

Learning Guide #1 For Watching the Olympic Games/Sporting Events with Children

Good Sporting Behaviors

Watching the Olympic Games or a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) has developed a series of learning guides for adults and children to use while watching sports on television or in person to promote healthy dialogue. This guide suggests certain observations and presents several questions to discuss together. The learning guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

Observation and discussion questions: Good Sporting Behaviors

While you watch the Olympic Games or a sports event:

- Pay attention to individual athletes and teams of athletes. In particular, watch for examples of positive sporting behavior.
- Do you see athletes shake hands before and after the competition?
- Do coaches shake hands before and after the competition?
- Why do you think it is important for athletes and coaches to shake hands before and after competition?
- Watch how the athletes and coaches interact with each other. Do they treat each other respectfully?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you were a "good sport" to someone on an opposing team? How did you think that made them feel? How did it make you feel?
- Watch how teammates interact with each other. Do you see them giving only constructive criticism and positively encouraging each other? Why do you think this is important?
- Think about the rules of the sport you are watching. Positive sporting behavior is exemplified by following all of the rules. Do you see athletes and coaches doing this?

Lesson Conclusion

Research on athletes and coaches shows that appropriate sporting behavior can be developed in both game and practice situations. Positive sporting behavior is important at all levels of sport because it aids in character development. It is also important because it impacts many areas of sport such as team cohesion, respect among opponents, emotional control, and transferring values of sport into everyday life and non-sport activities. When we see examples of positive sport behavior (e.g. respectfully questioning officials, playing by the rules, congratulating your opponent, encouraging teammates), positive values are modeled and reinforced. This creates a positive sport environment for all involved.

What is critical in the discussion of positive sporting behavior is the idea that displaying positive behavior is a choice and a moral action. Once an athlete or coach recognizes the dilemma at hand, he or she has a choice to respond in an appropriate positive manner. The more times we respond positively, the better examples we set for athletes of all ages.

AASP encourages adults to do their part to create a supportive youth sport environment so children will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help children develop winning attitudes, both in sports and throughout life.

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The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org.

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