



# Growing Champions *for Life*

## Your Body Language Never Lies by David Benzel © copyright 2011

As parents we're communicating every single second of every single day. Mouth open or mouth closed, the message is getting out. Your attitude about your child and her play, your sense of admiration...or not, and what you think about her efforts is transmitted in subtle ways for her - and everyone else - to read. Approximately 55% of all communication is transmitted by body language.

I'm amazed at how many parents continue to behave as if they are invisible or as if their children can't see them at the soccer field or from the tennis court! The dad who drops his head after each strike out; the mom who looks away after each unforced error; and the shuffled walk of disappointment after a missed kick are seen, interpreted as personal, and noted by your child. The fact that you are not disappointed in them, but actually for them, does not come through like you intend.

Let's think about the possible ways your child may interpret body language messages being sent from the bleachers.

"You blew it again."

"Your performance is embarrassing me."

"I'm disappointed in you."

"You're not good enough."

"You're not trying hard enough to please me."

"I don't want to be here."



***The reason your body language is of such importance to your child is this:***

***The opinion that matters most to your children is what they think you think of them - including and especially during a competition.***

For your athlete to perform up to his or her natural potential there must be a consistent assumption in place: *unconditional love and total acceptance no matter how the game goes*. Children are free to be their best when the fear of disappointing their parents is not even remotely on their mind. When parents remain supportive in word, tone, and posture 100% of the time - regardless of performance ups and downs - children have one less critic to worry about. The internal critic is already giving them a hard enough time as it is!

We can accomplish this by monitoring our responses to the ebb and flow of the game or match. Conscientiously check yourself during the five seconds that follow any play or error. Those are the most crucial five seconds of the game! Remember, you are a supporter, all the time, not an evaluator! While it's true your child should not be looking at you during a game anyway, if they are looking perhaps it's because they've grown accustomed to receiving Dad's play-by-play feedback of "thumbs-up" or "thumbs-down" after every play. Take yourself out of the role of evaluator and your child will always assume the best about your opinion.