

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

*Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports*

## 3 Important Elements for Teaching Self-Respect

By David Benzel



If I told you that you just won the “parent lotto” and could “gift” your child athlete with any one quality, what do you think it would be?

Make sure to choose wisely!

But before you do, remember that you want this gift to equip them to face the many challenges that life will bring – well beyond school and sports.

As parents, we could come up with a lot of answers to this question. However, one quality to consider because of how greatly it impacts your child is **self-respect**.

No other gifting empowers them – mind, body, and spirit – quite the same way.

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

## Sports Participation's Role in Developing Your Child's Self-Respect

Millions of small messages from the moment your child enters this world go into shaping their self-respect. From how you value them, to your own example of respecting yourself, and everything in between – they are learning what their value is.

By the time they begin participating in sports they have a sense of who they are and have a level of confidence by which they operate. However, **developing** that sense of worth and value is critical, and participating in sports is an ideal platform to work on it.

3 important aspects to developing this quality are how it relates to mind, body, and spirit. Here are some practical ways to optimize your child's self-respect through sports participation.

### 1) Make Sure the Mind is Not a Battlefield

Competing in sports is often the first place we encounter the idea that our thoughts and mental pictures can impact an outcome. Elite athletes use the power of visualization because it works. Good coaches direct their athletes to envision a win before it even happens. And diligent parents guard the thoughts and minds of their kids.

A healthy self-respect comes from a positive mindset.

Imagine for a moment this scenario:

*A Mom watching her daughter at a cross-country meet sees her coming around a bend. Her daughter is at the front of the pack and the Mom yells, "Sara, how bad is it? Is it bad? How bad? When the runner replies that it is bad the Mom says, "well you better suck it up, and get going."*

As you probably guessed, this exchange was not helpful to the young girl. Not only did the Mom put the negative thought of how bad the run may be, front and center in her daughter's mind, but she also gave her the message that her value was not in her ability to endure but only in if she won or not.

We have all heard examples like this of what **not to do**. Here are some practical ideas for what you can do to help develop positive self-respect in your child.

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

*Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports*

## Action Steps for the Parent:

- Be purposeful to check in with your child regularly to see what their thoughts are in regards to school, friends, sports, family etc.
- Allow for a no-judgement time where you simply **listen** and refrain from making parental commentary.
- Give specific compliments that are not tied to winning or losing. For example: I am proud of you for a consistent work ethic. OR You always have a good attitude about helping your teammates.
- Value “who” they are not just “what” they do. Be verbal about this.

## Action steps for the child:

- Practice positive self-talk especially before competitions.
- Journal at least one positive ‘I am’ statement a week. For example, “I am a thoughtful team player,” or “I am very responsive to my coach’s teaching.”
- Confess to parents or coach a negative thought that you are struggling through.

## 2) Do the Body Good

If you had a million-dollar racehorse, would you give thought to its food, drink, and stable accommodations?

Chances are that these decisions would consume a large part of your time because you would want to ensure that all factors contributed to its ability to race in top form.

Yet, we don’t always take the same approach with our own bodies or our young athlete’s body.

Teaching our kids to respect themselves in regards to their body, starts with the example we set. They learn first by what they see.

What they hear – in the way of instruction – is a distant second.



# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

*Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports*

## **Action steps for the parent:**

- Start somewhere. If you realize that you have bad habits in regards to how you treat your own body, then resolve to make small changes. Share these efforts with your kids.
- Be diligent about ensuring that kids are getting proper rest, adequate fluids, and balanced nutrition. Be extra mindful of this during sports seasons.
- Follow-up at bedtime to make sure that kids are not staying up late on their devices.

## **Action Steps for the child:**

- Keep an honest food diary for one week. Make better choices based on what you discover.
- Have an open and honest conversation with parents about alcohol and drugs, and its detrimental impact on your future.



## **3) Feed the Spirit**

Faith provides direction.

It also gives a person a sense of responsibility, a sense of purpose, and a sense of belonging.

All of these characteristics impact self-respect.

Competitive sports will give a young athlete many opportunities for decision-making.

When they have the framework of faith in which to make these choices a confidence in who they are develops.

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

*Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports*

## **Action steps for the parent:**

- Provide your child with an appreciation for their faith and the ability to develop it. For example, participate in a healthy youth group at your place of worship.
- Discuss with your child your world view when talking through decisions.

## **Action steps for the child:**

- End each day by thinking of three things to be thankful for.
- Behave in ways that align with your family's belief system.

## **Final Thoughts**

A healthy self-respect stems from all aspects of a person: mind, body, and soul. When you teach your child how to appreciate their worth and live accordingly, you set them up for success in sports, relationships, and life.

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic:

<http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com/coachdavid>

**David Benzel** is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](#), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience. David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"* [www.growingchampionsforlife.com](http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com)