

Business Tips

Educating Your Parents-Part I

I bet I could describe in some detail the 'problem parents' you have in your club: their mindset, their complaints, the grief they have caused for themselves, their child, other parents, you, the club. Of course, this feat takes no great talent since most gym club professionals could do the same thing because parents are the same coast to coast and club to club. Parents all have the same love for their child, the same emotional impulses, the same concerns, the same misunderstandings about what we owners and coaches do and why we do it.

Oh, we are so under appreciated; so misunderstood; poor us; pity us. Get my drift? At Congresses we hear owners and coaches sit around and bellyache about parents as if being one was a disease. But what are we doing in our clubs to actually SOLVE this problem? (Let's face it, this problem does not sneak up on us.) If we KNOW what is in the parents' minds, the unintentionally destructive things they do and the problems it causes, why don't we take proactive steps to educate our parents to help them understand a better way.

Last night I conducted a team introductory meeting for 33 wonderful Kids First parents. The meeting had nothing to do with gymnastics, levels, boosters, or the like, and everything to do with parenting styles -- what works and what doesn't. The purpose of the meeting was to bring to light and help solve problems BEFORE they had a chance to materialize. I had fun and the parents appreciated the information and the effort. Whereas, I have no illusions that one meeting is a panacea, there is little doubt in my mind that 33 parents are now better equipped to handle the emotional tugs that they will face PLUS they have a greater appreciation for our company, and what it stands for. To me, THAT is a productive meeting, a HIGH PAYOFF on an investment of 90 minutes.

Next month I will detail the agenda we use in such a meeting. Generally speaking, we cover the high goals of the company, the company belief system, how we deal with one another, some examples of good parenting and not so good parenting.

Next month we'll discuss more on this topic. Contrary to popular opinion among coaches and owners, parents truly WILL accept parenting advice IF you take a proactive approach (but try to offer such advice AFTER a conflict has arisen and see how successful you are).

Make it a great month!

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