

Improving Sportsmanship

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ABSTRACT

The theory of basic psychological needs refers to three fundamental needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The need for autonomy is satisfied when a person feels in control of his own actions; the need for competence is satisfied when a person realizes that he successfully masters the environment and interactions, and the need for relationships is satisfied when a person feels connected with others, feels understood and can understand those around him. Meeting the three basic psychological needs is essential for human development and functioning.

KEYWORDS: sport, theory, program, need, meeting, assume

When these three basic psychological needs are met in a sports context, it is assumed that athletes' well-being and motivation will improve [3]. Numerous studies have shown that meeting basic psychological needs is associated with physical activity intentions [4, 5] or performance [6], but there are not enough studies to show the links between meeting basic psychological needs and sportsmanship [7]. An environment that facilitates the fulfilment of basic psychological needs, namely competence, autonomy and relatedness creates an autonomous and motivated individual [8]. These, in turn, are positively associated with prosocial behaviour and negatively associated with antisocial behaviour [9]. According to the theory of self-determination, when psychological needs are obstructed, two possible consequences arise. First of all, people pay the immediate price by dramatically reducing their well-being. Secondly, when satisfaction of needs is chronically hindered, people develop certain coping strategies to accommodate the experience of need frustration, which translates into the development of need substitutes and involvement in compensatory behaviours [10, 11]. Cross-sectional studies have shown that need satisfaction is associated with a lower level of exhaustion among employed adults [12, 13], with a lower level of anger and anxiety among teachers [14] and with fewer teacher-student relationship problems among adolescents [15]. Moreover, studies based on daily journals have shown that daily increases and decreases in psychological need satisfaction are associated with daily fluctuations in symptoms and adverse effects among students [16, 17] and among employed adults [18, 19]. On the other hand, frustration of psychological needs has been associated with decreased well-being in athletes [20, 21] and coaches [22]. Frustration of psychological needs has also been associated with increased levels of S-IgA, an immunological protein responsible for anticipating acute stressors.

Parents and kids alike love sports, and it's easy to get caught up in a game and become focused on winning. Yet there is much more to be gained from the sports experience than a

winning record. When children and teens are involved in sports, they are able to learn and put into practice values that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Good sportsmanship is one of the life lessons that children can learn from sports. You can help your children understand and value good sportsmanship while making sure they have a safe and fun sports experience.

Good sportsmanship may seem hard to define, but its hallmarks include being able to win without gloating, respecting one's opponents, and being able to lose gracefully. Here are some important principles to instill in your children:

- If you lose, don't make up excuses.
- If you win, don't rub it in.
- Learn from mistakes and get back in the game.
- Always do your best.
- If someone else makes a mistake, remain encouraging and avoid criticizing.
- Show respect for yourself, your team, and the officials of the game.

Parents are important role models, so let your children see you upholding these principles, whether you play a sport yourself or root for your child's team from the sidelines.

Tips for teaching good sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship includes following certain guidelines for good behavior. Share these concepts with your children:

Follow the rules of the game. It might seem easier to win by doing things a different way (cheating), but everyone has to follow the rules. Explain to your child that rules are created so that sports can be played in an organized way.

- **Avoid arguing.** Stay focused on the game instead of giving in to anger with teammates, coaches, or referees. Always avoid using bad language and negative words.
- **Everyone should have a chance to play.** In youth sports, it's important to encourage even those players who are the least skilled to have fun playing in the game. Parents, coaches, and even other players have an important role in allowing less talented teammates time to participate.
- **Play fair.** Good sportsmen want to win because they followed the rules and played the best game they could. Never support any effort to win that attempts to go around the rules. Cheating is not acceptable.
- **Follow directions.** Emphasize the importance of listening to coaches and referees and following their directions while on the field and involved in team activities.
- **Respect the other team.** Whether your team wins or loses, it's important to show respect for the effort of the

other team. If the other team wins, accept defeat, acknowledge their abilities, and move on. If your team wins, resist bragging—that's what it means to be a gracious winner.

- **Encourage teammates.** Team sports work best when each individual supports the team. Praise teammates for what they do well and encourage them when they make mistakes. Avoid criticism and unkind actions. Parents should model this behavior for children by praising them for specific things they have done well, even if they made a mistake or may not have played as well as hoped.
- **Respect the decisions of referees and other officials.** These people are charged with making difficult decisions about plays in the game. Good sportsmanship requires that you accept a call, even if you disagree with it. Remember that it's only one call in a long game—get back into play and focus on the game.
- **End with a handshake.** Good sportsmen enjoy sports and know how to end a game on a positive note, whether or not they won. Threats, anger, criticism, and other negative expressions are not acceptable.

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