



Help Your Child Reach Their Goals In The Gym



Coaches are always bombarded with the question, "How do you put up with those parents?!" Well the answer is simple. Without the parents, we would not have successful athletes, so great coaches work hard to educate parents on the best way to help their child reach short term and long term goals. The ones that listen typically form a great team of success with their child, their family, their coach, and their team. Here are a few Do's and Don'ts we have learned over the years.

DO realize that this is your child's sport and therefore the goals that are set must be that of your child. It is important for your child to set easily attainable short term goals as well as great and exciting long term goals. Talk with your child about what they would like to accomplish within the sport and what skills they would like to eventually master. Let them set some short term and long term goals that they can discuss with their coach. Urging your young athlete to set goals and supporting them will help them achieve those goals, and it is one of the best things a parent can do for your child inside and outside of the gym!

DON'T set the goals for your child. You may want them to succeed at a fast pace and try to encourage them to get that next skill, but it is the child's sport. Coaches very rarely see results from kids whose parents are setting the goals and pushing them to get that next skill. You want the child to feel excited when they master a new skill they wanted, not relieved when they mastered a new skill their parent wanted.

DON'T get caught up in team levels and progressions. In the long term, these will not matter. All kids progress differently. Coaches see kids that master lower level skills easily while it takes them years to hit the more advanced skills, and we see kids that struggle for years to master lower level skills yet once they achieve these, they fly through the elite skills like a light switch has been turned on for them. In the long term, everyone can be successful no matter what level or pace of progression.

DO stay positive about their success and their training. Every young athlete will get frustrated, and they will look to you to vent. That negative action is fertilized by a negative response. Coaches typically tell parents to only speak positively to their young athletes about training and progression. A simple, "I love you, and I am proud of you for all you have accomplished and will accomplish in the future," will go further than you know the next time your young one comes to the car frustrated after a tough practice.

DON'T get frustrated with your child's progression or show negative signals to them during or after a training session. Confidence is as important as training in tumbling skills. A parent that says, "We are not leaving until you throw it!" might as well be the dad that throws the kid off the high dive that's screaming with terror and afraid of heights! It rarely helps them overcome fear and can be the sole thing that creates what some people call a "mental block."

DO encourage your kids to train more often, come to practice, and stay involved. Cheerleading is a team sport. Many believe it is the ultimate team sport where the success and safety of each individual is determined by every other individual on the team. At some point your child will get frustrated, become more socially involved with friends, get a boyfriend/girlfriend, or just get teenage lazy! At these times they will try to make many excuses to give up on their goals. These hiatuses from training are very typical and they are almost always temporary. Do not let your child give up on their goals until they have reached them. They will appreciate it in the end if even for the exercise!

DON'T ever think that you are on your child's team. You are not and never will be, and the rest of the team knows it. There is nothing more embarrassing for a child than to have a parent that acts like they are part of the team. Your only place on the team is cheering for them and being supportive! That mother that jumps another child for "dropping" their kid is almost always wrong and is ALWAYS out of line. Concerns should be handled behind closed doors and away from your child and others with your child's coach. Negative parents result in negative athletes, and that always results in more "drops" or failures.

DO expect more from your child. Children have been coming up with excuses since Cain and Abel! It always makes a coach grit their teeth when we hear words like burnout, bad grades, exhaustion, or problems at home. The coaches can tell you that your kids are capable of much more as I am sure their teachers tell you the same at school. There will be times when stress may cause them to abandon their goals, but it is a parent's job to make sure this never happens. A successful person is always one that works the hardest! Your kids CAN do it all. If you need help with grades or school work, I am sure the coach will be right there in your corner, but never use your child's athletic training as an excuse for failure at other parts of their lives. The gym should and will help to make them better, stronger, smarter, healthier, more confident, and ultimately more successful.

DO set healthy habits for your young athlete. A healthy, flexible, and in shape athlete is one that will safely reach their goals. It has been proven time and time again that we get these healthy traits from our homes. Stay involved in the health, nutrition, and training of your young athlete. It will be the one of the best gifts you can ever give them for their future.

DO stay active in learning about your child's sport! There are tons of resources out there that can help you understand the often confusing world of cheerleading. Always stay involved in the program, and communicate with your coaches about your child's goals and progressions. The more you learn, the more fun you will have watching your child and their team.

There are many more Do's and Don'ts, and we are sure you will learn some of those on your own, but we as coaches appreciate the fact that you took the time to read and understand this small snippet of info we have learned. You are among the few that are already well on your way to helping your child reach their goals!

—*Unknown Author*