

Navigating the Car Ride Home

Follow these tips to make the car ride home a positive experience for your athlete instead of a stressful one.



Give your athlete time

Give your athlete time to think and space to process the game for themselves before probing them about it. You can also use this time to think about how you will approach the discussion and what helpful things you can say.



DO follow your athlete's lead. Wait for them to bring up the competition first.



DON'T interpret the game for your athlete right away. Allow them to tell you how they think it went first.



DO ask your athlete if they are ready to talk about the competition. Respect their answer.



DON'T force your athlete to talk or pepper them with questions as soon as they get in the car.

Navigating the Car Ride Home



Develop “rules of the road”

Communication is the most important thing when it comes to supporting your athlete. Have a conversation with them and ask them how they would like you to approach the car ride home.



DO allow your athlete to make the rules for the car ride home. Ask them what they need.



DON'T force your athlete to follow your rules. Let them take the lead.



DO follow the rules your athlete set for the car ride home - every time.



DON'T allow your emotions to override the rules.



DO ask your athlete what they need from you after a competition.



DON'T get defensive when your athlete tells you they don't like something you do.

Navigating the Car Ride Home



Listen more, talk less

If your athlete is interested in talking about the game, try to listen more than you speak. Ask your athlete questions and allow them to come to their own conclusions about what went right and what they can learn.



DO ask your athlete what they are proud of and what they learned from the competition.



DON'T focus the conversation around the referee, the coach or other players.



DO ask your athlete what they think they can do better next time.



DON'T point out your athlete's mistakes.



DO ask your athlete if they had fun.



DON'T focus on the outcome of the game.

Navigating the Car Ride Home



Pay attention

Look for non-verbal cues and interpret them before you approach a conversation. If your athlete puts their headphones on and stares out the window or pretends to fall asleep, they are probably not ready to talk.



DO interpret and respond appropriately to your athlete's non-verbal cues.



DON'T reprimand your athlete for not wanting to talk to you after a game.



DO allow your athlete to talk freely about the game if they want to.



DON'T use the car ride home as a time to give constructive criticism.



DO talk about anything else besides the competition.



DON'T force a conversation or try to cheer them up.

Navigating the Car Ride Home



Be positive

Always be supportive no matter how your athlete did. They probably gave their best effort, and if they performed poorly, are already feeling lousy about it. Be their number one fan and find something positive, encouraging, or supportive to say.



DO tell your athlete that you are proud of them and love them no matter what.



DON'T let your athlete feel as though your support is conditional to a good outcome.



DO be mindful of your non-verbal communication.



DON'T sigh, look disappointed or show them that you are angry.



DO smile and tell them that you love to watch them play.



DON'T forget that you are not their coach. You are their parent.

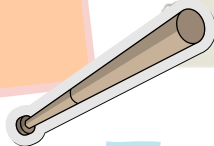
Navigating the Car Ride Home

Ideas for the car ride home:



"I love to watch you play!"

"Do you want to talk about the game?"



"What are you proud of?"

"What's your favorite place in the entire world?"
(or anything not related to their sport)

"How do you feel?
What can I do to support you?"



"Where should we go for ice cream?"



"I will always be in your corner, no matter what!"



That was a tough game out there today. I thought you really bounced back when things didn't go your way. What do you think?



"I am here for you if you want to talk."

