

STRESS FREE YOUTH SPORTS

**HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT
COACHES AND CLASSES
FOR YOUR KIDS**



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Forward

I want to thank everyone for taking the time to read this book. There are many ways to do things right, but there are unlimited ways to do things wrong. Success becomes a fruitless task if you only ever solve problems. Finding a permanent solution comes only from focusing on a correct solution and staying with it until the end. Other people may choose a different path, but that does not invalidate a choice. Keep confidence in yourself and maintain the mental fortitude required to reach your goals.

I cannot say that my standards are the only way to judge a coach, and neither are they perfect. These are a summation of my knowledge regarding the topic at this point in time. I hope that in one month, one year and later on I will have developed my skills enough to add even more into this. Despite this, I hope that you can take home a few insights from my own experiences that will benefit you and your kids.

Please enjoy.

Mark

Introduction

Talking to 10 coaches is a good start in growing your understanding of coaching. Like elite athletes, they will often have trouble explaining why their processes work. What separates successful coaches is often their small subconscious tendencies. The goal is to find patterns between them. Pull out the common points and test them. We then use this knowledge to go a step further..

Our goal is to recognize if they have the right characteristics. Making the right decision requires a quick analysis of the coach and their program. We can use existing research to help with this. Without needing to be experts in coaching, parents can build a picture of what a should coach looks like.

We can build a picture of what skills a coach needs. How they communicate, how they think, what skills are necessary to focus on and how they view sport development and specialization. We can help make our decision by building a shortlist of these traits. Any parent will be able to use this to accurately gauge the ability of a coach and his program.

When should an athlete focus on one sport? What programming is best for long-term development? What coaching style is ideal for your kid's self confidence and self-development? Answering these questions will give you the tools to recognize good coaching and judge a programs quality. When you sign up your kid for a sport,, you will make the right decision, more often.

What should you look for? What are the signs of an excellent program? This book will give you the tools required to make the right decisions for your kid (for sports).

Assumptions in Coaching

There are many ideas floating about what is the right way to teach. Often coaches adopt these ideas based only on their own experience and through anecdotal evidence. Before you make a decision, increase your knowledge about best practices for youth training. Make sure that the program's values align with your goals and that they use the best techniques to maximize their effectiveness.

Unlike skill training, proper coaching, youth development and planning has similarities across all sport disciplines. There are correct ways to teach. There is plenty of research into kids like yours going through situations akin to there's, tracked over periods of time that show the right answer. By reviewing these topics, I hope to make your decisions a little less stressful.

Start with the Goals

Each coach, each club and program will offer advice from a biased perspective. Each will offer a set of promises, of skills they will impart on your kid and give reasons that theirs is the best choice. The problem is choosing the right one. I recommend that before you engage with any of these program, you consider what you hope your kid will get out of training.

Fitness?

Competitive Success?

Personal Development?

Fun?

Self Esteem?

Making Friends?

Something to keep your kid busy and give you a break?

A well-designed youth program with the right coaching can knock off many of these goals at the same time. The difference comes into whether the program teaches the different training goals. Some many only have a very narrow focus. Taking part in a program that leaves the door open for elite performance should not limit the personal development opportunities of your kid. I am not saying all programs will do everything. What I am saying is that it is possible for a well-designed program to suit many goals. The hard part for you is to recognize which work towards your goals and which do not.

Is the Tiger Wood approach, starting super young with super systematic training, the best approach for elite results? Is high performance training incompatible with the health building aspects of sports? These are important questions. Think about what is most important for your kid. Separate these thoughts from any preconceived notion of how to achieve them. In the following pages I hope to present you with different aspects of what successful training and coaching look like.

Building healthy habits does not happen over night. Starting on the right foot will make any long term goal more likely to succeed and leave your kid with far more benefits. Take these lessons with you when you interview potential coaches and programs and you will have more confidence selecting the right program for your kid.

Modern Sedentary Lifestyle

Today's kids spend more time focused on screens than any group before them. We can see a large drop off in activity and fitness levels when comparing them against earlier generations. Cutting funding for physical education in schools hurts kids' health and is much too common. This trend has decreased our overall focus on physical education. Kids have fewer opportunities to develop their physical abilities and this make participation in sports more important than ever.

