**18 Things Parents want Coaches and Teachers to Know**

1. **We know a lot about our kids**. Just as you want to be respected for the knowledge and experience you have in your line of work, we want to be respected in our role as parents. We have spent a ton of time with our kids and love them more than anyone else in this world. Of course we don’t expect you to love them as we do, but we do want to feel that our experience with them and our knowledge about them is valued. Living in the trenches with our kids gives us pretty good insight into their functioning, and we often do have a sense of what’s going on with them and what’s best for them.
2. **We don’t think our kids are perfect or the best at everything**. In fact, we are often acutely aware of their weaknesses, and this can make us anxious–sometimes without our realizing it. And when we get anxious, we might get pushy or appear to be meddling. Actually, we are just trying to help our kids, occasionally out of a feeling of desperation.
3. **Sometimes we mess up**. We might get angry when it’s not warranted, or get too involved, or say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Know that our intentions are almost always good, even if our actions appear misguided. We are usually sorry when we are out of line.
4. **We are often novices, no matter how old our children**. With each new activity, school, or social scene, we are parenting through a totally new set of challenges. Since the game changes constantly, we might seem confused and ask “silly” questions. We are just trying to navigate unknown waters, so please bear with us.
5. **We talk to each other**. We know when the rules for one kid are different from the rules for another. We hear from other parents what’s going on in classes, on teams, with our kids’ social lives. We also hear what you say to our kids, so please don’t say anything you wouldn’t want us to hear.
6. **We care about other kids, too**. We might step in to help our kids’ friends or even kids we don’t know. Part of our parenting instinct is to protect the kids around us.
7. **Despite what people sometimes say about kids sharing with their parents, many of our kids do tell us a lot of what goes on for them**.
8. **Even if we spend a lot of money on an activity or lessons or tutoring, please don’t assume we are “loaded.”** More often than not, that money is hard earned, and we are making many sacrifices in order to prioritize our children’s needs and desires. We find it unproductive and hurtful when you act surprised or irritated when we question or lament the finances involved in the activity you’re leading.
9. **Like any demographic, we have outliers. Please do not treat us all as though we are one and the same**.  For example, while some parents may live and breathe their college alma maters in hopes that their kids will end up there through years of exposure and osmosis, most of us don’t have single-minded college aspirations for our children. In fact, many of us don’t want to think about college yet and rush the process, preferring to let our kids be kids without premature pressure. So when we ask questions about how our fourth grader is doing in class or on the team, please don’t assume we are part of the small percentage who are recording your answers in secret college-entrance journals; we might legitimately just want to understand what and how our kids are learning.
10. **If you are coaching our kids in a sport, please refer to #9 above**. While there are certainly some of us who will do just about anything to further our kids’ chances of playing on the US Woman’s National Hockey Team or rowing crew at Harvard, the majority of us just want our kids to have fun on the field, stay active, enjoy the camaraderie of a team, and grow to love a sport. Even the most well-intentioned among us slip up from time to time–screaming on the sidelines or overly investing in tryout results. For the most part, though, we, too, are distressed when a parent consistently acts out during sporting events. What we want is for our kids to appreciate the power of hard work and dedication and know how to overcome loss and frustration. We recognize that our kids aren’t going to be the next Michael Jordan, but we want them to feel appreciated, encouraged, and cared for while they’re in your hands.
11. **We want to give you the benefit of the doubt, and we’d like you to do the same for us**. When our kids go off to school, we want to believe they are in good hands and are safe. We want to trust that their teachers have their best interests at heart, will teach them well, and will develop their self-esteem throughout the learning process. When our kids go off to band practice or dance rehearsals or hockey training, we want to believe that the adults responsible for their growth will be attuned to their emotional well-being and will help them develop as musician or dancer or player. We don’t want to worry, and we don’t want to meddle. In fact, keeping in mind the outlier rule of #9 above, most of us would prefer to have some rare time off while our kids are occupied with activities. But if something goes wrong or we have cause for concern, we will engage; that is our job as parents.
12. **Parenting is a humbling—and daunting—experience**. If you don’t have children, yourself, it might be more difficult to understand us at times. We might seem overly protective on one day and then overly inaccessible on another. We might be brought to tears at what seems like a run-of-the-mill parent-teacher conference, and we might take pictures of our kids doing basically nothing. We might send our kids to school without lunches five times in one school year, and we might help them a little too much now and then with their homework. We might call them childish nicknames in high school, even while we expect them to act like adults. We also might dress up a little too much for back-to-school night.
13. **Just as in your own life, there is often much going on behind the scenes in our lives**. We might appear to have it all together, but our two-year-old may have just had a major meltdown right before our meeting with you, our spouse may have just lost his/her job, and we may have just found out that our nanny is leaving or that we have a suspicious breast lump. Keep in mind that there might be a backstory. Through it all, we try to hold it together for the sake of our kids (not to mention our dignity), but sometimes it feels like a house of cards, and we may falter sooner than you’d expect.
14. **No matter the circumstances, there are certain interactions with our kids that we feel are unacceptable**: [demeaning a child on the volleyball court for missing a serve, or scolding a kid at school for talking out of turn when it really was another student at fault, or yanking a kid completely from a performance for a single missed rehearsal. These are examples of hurtful encounters where we might (we should) approach you,](http://soccerparenting.com/2015/11/02/7-reasons-we-regretfully-allow-bullying-by-coaches/) and you may need to dig deep and apologize or rethink your behavior for next time. We know people slip up (see above), and we want to give you another chance, but we need you to show us that you care.
15. **When our kids have problems (medical, educational, psychological, social, etc.), we can become very concerned very quickly**. We might pressure you for answers and information sooner than you’re able to provide. Acknowledging the challenges of the situation and communicating with us that you understand how hard it is to watch our child struggle can go a long way.
16. **You hold a great deal of power and have a massive impact on our children**. What you say to them sticks with them—the good and the bad. A simple “way to go” or high-five can make all the difference in the world, as can a negative “what the heck is wrong with you today?” said in a moment of frustration.  Please be as kind as possible, despite the enormous challenges you face in your important and meaningful role.
17. **Remember that our kids are little human beings with all sorts of complicated emotions and traits**. Keep in mind that your role in working with children is to be sure they are feeling as good about themselves and their experiences as possible.  Don’t take out your frustrations with us on them, and please don’t forget to keep in mind their emotional wellbeing, even as you try to develop their skills.
18. **Our number-one goal, despite all of the distractions, is for our kids to remain happy and healthy**.  Period. We want them to be encouraged and appreciated. We want you to be honest, gentle, and sometimes firm with them when they need to know something, and we want you to expect the best from them. Ultimately, we want them to feel good about themselves and enjoy their time with you. There are no redos. This is not a dress rehearsal. They only get one childhood, so the stakes are high. We truly do appreciate your efforts with our kids, we recognize the significant challenges you face, and we hope that we can work together in the vital process of developing and enhancing their young spirits.