can be just as emotionally trying for parents, sometimes even more so. One of the great things about youth is that they know how to keep things in perspective, many times better than adults. It is important to remember to calm yourself down before the ride home. Parents can sometimes say the wrong thing at the wrong time because of their own emotions. The emotions are fine to have, but we need to make sure we handle them

in a productive and constructive manner.

4. Every Youth Handles Loss Differently

It is important to realize that every youth handles a loss or poor performance differently. Some student-athletes may want to talk about the game, but others may need to put it away until a later time. Others may be able to let go immediately and get on with the rest of the day or evening. It just depends. Asking your son or daughter before the season what you can do after a loss is helpful – they can tell you what they want or do not want. Finally and most importantly, use your intuition to know the appropriate thing to say or do in these moments. It usually is a very good guide.

Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!