We know the impact of a more sedentary lifestyle. Kids health has been and will continue to degrade due to this. Solving these problems involves more than turning off their devices and pushing them out the door. Singing them up for the one off boot camp is not the best option either. The actual solution to teach them to enjoy these activities and build lifelong habits.

Today's kids are Different

To avoid injuries programming needs to incorporate fundamental physical literacy into its curriculum. The assumption that kids know these skills will cause them undue injury. In the past, kids used to learn many of the physical literacy skills and many other skills on their own. This is not the case anymore. Designing a program that assumes kids have already learned these skills will invite failure. We need to increase the focus on these types of exercises early in their development to compensate for the lack of development in other parts of their lives.

One goal of sports is to promote long-term participation in these activities. Mental gains, confidence and self esteem, all the long-term benefits of sports do not click on overnight. It takes time to develop these skills, building them into habits and reinforcing them. Unfortunately, the opposite is happening as kids are find themselves in environments that foster negative attributes. Consider the impact of social media on developing kids. Deliberate participation in positive environments is necessary to

counteract these negative realities. More than ever before, sports are a tool to gain, then reinforce and maintain the positive personal traits.

Some day your kids will have the ultimate choice on whether to continue to take part in sports. One aim of early adolescent sports and training is to teach kids to enjoy participating. Finding a class that builds and maintains interest and enjoyment in all students will cause more kids choosing to continue healthy habits once they have the decision making power.

Kids may not always want to come to practice, but for long term success it is important that they enjoy their time in sports. When you are making your decision, look long term. Sign them up for programs that develop your kids' physical literacy today in an environment that will increase the likelihood that they will stay involved.

Aspects of Sport Success

The first question to ask is what makes an athlete successful?

How a coach answers this question will show what they value. Each lesson, each drill, each game works on building towards their values. This process is what will build a successful athlete. These skills can get grouped into a number of categories. Successful athletes will need training and mastery in each of them.

Physical Fitness

Building up strength, balance and overall physical literacy is important. Many of these skills are transferable between disciplines and sports. Physical literacy can be some of the most beneficial aspects of early training. This doesn't mean 6-year-old should be bench pressing weights. What it means is that teaching the full range of physical skills is important for success in sport. Because less emphasis being placed on physical education in schools general athleticism has had fewer opportunities to develop. Extracurricular sports have grown in importance as a tool to develop overall physical fitness in kids.

Technical Skills

These are the sport-specific skills, how to score. How to kick the ball.

Technical training is about building new muscle memory and improving neural pathways. These are more likely to be sport-specific exercises.

The best programs will include technical training in several stages. Skills will be introduced in very controlled environments and as mastery increases they restrictions are removed to move the practice into a more "real" scenario.

Excellent programs will train good technical skills. Elite performance requires an excellent grasp of the technical aspects of a sport. A group of 6-year-olds will require a very different set of exercises and training than adults. Always be on the lookout for how technique is being taught to different age groups. Excellent programs will modify the delivery of their training to the audience. Look for this.

Timing and Decision Making Skills

Timing is about training people to make the right decision at the right time.

Timing does not start once athletes have perfected the action but develops at the same time as the technical skills themselves. It is a coaches job to manage training difficulty by adapting the it to the abilities of his students.

More advanced students are given choice, two, three or more options that challenge them to make the correct decision. This creates a progression from a controlled environment into more open scenarios.

Training will take on the appearance of real competition.

Coaches should teach timing exercises to all ages. For younger kids games become important exercises for training decision making. They should look for creative ways to integrate this training into exercise that the kids will understand. Look for how the coach communicates with the kids. His instructions will give hints if he is considering timing in his exercises.

Mental Skills

Mental skill training is often the least tangible skill taught, but is also one of the most valuable skill that can be learned. How to perform under pressure, adapt to failure and overcome challenges are all important skills that will pay out in school and working life. Self confidence, working towards goals, dealing with success. The list of internal skills is huge.

