TALKING TIPS FOR TEENAGERS (13+)

Keep lines of communication open with your teen, their coaches, and parents of their peers. This will help you respond if you see or hear anything that makes you or your child uncomfortable.

Here are ways you can keep communication open with teens and reinforce healthy emotional, physical, and sexual boundaries in sport activities.

- Allow plenty of time in car rides and at meals to learn what is going on in their lives (as your child spends more time with peers and coaches). Even texting offers informal ways to check in without the appearance of an interrogation.
- Create a code word your child should use if they need to call or text you for help but are not in position to have a private conversation. Whenever you get a text with the code word, you will know they need you to show up immediately, no questions asked.
- Stay in touch with the parents of your child's teammates. You might learn information from them that you can raise with your teen. You might need to confirm facts and rules with your teen, as they may have heard conflicting information from their peers.
- Be open to discussing your child's feelings about their uniforms, especially if they express discomfort about how their body looks or feels.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT EMOTIONAL MISCONDUCT:

Talk to your child about how some people are bullied or harassed because of their sexual orientation. Encourage them to report any derogatory comments they hear from teammates and coaches.

Make sure your child understands they should never criticize the weight, body type, and food choices of their teammates. Neither coaches nor teammates should shame athletes. Refrain from emphasizing your child's weight to help them maintain a positive body image. Tell them they should let you know if a coach uses hurtful words when they talk to them.

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COMMUNICATING ABOUT PHYSICAL MISCONDUCT:

If possible, host team dinners or offer to bring snacks to practices and games so you can hear players talk and try to learn about coach/player dynamics.

Pay attention to your child's attitude about their sport. Do they still look forward to practice and competitions? Have they voiced any complaints, even vaguely?

Develop a plan with your teen for how they can manage situations in which alcohol and drugs might be present. Explanations for abstaining help teens respond to peer pressure. Examples: "I have (a test/a match) tomorrow, and I need to be at my best," or "I'm on medication so I can't drink."

COMMUNICATING ABOUT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:

Make it part of your routine to check in on your teen's relationship with their coach. Listen for any behaviors (positive or negative) that sound alarms, particularly if they are being singled out for special treatment.

Talk to your teen about the importance of asking for consent before (and during) any sexual activity. Consent can be verbal ("Is this OK?") or nonverbal (leaning in). Someone who is incapacitated by drugs or alcohol cannot give consent. Anyone can withdraw their consent at any time.

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