

Fostering Positive Parent/Caregiver Engagement

A positive coach strives to create a supportive sports environment where athletes grow as competitors while developing life skills. Parents/caregivers can serve as powerful allies in creating these positive sports experiences. The strategies below will help coaches develop positive relationships with parents/caregivers while actively engaging them to cultivate a positive sports experience for all athletes.

Coaches Can:

- Hold a preseason meeting to share your coaching philosophy, the importance of valuing effort over winning, overview logistics, and any feedback channels you'd like to establish.
- If you have a written team agreement, charter, or code of conduct, extend that to the parents/caregivers. PCA's [Positive Sports Parent/Caregiver Pledge](#) is a great way to align on expectations, get everyone on the same page, and set the team up for success no matter your record.
- Offer opportunities to participate in the team community with small things that make sports fun: encouraging signs for big games, after-practice get-togethers, or even a parents/caregivers vs. athletes scrimmage at practice.
- Consider inviting parents/caregivers into the huddle after the game - show them how you help your athletes digest a big win or learn from a loss the moment when emotions are most often at their highest.
- Establish a [Team Parent/Caregiver program](#) to engage parents with the time and availability to help out with larger tasks to help shape the team community - like managing travel to and from practices/games, welcoming new families into the fold, intervening when sideline expectations aren't met, etc.
- Provide parents/caregivers with opportunities to connect with their athletes through the sport such as:
 - Encourage them to watch sports together and identify skills they can learn from watching professionals.
 - Create a 'Take Home Ball' - a ball that each athlete takes a turn bringing home after practice to use to practice with their parent/caregiver, older sibling, friend, or mentor. Each person who plays with the is instructed to sign it before returning it to the coach at the next practice.¹
 - Reinforce different life skills and perspectives in sports by giving parents/caregivers a list of sports movies they can watch and discuss with their athlete.

1. The take-home ball is based off of youth softball coach and board member for East Williamson Athletics (Franklin, TN), Brian Lord's, 'Parent Ball'.