Look for coaches that model the correct behaviours. Outside of specific age appropriate exercises, look for the communication styles used by the coach. How coaches communicate will affect the mental skills they can teach, which are further influenced by their personal beliefs.

Bringing it all Together

Overall, certain sports will focus on certain skillsets more than others, but I am confident that genuine success, whatever your goals they will benefit from a balanced training approach. Look for all the aspects required for success in sports when you are interviewing your coaches.

The path to success is not a straight grind. Sports are complex and require a complex skill set to excel. Going faster, stronger for longer, is a common but limited approach to coaching. Often, the bottleneck is not just physical strength. Coaches will limit long term growth their training does not touch on all skills.

Not every exercise will teach everything, but properly planned games will have more benefits than just letting the kids have fun and relaxing. Finding creative ways to impart the different aspects of successful training is what will keep kids engaged over the long term. Whether their goal is elite performance, personal development or fitness keeping them engaged is key.

For the young kids, many programs will exclude the less tangible skills from their training. It is easy for these classes to turn into play time. Make sure their coaches respect all aspects of sport and are creative enough to work it into all their age based programming.

10, 000 Hour Rule

Deliberate practice is sacred in sport circles. How do you get better? Practice. It refers to practice activities done with the specific instrumental goal of improving performance and which;

- (a) are performed in a daily work-like manner;
- (b) require effort and attention;
- (c) do not lead to immediate social or financial rewards; and
- (d) are frequently not enjoyable to perform.

A good definition of deliberate practice is a structured activity with the explicit goal to improve performance. Through a study of professional musicians and grand-master chess players it was determined that 10 000 hours on a task are needed to achieve mastery. This remains true in sports once its additional complexities are accounted for.

The reality in sport context is that athletes can gain these hours through a variety of activities. If you want to improve your running you can pick up a second sport. The cardio boost will benefit you in all sports. As obvious as this sounds, the importance is that you can work towards your 10 000 hours for a certain skill by combining time spent on different sports.

Training in sports is not a zero sum activity between different disciplines. There are plenty of cross over skills kids will learn and take to other sports. One goal for kids is helping them to gain a full set of these skills. This changes the context of early sport selection.

If your kid was born to be a pole vaulter, and you put them in soccer as a kid, this is not the end of the world. They will carry many beneficial skills from their early training in other sports into their later activities, sports or otherwise.

Self Talk

The basic idea of self talk is that we are what we think. Our thoughts will often become self-fulfilling prophecies. If we believe we will fail for long enough, we will.

The sporting context for self talk is about our inner monologue can be trained to benefit performance. Athletes can use this to help with skill execution, mental stability and confidence.

Motivational Self Talk

Think about the fighter pumping himself up before a match, reinforcing himself to be the best, boosting self confidence before a major performance. Mohamed Ali is one of the greatest examples of this. His speeches were legendary, and we cannot overlook their impact on his and his opponents mental state.

Too much self talk and athletes will become delusional, not enough and they will lack the confidence to perform. Reinforcing healthy motivational self talk in practice is necessary for your kids to learn and implement it.

Instructional Self Talk

This type is about helping with skill execution. It often brings the athletes to focus onto the correct point, for the correct goal. An example would be a swimmer who repeats a key phrase in his head. The phrase could remind himself of the feeling of his hand entering the water as he strokes. It can help lock down technical or timing aspects. help an athlete relax and perform to their potential.

The key is to link simple specific key words to specific techniques or focus points

The Limits of Self Talk

A beginner will not lie his way into being a grand master with self talk. There is no cheat code for outstanding performance or god mode in sports. The process to input these types of prompts is a skill. If these exercises are taught, athletes will show a noticeable improvement. Their value comes in building up confidence and courage in the athlete, in executing complex actions under pressure and maintaining a cool head.

What Else Can it Do?

Proper self talk helps regulate and control thinking. Negative self thinking, thoughts of failure, doubt, over analysis all limit performance. Directing our minds to positive, beneficial and healthier outcomes requires training. It can enhance confidence, control emotions, assist with anxiety and trigger skills.

