PARENTING A COMPETITIVE ATHLETE

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# TALENT EVOLUTION

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B.S. Bloom (1985) *Developing Talent in the Young*
Role of Parents

• Enthusiastic, Supportive, Sacrificed
• Provide UNCONDITIONAL love and support
• Help build Confidence and Self-Esteem
• Reward/value EFFORT, not outcome.
Building Confidence

- Avoid comparisons with other gymnasts
- Be supportive. Be specific about what you liked!
- Help put things into perspective: It is not a tragedy…
- Separate your emotions from those of your child.
Teach them to Control the Controllables

- **Control**
  - Attitude
  - Behavior
  - Self-Talk
  - Focus

- **No Control**
  - Order of competition
  - Competitors
  - SCORES
  - Judges
Building Responsibility

• Allow her to take responsibility (no making her bag!)
• Do not criticize coach to gymnast: It only puts her in the middle
• No coaching from the stands (or car)
• DO NOT USE JUDGING AS AN EXCUSE!
DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

• Puberty changes: Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, Social…
• Impact on performance, approach to competition, motivation
• Pick your battles! Figure out your non-negotiables: Respect for others, manners, effort level…
• Watch out for social media behavior!
The Parents and the Coach

• Ideally allied to help the child, but with separate roles.
• Communicate with coach periodically, not only when there is a problem
• Allow your child to vent, but do not intervene too quickly.
Parents and Coach II

• Encourage your daughter to communicate directly. Rehearse with her and accompany her to support, but let her say it if she can.

• Help her take responsibility

• Issues with changing coaches
Parents and Parents

• You do not have to like your child’s friends’ parents.
• Separate your like/dislike from your child’s friendships
• Let gymnastics be your daughter’s activity. You just pay for it!
PARENTS AT/AFTER COMPETITION

• You are the emotional coach, so model calm and show confidence!

• After (if she can talk about it) ask how she thinks she did; I like to use 3 questions: What was Good about your performance? What do you want to do Better next time? How are you going to make sure you improve on that?

• Reward Effort!! Ask: Did you go for it? Did you do all your difficulties? Mention specifics: “I liked how you recovered after a mistake”. 
THE FAMILY OF AN ELITE ATHLETE

• The higher the level the more time/resources an elite athlete requires.

• Issues of unfairness with siblings

• Being a good gymnast vs a good citizen

• Educate the rest of the family so they do not see her “only” as a gymnast: Show your pride about her grades, art projects, good deeds….
Common Roadblocks

- Trying to protect your child from all disappointment
- Wanting it more than she does
- Expecting a fair world
- Getting emotionally over-involved
- Wanting to see more return from your investment…
DO NOT IGNORE!

• Watch for signs of excessive stress:
  • Insomnia, drop in grades, repeated injuries, constant negative self comments
• Weight /Food issues: Make sure your daughter eats healthy but do not obsess over food. The whole family should eat healthy, do not single out the gymnast.