

Learning Guide #5 For Watching the Olympic Games/ Sporting Events with Children

Setting Goals in Sport and Life

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: Setting Goals in Sport and Life

While you watch the Olympic Games or a sports event:

- Do you think the Olympic athletes set goals that helped them get there?
- What goals do you think they set?
- Do you think that they just had one goal to get to the Olympic Games? Or do you think that they had many smaller goals that eventually got them to the Olympic Games?
- Have you ever set goals in sports, school, or other performance areas?
- Have you ever set a goal and not reached it? Did that make you feel like giving up or did you get more determined? What can you do to change a goal to make it more reachable?
- Do you believe that the Olympic athletes achieved every single goal that they ever set?
- Do you ever write down your goals?
- Do you think of yourself as successful only if you achieve the “FINAL GOAL,” or do you feel successful along the way as you make steps toward your ultimate goal?
- When an athlete or team wins a Gold medal, ask the child: “Now that they have won the Gold, what do you think they will do now?”

TIPS FOR SETTING GOALS:

- Set specific goals.
- Set realistic, but challenging goals. Aim high, yet be reasonable.
- Set short-term and long-term goals.
 - Write a goal that is your ultimate goal.
 - Short-term goals should focus on developing specific skills needed to achieve the long-term goal.
 - Create goals to reach your ultimate goal.
- Set goals for practice AND competition (not just competition).
- Write your goals down. “Ink it, don’t just think it.”
- Develop goal achievement strategies.
 - Think about how you will develop the skills to meet your goal.
 - Create a system where you get a small reward each time you make progress toward your “ultimate” goal.
- Set goals that are measurable.
- Set individual and, if appropriate, team goals.
- Periodically evaluate where you are and decide if you need to change your practice routines to reach the set goals, or if you need to change the goals themselves to make them more realistic.
- Realize that improvement and success is an ongoing and exciting process, and the “journey” can be as satisfying as the “destination”.

Lesson Conclusion

Research on athletes and in business psychology clearly indicates that people who set goals, and then periodically evaluate their goals, are more successful than people who do not set goals. Athletes usually set long-term goals, but they often don't set daily practice goals that will lead them to their ultimate goals. When children set goals that are achievable and then begin to see themselves reaching these goals, they will increase their confidence and self-esteem. Being more confident then brings about more success. Unrealistic goal-setting can create a sense of hopelessness and failure. While few athletes become Olympians or professional athletes, those who do had childhood dreams of doing so. So be careful not to dash the hopes of an aspiring Olympian! Athletes do best when they aim high, but focus on their short-term goals. Parents can help young athletes be realistic by helping their daughters and sons develop sensible short-term daily, weekly, or monthly goals.

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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