

## Positive Interactions in Youth Sport

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### Why Talk About Youth Sport?

Of the estimated 60 million boys and girls who participate in youth sport, roughly one-third drop out of sport each year, and up to 70% drop out by adolescence. Youth athletes report “having fun” as the number-one reason for participating in youth sport (Vissek, Mannix, DiPietro, Achrati, McDonnell, & Harris, 2015). Treating youth athletes like professionals by overemphasizing winning is a quick way to reduce their enjoyment in sport and increase competition anxiety and drop-out (O’Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2011). A positive sport environment shaped by coaches and parents can increase the likelihood that young athletes realize the full benefits of youth sport.

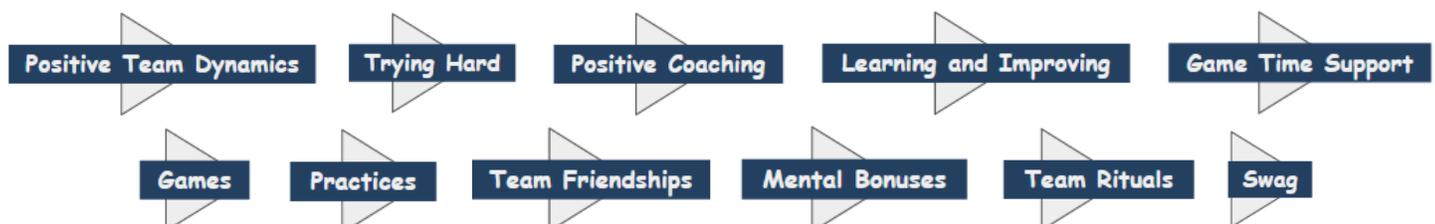
### How Can We Facilitate Positive Interactions in Youth Sport?

Positive interactions within the “Athletic Triangle” (athlete, coach, and parent), can make youth sport a positive social and learning experience for youth athletes (Smith, Smoll, & Smith, 1989). The diagram on the right highlights the Top 3 *fundamental tenants* of the Youth Sport Ethos of fostering fun (Vissek, 2015). Continue reading to learn how you, as a coach/parent, can be a positive member of your youth’s Athletic Triangle and promote the Youth Sport Ethos.



### What is a Fun Environment?

Vissek and colleagues (2015) discovered the following **11 fun-dimensions** of sport participation that make youth sport fun:



## What Can I Do as A Coach?

### Make Sport Youth-Centered:

- Activity based FUN, engage all participants.
- Focus on the process, build on skills, and learn from experiences.
  - ex. Model the **Good-Better-How** technique: ask what was **Good**, what could have been **Better**, and **How** the youth athlete can make adjustments.
- Encourage/reinforce effort vs. focusing on outcomes.
- Empower youth to name and work toward individual and team goals.
- Build quality and supportive relationships.

### Hold a Coach-Parent Pre-Season Meeting That Covers:

- Coach introductions, including philosophy and experience in the sport.
- An explanation/demonstration of the fundamentals of the sport.
- Objectives of youth sport participation.
- Information of the program expectations, such as communication style and pipeline, scheduling, equipment and apparel needed, and team rules.
- How parents/guardians can support the efforts of their child and the development of the team as a whole.
- Questions and answers.

## What Can I Do as a Parent/Guardian?

Post practice/games, these are the most important words:

*"I love to watch you play."*

- **Model a healthy, active lifestyle.** Play and activity extend beyond organized sport - join in the fun together!
- **Support your child's efforts and participation** in sport, with consideration of age and maturity level, keeping the following in mind: fun, learning, sportsmanship, creating friendships, and adopting a healthy, active lifestyle.
- **Support your child's maturation** by asking, "what do you want?" and/or "what do you find enjoyable?" - allow your child to learn how to self-advocate.
- **Think of the parent-coach dyad as a partnership** working to support a positive and engaging environment for your child and the team:
  - Proactively create a positive connection early by asking the coach what the expectations are of parents and players and how you can support the team culture and goals.

## Where Can I Learn More?

<http://changingthegameproject.com/>   <http://devzone.positivecoach.org/>   <http://youthreport.projectplay.us/welcome/>  
<http://www.y-e-sports.com/index.html>   <https://www.nays.org/>   <http://youthsportsoftheamericas.org/>

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Petitpas, A. J., Cornelius, A. E., van Raalte, J. L., & Jones, T. (2005). A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *Sport Psychologist*, 19(1).

Smith, R. E., Smoll, F. L., Smith, N. J., & National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (1989). Parents' complete guide to youth sports. Costa Mesa, CA: HDL Pub. Co.

Visek A.J., Mannix H.M., DiPietro L., Achrati S.M., McDonnell K., & Harris B.S. (2015). The fun integration theory: Toward sustaining children and adolescents sport participation. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 12(3), 424-433.

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