Positive thoughts keep athletes focused on the moment, move past mistakes and ensure they do not project their fears into the future. There is no secret to incorporating these principals into an athletic program. Coaches should not restrict positive self-talk to advanced and elite students. The developmental restrictions of younger kids dictate the context of how this is done but it should not restrict their inclusion. Young children can take part in self talk exercises as long as their coaches use a little creativity to make it work.

Beyond the sporting world, these skills remain very important. Teaching kids how to control their thoughts, maintain their emotions and build their self-confidence are all core skills that need worked at. Controlling the inner monologue and building a skill set should be goals for all kids. Working on this in a non judgmental environment is one of the strength of sports.

There is no reason a 6-year-old cannot start training and implementing some of these techniques. Once they get older, and they understand the ideas and principals behind it they can then apply these skills to success in a variety of tasks. It all comes down to communication. A good coach will find a way to communicate these skills to all of their students.

Specializing in a Sport

One of the important questions to ask is when does a kid have to specialize in a single sport to give them the best chance of reaching an elite level? There are two schools of thought. First is early sport specialization, these are the Tiger Woods, kids who are playing their sport before they know how to walk. They start chipping at their 10,000 hours early. This gives them an advantage over their peers, who start this journey later in life. The alternative perspective focuses on allowing kids to experience multiple sports early on to develop their athletic base. They focus on fewer sports as they grow and develop and can still achieve higher performance.

The underlying belief of specialized training is that kids are most likely to achieve elite success, Olympics results, qualifying for a professional team and competing on world circuits by starting young and focusing from day one. Is this the best way? Starting young is not a guarantee of success. Often with future top performers lowering the number of sports they are taking part in and committing to one or two by mid adolescence.

You need not sweat too much too early. You have time for them to build up their athletic foundation, to try different sports. To find the one that suits them. They do need not be training 40 hours a week when they are 6 to have a chance at an Olympic team. Often, allowing your kids to try a variety of sports will suit their long term development the best, only specializing in a sport once they are later in high school.

Sport Sampling

Sport Sampling is an alternate view towards youth development in sports. It is the idea that kids benefit the most by experiencing a wide range of sport and activities. The underlying belief is that there is a transference of skills between training from different sports. Placing kids into multiple different activities will allow them to learn a wider range of skills. Much of the coordination, strength and overall physical skills developed in kids in sports are universal. In time, kids can narrow down their focus and specialize without a loss in high level performance potential as they get older.

What is Specialization

The below questionnaire will help judge how specialized your kid is.

- (1) Has your kid quit all other sports to focus on one? (or only ever played in one)
- (2) Do they take part in multiple sports, but one is a primary focus?
- (3) Do they spend more than 8 months a year training and taking part in their main sport?

Add up the yes's

0 to 1 is classified as low specialization,

2 is moderate specialization,

3 is high specialization.

High specialization is not wrong, but it is also not always right.

Elite performance in some sports requires early specialization. In addition, every kid is different. Some are born with a desire to win while others will enjoy the social and personal development aspects of sports. A love of the competitive side of sports may grow once they get older and come out of their shells. Each of these kids has a place.

When to specialize comes down to you as a parent. When they are young, it is your choice but remember that once they mature the decision to continue is their own. The smart decision maximizes what they do now while also increases the probability that they will continue on this path in the future. There are risks associated with each approach and balancing them with you and your kids goals is where you will come up with the right answer.

Both Have Risks

Both methodologies carry risks unique to themselves. Some might only limit competitive performance, but others could affect the health of your kid. Responsible goal setting requires you to account for these risks.

Waiting to Long

Kids will need to specialize in a sport if there is a desire to reach an elite level, make an Olympic, join an NCAA school or become a professional athlete.

The time required to develop the skills to compete at a high level needs to be part of the decision process going into when a kid should specialize. Waiting too long makes the change more difficult.

