

## Old Bridge Soccer Club

### Guide for Parents



“Everybody is counting on me”

“I don’t want to disappoint my parents”

“My parents get so mad at me after a bad game...”

Do any of these statements sound familiar?

Parents want the best for their child but may not recognize how their child internalizes their expectations.

Even constructive criticism is often interpreted as disapproval by young athletes. In an attempt to avoid criticism and please parents, young athletes feel the need to be perfect, an ideal that increases the pressure to perform to unmanageable levels.

The job of the parent of an athletic child is a tough one, and it takes a lot of effort to do it well. However, it is worth all the effort when you hear your child say, “My parents really helped, and I was lucky in this respect.”

#### **The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children**

1. Make sure your child knows that - win or lose, scared or heroic -- you love them, appreciate their efforts, and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child’s athletic ability, their competitive attitude, their sportsmanship, and their actual skill level.
3. Be helpful, but don’t coach them on the way to the game or practice or on the way back, or at breakfast, and so on. It’s tough not to - but it’s a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction.
4. Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be "out there trying," to be working to improve their skills and attitudes. Help them to develop the feel for competing, for trying hard, for having fun.
5. Try not to relive your athletic experience through your child in a way that creates pressure; you lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Don’t pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents - so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive free spirit out there in that uniform who needs a lot of understanding, especially when their world turns bad. If your child is comfortable with you -- win or lose -- they are on their way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Don’t compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure, it will run from enchantment to disenchantment, etc., with your athlete.

7. Don't compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within their hearing.

8. Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that their philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under their guidance and leadership.

9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.

10. Make a point of understanding courage, and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight but turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear, but a matter of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.

- Bill Burgess, "The Young Athlete"