

The Real Value of Youth Sports

What do sports teach us? The universal response – from coaches, parents, athletes, – is always ‘life lessons’. We oftentimes champion sports for our children in the hopes that they will learn these valuable life lessons through their experience. But what lessons exactly do we hope they will learn? Have your athletes learned these life lessons this season?

Do you think your child has learned some of the major life lessons that sports can teach? As the season winds down, ask yourself, whether your child has learned these concepts. Or better yet, ask your child what lessons he or she has learned this season – and see how many of those lessons are on the list.

1. Practice Makes...Better

It’s not about being perfect. It’s about getting better; improving. One of the life lessons we hope our children learn through sports is that their effort is rewarded.

2. Focus on what you can control

Youth sports should help kids learn that all they can do is focus on their effort, and not the outcome. Focus on what they can control, not what is out of their control.

3. Let go of mistakes

Successful athletes brush off mistakes. They acknowledge them, they learn from them, and they then move past them. They are in the past.

4. Keep learning

We’re constantly learning – from our successes but also from our mistakes. Youth sports should help kids recognize that even the best players are constantly learning and working to get better. It’s an approach to life that will serve us all well.

5. Being positive moves us further

PCA’s “Emotional Tank” analogy to a car’s gas tank is a good one here: just like a car’s gas tank, when our emotional tanks are full, we can go further. In a Responsible Sports environment, while coaches and parents fill our youth athletes’ tanks, one life lesson for athletes to learn is the need for them to fill their teammates’ tanks..

6. Celebrate Success

Sports teach us to celebrate success – large and small. We all know how to celebrate winning the game, but sports can also help us learn to celebrate the smaller goals we set for ourselves, and see ‘winning’ differently.

7. Become a true team player

Sports should teach our children what we mean by a true team player – someone who contributes 100%, and at the same time cooperates and collaborates with teammates to help bring out their best, too. PCA talks about being a Triple-Impact Competitor®: making yourself better, making your teammates better, and making the game better. It's this lesson we hope our children bring to their adult relationships.

8. Win and Lose With Dignity

It's called Honoring The Game in sports. And we hope our athletes learn to both win and lose while respecting themselves, their teammates, their opponents and the officials and organization that help make their sport experience possible. As an adult, how we define 'game' changes, but we hope sports teaches us all to win and lose with dignity and respect.