Say your son is looking to earn an NCAA sport scholarship. Getting good enough to compete at the DIV 1 level by first year is not enough. You need results in the season or two preceding his enrolment to get noticed and recruited. Block out the time you needed to gain the right skills with enough time extra to demonstrate them in front of an audience. If you don't, you may run out of time.

Delaying specialization does not mean delaying training or putting off an introduction to a sport. Kids can still train and practice early. Sign them up for youth Judo classes if your kids love Judo and dreams of being world number one. What this idea means is that when you sign them up to those classes, also sign them up for Soccer or Fencing. Adding in other sports, early in their training will help them.

Also some sports “peak” early. For example, if your daughter wants to be an Olympic gymnast, they need a different specialization plan than most other sports. Focusing on sport sampling until a kid is 14 or 15 then specializing might be too late for some specific sports but acceptable for others. Understand the developmental requirements of athletes for a particular sport and work them into your plan.

Shallow Development

Not every program is equal. Some clubs produce Olympians, but not every Olympic coach understands what the best way to train a 6-year-old is. Some programs do not always plan around long-term growth and become little more than daycare. Your kid will not develop where they need too if this is their only experience in sports.. Sampling requires taking part in multiple sports only works when every coaching team understands what skills need to be taught.

Having a program without coaches that understands all the technical requirements of the sport is just as big a problem as a class that ignores the mental skill. The ultimate risk is signing up your kids for shallow programs is that they will only develop shallow skills. Finding the right coach and class, one that that understand how children develop and designs age-appropriate activities, is your most important task. You need to find real training and development, not baby sitting.

Overuse

Overuse is the ultimate risk of starting too soon. Too much strain on specific joints and body parts during developmental years will hurt your kid. They need sufficient time to recover. Kid's training thresholds differ from adults and an understanding of youth developmental is necessary to balance this out. Unnecessary injuries will negate any performance boost of early specialization.

Sport Sampling will mitigate some of this risk. Kids can balance out the loads on their bodies and joints by practices a variety of different activities and sports. For example, if a kid is playing tennis 6 days a week, his elbow will get damaged fast. If he practices once a week for tennis, and 5 other sports the other days, he will still improve his athletic abilities while lessening the strain on his elbow. Proper training programs mitigate these risks, but never 100% protection against them.

Burnout

Burnout is real. Every kid grows up. As they get older, they will get to decide whether to continue to training. Pushing kids too soon will often lead them to hating the sport and eventually to them quitting. Athletic potential is meaningless if the kid quits. Pushing too hard too soon will lead to this.

Look to balance out the pressure. Think about when you cook. Eating the same meal every day will lead you to get sick of it. When they are young, train them, build up their athleticism and skills, but do not burn them out on one sport. Let them enjoy a variety of original foods, and once they get older let them be part of the decision, let them pick their favourite to eat every day.

Missing Skills

By committing your kid to only one sport, they are being taught only the skillets of that sport. Say you sign them up for left foot only skipping. They will get great at that one foot, but they will never learn to jump on their right foot. Further, because they are training asymmetrically, their bodies will not develop in a balanced way. Early on, prioritize them taking part in a variety of sports that train a variety of core skillets. Look for sports that focus on complementary skill sets.

If you are having trouble finding enough different quality programs, look for single programs that incorporate different training methods to supplement their sport-specific training. The left foot skipping club might also practice two foot skipping as a training activity. One trick to recognizing a quality program is looking at what types of exercises they do. Seeing a variety of training activities is a good sign.

How Much Training is Too Much

The rule of thumb for accommodating a heavy athletic workload is to never have your kid train more hours per week than their age. Six hours for a 6-year-old, 12 hours for a 12-year-old etc. Breaking this

rule can be done but it requires extra planning. Make sure they get enough rest between practices. Always consider the strain the training is putting on your kid. Push too hard too soon and they will break.

When Should Kids Specialize

Elite athletes often specialize between 14 and 15 years of age.

Can you specialize earlier? Yes.

Can you specialize later? Yes.

Every decision is a trade-off, Consider a few things before dropping all activities for your 6-year-old kid to have a shot at the Olympics. For every kid who succeeds from that earliest of age, many will have burned out before they peak in their sport. Be open to allowing them to try different sports early and only specialize once they get older. This early training is not a waste, but will become a foundation for their later success.

