

Learning Guide #11 For Watching the Olympic Games/Major Sporting Events with Children **Resilience: “Bouncing Back Quickly”**

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: Dealing with Disappointment

While you watch the Olympic Games or a sports event:

- Find a few examples of athletes in individual sports that made mistakes during their performances.
- How did these athletes respond after making these mistakes? How did they perform just after the mistake and/or in later trials or events?
- Think of a time when you made a mistake. How did you feel? How long did the feeling last? How did that feeling affect you when you tried again?
- Watch a team sport such as a basketball game and identify a point in the game where an obvious rule violation is not called. Focus on those players who are visibly upset about the official’s mistake. How do their reactions affect their performances? Are they able to let it go and get back to focusing on the game?
- While watching a team game, or team effort, notice a team that is behind. How can they “bounce back?” When a team or player bounces back, THAT is called resilience.
- How do you feel when someone treats you unfairly and gets away with it? What happens to your concentration?
- When you make a mistake or something doesn’t go your way, how quickly do refocus on what you were doing?
- Does refocusing help your performance?
- While performing, does focusing on your mistake or the mistakes of others help you perform better? If so, how?
- If something goes wrong in your performance, what are some ways you can quickly bounce back and perform your best?

Lesson conclusion

Successful athletes understand that things happen during competition that are unplanned. The best response to these things is to ignore them or quickly refocus on the game and move forward. Sometimes athletes themselves make mistakes. Other times, the environment (weather or equipment), a competitor, or even an official can knock an athlete off track. Successful athletes do not dwell on these mistakes or mishaps. They quickly refocus on the present and what they need to do next. It is natural to experience immediate negative emotions when something goes wrong; however, resilient athletes do not allow these emotions to linger. Athletes who are not resilient waste valuable energy and focus on things other than the skills they are doing. These athletes often perform poorly. In contrast, resilient athletes limit the effect of adversity on later performances, allowing them to return to performing well. Successful athletes may experience disappointment, anger, or frustration associated with adversity, but rather than being overcome by these emotions they find ways to quickly bounce back.

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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