

A Parent's Game Plan: "A New Definition of Winning"



GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE



What bothered Trisha most of all was that the mantel over the fireplace was bare. She knew the mantel was the place where winners put their tall trophies and gold medals. She trained, she competed, but she came home empty. The thought that shook her world was that if winners have tall trophies and gold medals, and she had none, then she must be a ... oh, she couldn't even say the "L" word – but she thought it must be true. Trisha's

dad could sense that his daughter was chasing trophies whenever she competed. Perhaps it was partly his fault because of comments he made like, "If you try harder you can win a medal too." Now she seemed to tighten up during competitions and her movements didn't look natural or confident. Then Trish's dad remembered something he'd read in a book about a different way to look at winning. He decided to share this new definition of what it means to be a winner. On the way to practice one day he said, "Trisha, I think you're a winner already, you just haven't been looking in the right place for the proof." "Where should I be looking?" asked Trisha. "In the mirror" replied her dad. "You see, **winning is ending the day just a little better than you were that morning.** That's the real definition of winning. If you can look in the mirror at the end of each day and see some small way in which you are better than you were that morning, you are winning! And if you put a string of those winning days back to back, one after another, you must be a WINNER!

Trisha's eye lit up because she knew she could do that. She looked at her dad with a smile and said, "I guess if I focus on winning each day the trophies will take care of themselves. Dad smiled back, "I believe they will." Children who make learning and progress their primary goal discover they not only have more fun, they win more often too.

Put It To Practice

One primary difference between your child's sport involvement and the goals of professional athletes is that the pros are paid to win, your child is not. Make it clear to your child that **learning** is the real goal.

Even with this healthier perspective, it's possible for you to pressurize the family environment if every conversation begins with "So, what progress did you make today?" Or, "Are you learning anything yet?" That kind of nagging is like going out to the garden every morning and pulling up the carrots to see how much they've grown!

If the message is clear that you value "AHAs", your child will frequently come running with the latest report without you asking for it. Find the balance point between conducting an inquisition about daily progress and ignoring your child's efforts. Statements like, "I can see that your hard work is paying off" followed by, "What did you do to make the improvement?" will normally start a conversation you'll both enjoy having.