Understand the specific sport. Some require early specialization as their elite athletes peak at a much younger age (Gymnastics). Do your research on the sport. Looking up the ages of Olympic athletes will give you some ideas. You will need to accommodate these types of sport specific requirements. Speak to experts of that sport to understand their unique requirements.

You have time to decide.

Put them in a few programs, let them develop their skills and once they are a little older, they can become stakeholders in the decision to specialize. If they develop a love for their sport early on, they will more likely self motivate as they get older. Outside of avoiding burnout, they will become their own driving force to compete at the highest competitive levels. This has the added benefit of reducing your stress.

Coaches

Reviewing a coach's skill is a good first step in validating the quality of their class. Make sure you look at the quality of students they produce, not just their personal athletic achievements. Being an elite athlete alone is not enough make them a good coach. They need to practice and study to get good at their craft. Look at what skill they can teach to their students. To make an accurate assessment, you need to look more then just their technical sport mastery of the sport.

How a coach communicates, how they interact with their students, everything about how they operate influences how effective they will be. Understanding and recognizing a few of these traits will help you make the right selection.

The effectiveness of a coach is often limited by their communication style. Besides changing how receptive kids will be to instruction, this will also affect the less tangible skills a coach can teach. It affects their ability to build their students confidences, foster mental development and all the other skills an athlete requires.

Coaches specialize in different areas of sport development. Some are great for taking average athletes and making them world class, others have a knack for youth development and training. Think back to you and your kids goals. What does your kid need right now? Your goal is to find a coach and a program that specialize in that stage of athletic development.

The Angry Coach

While there are many types of coaches, and many communication styles, one of the most enduring is the angry coach. It is common to see this trait as a requirement for discipline and success. Some kids can train under these conditions, but many cannot. Do not assume that an angry person is imparting quality instruction.

These types of coaches are held up as role models across media. It is a mistake to assume that this trait is a requirement for quality instruction. Judge its impact on students to calculate the efficacy of a communication style.

Do not get tricked by a loud and short-tempered coach into believing this is the best way to teach. The angry coach will motivate with a fear of failure. The fear of what happens when an athlete makes a mistake drives them to perform correctly. These coaches make results by berating, yelling, and threatening. This is an unhealthy foundation for a coaching relationship. It is not efficient coaching.

The real problem is that you need to make a snap judgment on the long-term affects of a coach. Instead of relying on the coach to sell you on their abilities. Look for signs they are creating, building the right environment with the right communication style to coach efficiently.

An Efficient Coach

Look to find an efficient coach for your kid. What I mean by this is a coach skilled at connecting with the greatest number of kids. Consider a program that starts with 10,000 kids. You can push these kids past every breaking point if you do not care about the human costs and all you need to produce is 4 or 5 elite athletes. Injury, burnout and the health of the kids do not matter for these programs. If you start with a large enough group and ignore the human costs, you will end up with a few elite kids. Some countries use the meat grinder approach in training to churn out Olympic level athletes. Regarding the human cost, it is inefficient and should be condemned by parents. It is far more likely that it will injure your kids and force them to drop out before they achieve any success. You will not understand the costs of a program if you only look at its most successful athletes.

Efficiency means getting more kids from that initial starting student pool to learn more skills and perform higher. It raises the average skill of the initial training group.

What sets an efficient coach apart is several underlying beliefs that shape how they build their programs, interact with the kids, and communicate their skills. An efficient coach will coach without minimize burn out and student injuries. More of their students will benefit more from their coaching. In your case, it will become more likely that your kid will achieve the skill development that you signed them up for.

Interview the coach

Watch their classes

Look at their successes

Understand How the program develops its results, what does it stress, what does it cost its students to achieve its goals.

Then decide.

A competitive background and proven success is only one factor in choosing a coach. Learn about how your potential coach thinks, how they believe kids best learn to get a deeper understanding of what working with them will be like. Find an efficient one and your kid will be in a better place.

