

Expertise in sport parenting requires parents to develop knowledge and utilize a range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational skills in order to support their child, manage themselves, and operate effectively in the wider youth sport environment (Harwood & Knight, 2016)

Parents are instrumental in developing/enhancing

- Enjoyment and love of sport and PA
- Introducing children to appropriate sport/PA
- sporting competence and self-belief
- coping with setbacks/developing resilience

Which lead to development of intrinsic motivation + longevity in PA

But the way they behave is crucial in creating positive and lifelong involvement

There is a huge body of research in this space...so there is not really any excuse for parents these days to say 'but we just didn't know what we should do to encourage /support/guide our kids'

A lot of research has been done around parents in tennis (and other sports) resulting in various models outlining ideal 'sport parent hooding'

For example, the **Parental Optimal Zone** (Brackenridge, 2006) which relates to the activation states for kids' involvement – based on an earlier model parenting continuum (Hellstardt 1987)

	Opposed/inactive	Reactive Active Proactive	Hyperactive
	VOICES+KNOWLEDGE+		FEELINGS + ACTIONS
	UNDERINVOLVED Disinterested Misinformed	MODERATELY INVOLVED The comfort zone	OVERINVOLVED Excitable Fanatical

Three types of parents

Under involved – misinformed or not interested

Moderately involved -reactive/active/proactive (**THE COMFORT ZONE**)

Over involved- excitable/fanatical

What does the parent in comfort zone look like?

- comment on effort and attitude...not on performance
- provide practical advice – not technical/tactical e.g. no coaching
- Not totally focussed on their kid becoming a professional
- Open to having their behaviour evaluated
- Provide unconditional love
- Have a good relationship with coach – seek advice from coach
- providing logistical, financial, and social-emotional support and sporting opportunities
- focusing on their children's holistic development at home and all areas (e.g. school)

- motivational and constructive evaluation at training, and
- limiting demands on athletes through the provision of practical support,
- reading and understanding the situation and their child,
- and supporting the development of growth mind-set across all domains
- Have realistic expectation and try to understand what the sport/training/comp is like for their child e.g. step into their shoes
- **KNOWING WHEN & WHAT buttons to push** e.g. understand what and when kids need or want feedback e.g. give praise straight away but constructive feedback later and away from other players/teammates.

Parents also need to understand that their role changes as kids grow and transition from early childhood involvement through to early, mid and late adolescents. Parents may also have very important roles when their children reach adulthood.

Also, the role of a parent may be different before during and after competition.

Before comp

Young athletes want parents to help them to physically and mentally prepare for competition.

Physically

Get ready and make sure I'm on time and get me prepared and all that stuff."

"Tapes my ankles for every game, and he always makes me drink a lotta water.

Emotionally

Athletes want parents to understand their needs in terms of mental preparation - this can vary – sometimes they want to be left along and sometimes talk about other things...not the games

During the comp

Do

- Encourage whole team/others
- Focus on effort rather than outcome
- Interact positively with all players throughout game/competition – clap and praise don't yell out and *"I like them to say good job, keep going, that's awesome and stuff."*
- Maintain control of emotions

Do Not:

- Draw Attention to Yourself or Your Child
- Do Not Coach
- Do Not: Argue with Officials

After the Competition

- positive feedback straight after the game and around others
- but constructive feedback on their own
- AND also, honest feedback

Some good resources

<https://truesport.org/>

<https://sportforlife.ca/portfolio-view/ltad-information-parents/>

An example of what children through to adolescence should be doing in T&F

<https://www.athletics.com.au/get-involved-athletics/juniorguidelines/>

<https://www.parentsinsport.co.uk/>