

**PLAY LIKE  
A CHAMPION  
TODAY**

Character Education Through Sports

## Champion Parent Note

Educating and Forming Champion Parents

### Words That Can Crush Young Athletes

Parents of youth and high school athletes have a pivotal role to play in each child's enjoyment and development. Yet we often misunderstand that role or fail to interpret what young athletes need. First and foremost, parents are called to *support* our children, offering positive encouragement and demonstrating our unconditional love. While coaches are responsible for developing skills and correcting mistakes, parents should be a young athlete's biggest cheerleader.



With that in mind, **what we say matters**. The words we use and the way we use them can make the difference in how our child experiences an activity. For some children, such as those with ADHD, certain comments can have a dramatic impact. Licensed counselor and friend of *Play Like a Champion* Bill Matthews has provided [a helpful list for parents and coaches of athletes with ADHD](#) that details common phrases and their negative effects.

The **ride home** is a critical moment for many young athletes. Too many kids report this is their *least* favorite part of the sports experience, often because of the way parents respond to practices or games. Sometimes athletes are not ready to talk about a competition immediately following the event. It's our child's sports journey, so parents should respect this. *Play Like a Champion* suggests setting up a system with your athlete: If they want to talk about the competition on the ride home, they can climb into the front seat of the car (provided they are old enough to sit in the front safely). If they prefer to not discuss the game at that time, they can climb into the back seat. This simple cue provides your athletes with ownership over their post-game conversation.

If your child does "climb into the front seat" post-game, the mantra "*Less Telling... More Asking*" is best to follow. Utilize open-ended questions that allow your child to discover how they feel and set goals for future performances. Some suggestions include:

- Did you see God present in today's game? How?
- What do you think went well in the game? What was the most difficult part of today's game?
- What are you most grateful for from today's game?
- What was the funniest thing that happened in the game?
- What was the nicest thing someone on your team did for you today?
- Are you proud of something you did today?
- What would you change about the
- Which person on your team is your exact opposite? And what do you admire about him/her?
- Who would you like to get to know better on your team? How can you reach out to him/her?
- What is one thing you did helpful today for your coach or someone on your team?
- If one of your teammates could be the coach for the next practice, who would you want it to be?
- If you had the chance to be the coach tomorrow, what would you focus on

- game today? Why?
- What new skill did you try/work on today?
- What challenged you in today's game?
- How would you rate the game today on a scale of 1 to 10? Why?

- in practice?
- What is the main thing you hope to learn/accomplish before the season is over?
- If Jesus was sitting next to you on this pre/post-game ride home, what would you visit with him about?

Using these cues can create a positive experience on the ride home and offer the encouragement and support we want to show our young athletes. Consider the tips above and make a plan for the next drive to and from a young athlete's practice or game. Choosing your words carefully might make all the difference.

***"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*** ~ Ephesians 6:4

## A Prayer for Families

Grant us, O Lord Jesus,  
The strength to imitate faithfully the example of  
your Holy Family

And to make our home another Nazareth.  
May peace, love, and happiness prevail in all  
things and all games.

Grant us the grace to be the parents  
We should be for our children.

Grant that our child may find solid support  
For their human dignity

And for their growth in truth and love  
Within the embrace of their team.

May Saint Sebastian watch and guide them in their efforts today,  
As he guides us in support of our children. Amen.



*Adapted from: [www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=835](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=835)*

**Access Resources & Learn More at [PlayLikeaChampion.org](http://PlayLikeaChampion.org)**

Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series  
PO Box 72, Notre Dame, IN 46556 [information@playlikeachampion.org](mailto:information@playlikeachampion.org)  
[www.playlikeachampion.org](http://www.playlikeachampion.org)

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