Communicating as a Coach

The goal of an efficient coach is to promote a desire to succeed in their student.

A coach promotes this motivational style by focusing on how they interact and provide feedback with their students. Kids will enjoy this coaching more than aggressive and confrontational styles. This leads to better results for more kids.

Long-term success in sports requires your kid to buy into the training. One of the best tools to ensure kids stay with sports and benefit long term is to ensure they are having fun. We can get their buy in by promoting a fun, inclusive and positive training environment. A coaching style focused on positive social interactions will benefit you and your kids.

Confidence and Self Esteem

Outside of the competitive sphere and moving beyond just having fun, one of the common reasons to sign up your kid for sports is to help them build their self esteem. There is a direct link between how a coach communicates and their impact on kids' self esteem.

The question, regarding self esteem asks if you compare two skilled coaches with a different in communication styles, one teaching a fear of failure and the other coaches by developing a desire to succeed, are there differences in results? The answer depends.

With both coaches, kids with high initial self esteem did not change. They will grow the same if they receive coaching from either style. The difference comes when they interact with kids that have lower self esteem.

A coach's communication style has a significant impact on students with low self esteem. Studies show that when coaches trained in a positive communication style, their low self esteem athletes show a noticeable increase to their self esteem. These kids became more confident, performed better and liked their coaches more. Without changing other aspects of the coach, the focus on positive communication methods led to better results.

The important point to focus on is that a coach can improve their ability to work with low self-esteem students without harming or limiting the quality of instruction to their higher self esteemed students. Slight changes to their communication style have sustainable positive effects on some of their most vulnerable and in need of students. A coach being loud and aggressive does not mean they are effective. Depending on the student, these tendencies might make the coach less effective..

Teaching a Desire to Succeed

To reinforce a desire to succeed in students requires them to focus on these four keys;

Reinforcement of good behaviour and progress,

Proper encouragement and support after a failure,

Corrections made with encouragement, support and positivity,

and the use of specific and direct technical directions.

Notice the lack of negative reinforcement, no yelling at students over a failure. Coaches retain their ability to address mistakes and makes corrections. Negative reinforcement can work for some people but I expect that the best bosses, friends and role models in your life shared the positive traits above. The quality of instruction will remain high, more vulnerable kids will benefit and everyone will have more fun.

Healthy Mindsets

A mindset is a set of assumptions, methods, or notions held by an individual. One factor relevant to them in the sport setting is whether a coach maintains a fixed or growth mindset. Their perception of ability changes based on whether they hold a fixed or growth minded. The wrong mindset in a coach can cause a lot of damage to his students. It will influence how they interact with your kid. Depending on their beliefs, this influence can be positive or destructive. The environment around your kid, including their coach, will influence your kids and it is important to immerse them in ones that promotes healthy mindsets.

When they fail how do they react?

Do they seek new challenges?

What do they believe their potential is?

The answers to these questions will shape how successful your kid will be in their pursuits. If they fail a test, lose a tournament or are slow to succeed, do they motivate themselves to work harder and succeed next time? Or, Presented with a hard task, are they likely to quit, avoid the problem and look for something easier?

Developing an environment where students learn healthy thinking is one of the most important things a coach can do. How successful a coach is at this task comes down to how they communicate. How do they present challenges to students? Look for signs of healthy mindsets to find good coaches.

What is a fixed mindset

The belief in the preset and fixed nature of intelligence and skills is at the core of the fixed mindset. Unlocking what already exists becomes the goal of the coach and natural talent becomes the most important contributor to success. A mistaken judgment regarding a kid's talent will limit them from the attention and support they require to grow.

Every time a coach interacts with their students, it reinforces their beliefs. Each time a coach reinforces their belief, it inches them closer to reality. The perception of low talent in a kid will become the reality of low performance. No one can anticipate the future with perfect accuracy. A coach's job is to build up their students. Prejudging potential can do nothing but limit growth.

Challenges can never be more than a display of ability, they never becomes a motivator for growth. Losing shows an insurmountable weakness in talent. Believing this leads athletes to give up quicker, avoid challenges, and lose out on their opportunity to grow. At a simple level, it does not allow a late bloomer to bloom.

