

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

. . . on Parents and sportsmanship

By Bill Welker, EdD

I would not argue with anybody who said it is hard to be a parent in our highly-competitive, contemporary society. I know; I was one parent who felt he could have done a better job, both in my children's education and extracurricular activities.

Still, I did the best I could with the limited parental knowledge I had. My only salvation was that I love all my children (and now my grandchildren) with all my heart. But, looking back, I could have done a much better job.

Regarding athletics, I always attempted to direct my children to behave in a "good sportsmanship" manner. And by example, I always sat in the stands, keeping my thoughts to myself. Have they always followed my advice? No. Of course, they knew I wasn't happy.

I confess that I wasn't totally successful in promoting sportsmanship with my kids. So, allow me to offer you the following guidelines to be good sportsmanship examples for your children.

*** Attend a contest to support and cheer for your team. Enjoy the skill and competitive efforts of both teams. Remember, all kids have parents who love them as well. Thus, do not intimidate or ridicule your opponents . . . they're just kids like yours.**

*** Keep in mind, school athletics are learning experiences for our children, and mistakes are sometimes made. We must praise our children in their attempt to**

improve themselves as athletes, just as we would praise them for their work in the classroom.

*** Some may not like this one. A ticket to a school extracurricular event is a privilege to observe a contest. It is not a license to verbally assault opponents, their fans and the officials. Remember, although you may not realize it, your children are watching all your actions ... and are learning from them.**

*** To truly show your interest in your children and the sports in which they are participating, see to it you take the time to learn the rules of the game. In doing so, you will better understand and appreciate why sports officials make the calls they do under certain unusual situations.**

*** All parents want their children to respect them and their beliefs in life. This can be accomplished by parents showing respect for others, especially in the sports arena. In other words, you need to respect opposing coaches, athletes, cheerleaders, spectators, as well as the officials assigned to the event. In essence, treat them as though they were guests in your own home.**

*** At this point, I think it is important that we take a more in-depth look at our understanding of the role that officials play in our children's athletic lives.**

Don't ever lose sight of the fact that someone must take on the responsibility of overseeing sporting events. Hence, you must respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. You must further focus your thoughts on the point that these individuals are doing their best to be totally fair to all the hard working athletes, including your son or daughter. And most importantly, admire their willingness to

participate in full view of the public. After all, few (very few) men or women would have the dedication and nerve to do what they do.

Do officials occasionally make mistakes? Of course, they do. It's part of the game and we're all subject to human error.

Now ask yourself this final soul-searching question in reference to officials: "Would I want my children treated as officials are frequently treated by many spectators after making very difficult decisions?"

*** By all means, no matter how upset you might be with your opponents' coaches' lack of sportsmanship, take a deep breath, and refrain from stooping to their level with derogatory comments that could be construed as unethical in nature on your part. I know it is tough to do during emotional circumstances, but you will be pleased with yourself later. Believe me, such coaches are their own worst enemies, and even their players, parents, and fans don't respect them.**

*** There are other individuals you, as athletic parents, have an obligation to . . . your school administrators. You must make a steadfast effort to support your school officials in their efforts to promote the educational benefits of athletics and their emphasis on good sportsmanship.**

*** This is another tough one. You should always attempt to recognize and show sincere appreciation for the outstanding efforts of players on both teams involved in the contest.**

*** Finally, there is one last point that must be emphasized. Be a positive role model and condemn any actions around you that promote behavior that is unbecoming to a wholesome, competitive atmosphere.**

I freely and honestly admit, it is quite hard to be a parent in today's modern "blame-somebody-else" culture. Thus, your extremely difficult job is to strive to foster appropriate parental behavior in all facets of your child's life, including sports.

In conclusion, I have devised a sportsmanship theory: "The 2-E Parental Principle." What you, as parents, Emanate is what your children will most likely Emulate regarding athletic competition. Be careful; your children definitely know your thoughts and observe your actions in sports and life more than you could ever begin to imagine.

Parent Proverb

"Character is not made in a crisis – it is only exhibited."

- Robert Freeman

Next Month's Column: "The Importance of Humor in Life."

(Editor's Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He was selected as a "2009 Teacher of the Year" by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. His e-mail is mattalkwy@hotmail.com.)