

PARENT AND GUARDIAN'S HANDBOOK FOR SAFER SPORT

SAFESPORT LISTENING DO'S AND DON'TS

FOR YOUNGER KIDS (5 AND UNDER)



When your child says, “The coaches never put me in the game at the end of class. They always pick other kids and don’t even pay attention to me.”

Do ...

- ▶ Tell your child that you are glad they shared this with you, and that you're sorry they feel frustrated because you want them to love their sport!
- ▶ Reflect on your experiences observing games and practices. Remember that one game with little playing time can feel like “never” to a four-year-old.
- ▶ Try and get more first-hand information on playing time by observing games and practices. You can also ask for observations from other parents. If your child continues to be excluded, calmly talk to the coach privately to raise your concern.
- ▶ Spend quality time with your child playing games. This shows them they're important.

Don't ...

- ▶ Tell your child they probably need to improve to play with the better kids.
- ▶ Yell at the coach in front of the team or your child. That is modeling inappropriate behavior for the kids and will likely embarrass your child.

When your child says, “I don’t want to go back to soccer camp. It’s too hard. We just run the whole time with no breaks. It’s no fun. I just want to play at the park.”

Do ...

- ▶ Empathize with them. Share that you signed up for the program because they like soccer and it sounded fun.
- ▶ Ask what they do at camp. Listen to the responses. Check in daily for a few days and see if the concerns are repeated.
- ▶ Talk about how you want to make sure camp is a fun and safe place to learn some new skills.
- ▶ Consider speaking to program officials. Do you agree with their balance on skill building to fun?

Don't ...

- ▶ Overlook your child's unhappiness.

This product was supported in part by grant number 15PSMA-24-GG-03789-KYAS, awarded by the SMART Office, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

When your child says, “Camp was so fun today. We got to go to the water park. My counselor gave me a special treat in the locker room.”

Do ...

- ▶ Remain calm.
- ▶ Ask about the special treat and what happened in the locker room afterward.
- ▶ Tell them you are so happy they like swimming.
- ▶ Make sure you know the rules about adults and kids changing together, being alone together, or giving special gifts. Did the counselor break the rules?
- ▶ Ask open-ended questions about what was happening. Example: “What were the other kids doing in the locker room? Did anyone else get a treat?” Do praise your child for sharing with you.
- ▶ Consider calling the camp and calmly talking to the program director about locker room and gift giving rules.

Don't ...

- ▶ Jump to conclusions or assume there was some kind of misconduct until you have more information.
 - ▶ Make your child feel like they're guilty for something or that they did something bad.
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When your child says, “Coach gave me a nickname – ‘Slug’ and now that’s what everyone is calling me, and I don’t like it.”

Do ...

- ▶ Thank them for telling you.
- ▶ Ask if other kids get called by nicknames as well.
- ▶ Role play with your child how to ask the kids to use their desired name.
- ▶ Consider contacting the coach and sharing your concerns that your child feels unhappy about the nickname.

Don't ...

- ▶ Shrug it off as “Kids will be kids.”
- ▶ Tell your child to be a “big kid” and play along.

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