A high level of talent does not make an athlete immune to these problems. Athletes and kids of any level can change their mindset. Their beliefs will change depending on their environment. Anything that forces a new set of assumptions on your kid will influence how kids thinking develops. This could be starting a new class, working with a new teacher or making new friends. Thankfully, in sports you have control over who your kids will interact with. Reinforce only healthy thinking in your kids.

What is Growth Mindset

The Growth Mindset believes that intelligence can grow, the brain is malleable, and you can train yourself to overcome your current limitations. Failing at a task does not diminish your potential. Rather it shows a current insufficiency of a skill. Growth oriented athletes can train out weaknesses out. It allows for the development skills and the possibility of eventual success. Challenges and competition become skill tests to find out where you have come and measure growth.

Learning with a growth mindset becomes a skill-oriented experience. Success lies in the growth of these skills and does not focus on the innate ability of a student. A growth mindset benefits many facets of life The focus on improvement changes competition into a tool to gauge personal growth. Studies have linked the growth mindset to higher achievements in academics, socialization and in sports. Regardless of your goals, ensuring your kid develops a growth mindset will benefit them.

How is Growth Mindset Achieved

Living with the growth mindset, developing it and applying it to more aspects of your life is an ongoing process. For kids, how they interact with peers, how teachers run their classes and how their coaches build their training and what they believe all influence their ability to maintain a growth mindset.

The limiting beliefs of the fixed mindset can seep into different aspects of your kids' thinking. Different role models can cause kids to fall back into old habits. Constant reinforcement through participation in several sports and various academic environments is the best way to ensure a healthy mindset. Place your kids in programs and classes run by people who believe in it and build their curriculum around promoting it. Keeping them around as many positive role models as possible is the best way to minimize this risk.

What to Look For

Simple things like ability groupings for students, having the high potential kids be in an elite class etc, promote a fixed mindset. Kids in a remedial class will feel that they are worse than kids in an advanced class. This belief is a cornerstone of a fixed mindset and will cause this belief to become a reality.

These risks can be accommodated with the correct modifications. How the kids perceive the different classes matter. For example, kids can learn to focus on growth if their hard work is rewarded by an ability to fluidly switch between the different skills groupings. Look for ways coaches promote a belief in effort and work rather than innate talent.

Finding hints of either mindset often comes into examining how a coach divides up his time. Coaches may spend less time with those they deem “less talented”. Is he spending more time with the “most talented” kids? Is he explaining their success as a product of their height or natural ability or their hard work and dedication? Are kids being rewarded for their hard work or talent? If he telling the weaker kids to grow taller, or is it to work smarter? You want a coach that praises the right things in the right ways. They can enjoy their success, but the goal is to link their success to the process of hard work and growth.

Failing to establish this link will lead kids to associate praise with winning, with the results, and they will focus on finding opportunities to win. They will stop looking for ways to test their skills and fall back on low risk exercises. To get praise they will go to easy tournaments, win easy medals but never truly step out of their comfort zone. They may win for a while, but will never excel or become great.

Olympians are not born. They need the right genetics, but not everyone with the right genetics is an Olympian. True excellence requires a drive and a focus on growth. Judging your own worth by winning becomes self-defeating. Beating your peers is not the goal. What happens once you do? If your goal was to win, you are done. If testing your growth, you move onto the next level of challenge. A growth mindset will allow you to continue to develop even when you are winning. How do your kids view handwork, how do they view challenge? Long term success in sports and life come from overcoming challenges and developing beyond your limitations.

In Conclusion

When you are weighing different options for your kids, look for the signs of good youth development. Look for how the coach is communicating, get an insight into their beliefs and mindsets and learn about their own history and experience. The solution is the same whether they dream of elite performance or are looking to get healthier. Focus on getting them in the right positive environment early and they can build the skills they need and grow into high performance and specialization. Get them working with the right people and they will have more fun, be healthier and continue to exceed your expectations. And you will be less stressed.