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Motivating your Child in Athletics

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As a parent, volunteer coach and communication trainer, I have learned motivating your young athlete must be specific to who they are. Each of us are born with individual attention and motivational needs and desires that must be fulfilled in order to function at our best. I have three children, all have shown interest in sports, and all are motivated to participate in different ways.

One wants to have fun and is motivated by playful contact with others. He is energized by keeping it lively and moving, he is less motivated by the outcome of winning and awards. Another is motivated by the recognition of his hard work and personal achievements ? medals and trophies all have their prominent place on the wall. The other is motivated by recognizing her person ? with no strings attached, win or lose. Telling her "I love you," and how special she is right before she runs a 400 meter race is as effective for her as telling my son who is motivated by achievements "you have worked very hard, we are proud of you."

Athletics create all kinds of opportunity for our children to learn important life skills. Paying attention to HOW our children are communicating to us, and creating an environment where abilities and traits are supported, could make a huge difference as to whether they stay engaged in sports and continually improve their performance.

Focus on effort and learning, rather than the temptation to compare your child's performance to others, or the "win at all cost" mentality. Create an environment where mistakes are learning opportunities and failure is not feared. There are many great resources out there for parents of young athletes; *Positive Coaching Alliance* and *Positive Coaching* are a couple.