



High Impact **Parenting** Principles

The challenge facing every parent is to maintain the ability to influence their children as they encounter a variety of challenges throughout their youth sports experience.

Every parent desires to be a positive influence in the lives of their children. The older our children become the more difficult it is to translate our intention into life enhancing experiences leading to a healthy influence with our kids. Many kids give their parents the impression that they are disinterested in their opinions by becoming oppositional or apathetic. Because of this dynamic parents are left with no real “manual” on how to proceed and often become frustrated, disappointed, manipulative, and controlling in an attempt to find their way back to influence and control with their children.

It is important to say at this point that discouragement within parents drives them to do many “ineffective” things with the intention to be helpful. Some end up bullying their way into the personal space of their children by incessantly asking questions, communicating a desire to help but the inability to exhibit the patience it takes for the child to open the door on their own, as well as others. These attempts to gain pertinent knowledge of our children backfire because our motivation and emotional positing leave our kids feeling manipulated and coerced. Although, not all parents revert to these types of tactics enough do that many children begin disconnecting themselves from the influence and relationship of their parents in an attempt to rescue themselves from interactions that leave them empty, discouraged, disappointed, controlled, and feeling extremely misunderstood.

The goal of the **High Impact Parenting Series** is to equip parents with the skills and understanding needed to enjoy their kid’s youth sport experience and capitalize on teachable moments, work cooperatively with coaches, while enhancing the parent-child relationship for the long haul.

Principle 1

Positioned For Impact:

As parents we are constantly trying to determine how to be healthily involved with our children. When determining this it is important to understand some concepts for helping our children mature that aid in making decisions daily. There are (3) concepts that are crucial in helping parents healthily align their emotional position with their children.

1. **Enmeshment:** Assuming a place of emotional control without acquiring permission to be there. As our kids get older their developmental challenges change and the kind of support they need from their parents moves from the need for feedback and advice to a need for understanding and space to learn from the natural outcomes individual decisions bring. Wisdom is acquired by taking inventory in a safe emotional space grounded in knowing they are understood. When this safety is cultivated through empathetic listening on the parent's part kids not only become more self directed they also take a greater sense of pride in what choices they make. Often times out of a sense of fear, or need for control we handicap our children by assuming the control for parts of the child's life leaving the child unable to make confident decisions.
2. **Disengagement:** Creating such emotional distance that influence becomes virtually impossible. Sometimes because of our inability to make adjustments within our relationship with our children, as they grow older we simply leave them alone. We have a young adult in our home that we have a difficult time communicating with and internally we throw our hands up at a loss for what to do. When we disengage out of a sense of disappointment or our basic inability to relate we create a gap in our relationship with our children that feels abandoning to the child. When this happens our kids begin to rely on other resources to feel understood and secure.
3. **Interdependence:** negotiating independence and influence within the relationship. Finding a balance between enmeshment and disengagement is a challenge and not meant to ever be perfect. As parents we walk this fine line consistently with our children. The important thing to remember is that we are trying to increase the level of responsibility and ownership in our children with every year of life. The most ineffective thing we as parents do is to offer advice or problem solve when our children are not looking for it. The goal of interdependence is to create safe emotional space for our children to experiment with life choices through quality empathic listening, understanding, and well-timed statements of guidance. Athletic participation undoubtedly provides numerous opportunities to practice this balance.

Principle 2

Behavior: Don't Be Fooled

Parents are forced to decipher the behavior of their children on a daily basis. Unfortunately, many of us do not know how to effectively perceive and interpret our kids behavior in a manner that empowers us to use what they do and do not do as an opportunity develop and grow maturity. The meaning we extract from our kids behavior informs what our reaction will be. It is important to understand that kids behavior is always filled with purpose. The purpose may be hidden and hard to identify. Having insight into why our kids do and don't do the things they do brings us great power in making effective interventions and investments in the development of our kids. Therefore, understanding the purpose of behavior is critical in empowering parents. One of the biggest errors we make as parents is to assume that undesirable behavior in our children is the sign of mistakes we have made as parents. When we get caught up in this we significantly limit our ability to get at the true goal of that behavior. Lets start by saying that the primary motivator (purpose) driving most behavior is the desire to solidify belonging and prove or acquire a sense of significance. Much of what happens is an attempt to clarify ones role or place and to prove ones value. When these important components are in question a child experiences discouragement and this discouragement can result in behavior that becomes very undesirable and immature.

However, understanding the goal of that behavior can give focus to the type of action that is required on the parents part to teach or equip that child with the skills to overcome discouragement and acquire a healthy sense of belonging and the ability to contribute in a healthy manner. Listed are the other goals often associated with behavior that can be undesirable and a cry for intervention supplying the kid with the needed skills to accomplish the goal without maladaptive behavior:

1. Attention
2. Power
3. Revenge
4. Display of Inadequacy

When parents are equipped with information that gives insight as to why a behavior exists then they can respond in a manner that gives the child a chance to learn new ways of interacting as well as the clarification of a role that the child can flourish in. Youth sport teams provide a great opportunity for kids of all stages of development to work this out. This is why one of the core principles of the **High Impact Coaching Series** is for coaches to identify a role for each kid.

Principle 3

High Impact Communication:

One of the most powerful tools we have as parents is our capacity to communicate. The ability to cultivate a meaningful interaction is one of the most powerful and effective tool a parent has. However, our communication can be poisoned when we are unhealthily emotionally positioned in a manner that is misaligned with the needs and developmental stage of our child. Therefore, it is important to be properly positioned emotionally in order to guard against positioned interactions with our children that contain some of the “right” words but are filled with non-verbal messages that discount helpful things we say and sometimes even cultivate a destructive relationship with our child. It is at this point that parents need to learn a language that opens their child up as opposed to closing them down. For that purpose we will talk about the difference between communication that opens kids up and communication that shuts kids down.

1. **Opens Kids Up:** Communication that opens kids up Starts with the ability to use well-crafted questions as a tool to gain awareness and understanding of your child. These questions become bids that seek to open the door of understanding for the parent as to what the overall perception the child has about their role and sense of belonging in whatever situation they find themselves. The parent’s goal is seek understanding and stay away from fixing and or resolving whatever potential problem might be revealed. This is one of the main differences between the types of communication that opens kids verses the type of communication that closes kids. Many of us ask the same questions day after day crossing our fingers that our kids will suddenly open up and give us that one gem of information that will change our relationship forever. What we are not aware of is that we are training our children to share irrelevant information over and over setting a precedent for interaction that is powerless and disappointing.
2. **Closing Kids:** Generally speaking whenever a parent is seeking to push their agenda, wishes, and will upon the child then kids become very suspicious and closed. We do this by telling our kids more then we illicit their thoughts, give advice when they have not asked for it, and show emotional displeasure when they do something that we disagree with. When kids are younger giving choices is very important because it teaches personal responsibility and the need to weigh benefits and negative consequences. The older the child gets the more that kids can be left to their own thought process to make decisions. When parents seek to give advice and or directions to their children without the work of understanding then they tend to cultivate a relationship of manipulation and often close the kid down.

When parents become healthily emotionally positioned, perceive the accurate meaning behind behavior and cultivate communication that opens the spirit of their children then parents are truly empowered to significantly influence the lives of their kids leading to kids that are able to maximize their youth sports experience as well as become the type of people that are equipped to succeed at all aspects of life. These three principles comprise the key concepts in educating parents towards helpful involvement as well as revealing involvement that is destructive when it is present. This basic series of principles deepen the skills of all parents to make significant contributions with confidence and assurance they are working in the best interest of their children.