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Swim Parents Ben's Bubbles Part 2

What are the effects of parental pressures?

Abnormal parental pressure may be one of the critical factors determining whether a child supports and continues to compete after adolescence. *Billie-Jean King*, surely one of the world's most remarkable athletes, has a brother who was also a professional athlete- a baseball pitcher. When asked whether she thought that she and her brother had been fortunate in inheriting sporting ability from their parents, she replied that they had indeed been fortunate in the parents they had, but not for that reason. "My parents were very supportive," stated King, "but they never asked if we won. They asked how we did, whether we gave 100%, and if we were happy with ourselves. You don't have to ask children if they won; you can tell by their body language. Just look at their shoulders". It was this supportive, non-manipulative attitude that she valued the most...

...Parents who stress the importance of winning risk raising children who, when they doubt whether they can win, may choose not to compete rather than risk losing... Children must be taught that giving 100% is all that matters.

Here are 11 helpful guidelines for parents of sporting children:

1. Make certain that your children know that your love and approval are not linked to whether they win or lose.
2. Be realistic about what your child is capable of achieving physically.
3. Help your child set realistic goals.
4. Encourage improved performance and skills (rather than winning) by positive reinforcement.
5. Don't use your child as a means of reliving your own athletic past.
6. Provide a safe environment, including a proper training program and equipment.
7. Control your own emotions at competitions- don't shout at other competitors, coaches, officials.
8. Act as a cheerleader for your child and any teammates.
9. Discuss issues honestly and openly with your child's coach.
10. Be a positive role model: live healthily, enjoy your own sports, and set your own realistic goals.
11. Parents wishing to remain at training and watch their children should be seated well back from the pool deck area. It is important that parents are seated out of eye contact with their children to avoid any distractions. The café at the entrance of the Casey Arc pool is an ideal location.

(Sourced "Lore of Running", Tim Noakes 4th ed)

