



TENNIS
FOR BRITAIN



MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

A Guide for Parents

SECTION 1: DEVELOPING AN EMPATHETIC AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PARENTING MINDSET

Understanding the Multiple Demands of Tennis	Page 4
Adopting a Life Skills and Values-Based Approach	Page 5
Communicating Positive Values Around Achievement	Page 5

SECTION 2: KEY ROLES BEFORE MATCHES AND TOURNAMENTS

Understand Pre-Match Thoughts and Feelings	Page 6
Acknowledge and Empathise with their Emotions	Page 6
Help your Child with the Meaning of Competition	Page 8
Encourage Intentions through Pre-Match Goals	Page 9
Mental Strategies for Coping with Matchplay	Page 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimising the warm-up • Executing the between point routine • Optimising the change-over • Gathering evidence of strengths, achievements and learning points 	
Optimising the learning experience for your child	Page 12
Concluding Thoughts	Page 16
Additional Resources	Page 18
Glossary Of Psychological Terms	Page 19

Introduction

Tennis is a sport that boasts numerous physical, mental, social and emotional benefits for players of all ages. In addition, the unique nature of the sport makes it ideal for lifelong participation. It is therefore vitally important that parents and coaches help to equip young players with the skills needed to cope with the challenges that make the game of tennis so enriching.

In this guide for tennis parents, we build on some of the details and insights that are introduced in the LTA's 'Optimal Competition Parenting Workshop' (<https://www.lta.org.uk/parents>). We encourage parents to attend one of the workshops as an opportunity to start exploring how best to support your child, and interact with other parents in the tennis community. Through this guide, we will provide additional information and guidance on how you can help the development of your child's mental and emotional skills. Importantly, the knowledge we share is focused on supplementing the programme that may be delivered by your child's coach as well as helping you to collaborate with the coach. Our aim is to help you continue the provision of excellent support to your child by drawing on core principles and practices from the field of sport psychology. The mission, in tennis specific language, is to share the fundamentals of what young players should be learning and practicing in conjunction with how you can create an environment to nurture these mental and emotional skills.

We have split this guide into different sections that progressively build on each other. By understanding the mental and emotional demands of the game, parents and children can become aware of the best attitude and mindset for tennis and the specific strategies that are important to practice and apply in both training and competition (i.e., before, during and after matches).

Professor Chris Harwood, PhD
Loughborough University

Sam Thrower, PhD
University of Roehampton

SECTION I: DEVELOPING AN EMPATHETIC AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PARENTING MINDSET

A parent's contribution to nurturing their child's mental and emotional skills in tennis starts with the development of their own healthy mindset towards the game. This begins with an empathetic command of the psychological demands of tennis and consideration of the values and expectations that they project onto their child

UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIPLE DEMANDS OF TENNIS

Tennis is a mentally and emotionally demanding sport for young players. Below we list some of the game's most challenging psychological features:

- An individual, head to head sport where your child is entirely responsible for every decision (made every 1.5 seconds!)
- A player's quality of performance on court is highly visible to all onlookers -every shot, every point. You are alone and there is no hiding!
- Multiple technical, physical and tactical skills are required to operate simultaneously against varying types of opponent, on changing court surfaces, in differing weather conditions, in diverse settings and often with no umpire or on-court referee.
- A brutal scoring system where every mistake is punished, where the score goes back to zero at the end of sets, where there are no draws or time limits to the match.
- A sport where you have 20 seconds to recover yourself before the next point, and the next, and the next....over 100-150 times!

In addition to these points, it is a game that ultimately judges the young player by the match result when they shake hands at the net. It doesn't give a personal or season's best time; an individual score that shows how the youngster improved in a certain area, or 'style marks' for their volleys or passing shots. Unlike swimming, athletics or gymnastics, the sport doesn't provide such personal reference points for the young player.

In summary, tennis fosters self-consciousness in young players and challenges motivation, confidence, concentration, and emotional temperament. It's a tough sport psychologically, and we need to work hard to help young players meet these challenges head on.

ADOPTING A LIFE SKILLS AND VALUES-BASED APPROACH

Paradoxically, the beauty and value of tennis is indeed that it places mental and emotional challenges on players. The sport can help to develop invaluable life skills in your child regardless of the level of tennis they may ultimately attain. However, this only happens when parents and coaches work together to create an environment which emphasises and values such skills. Parents can share with their child the many values and skills that they can learn through tennis (e.g., work ethic, perseverance, courage, respect, composure, acceptance, preparation, communication, conflict resolution, self-reflection, goal setting). Importantly, while all of these qualities will render the player more competitive and focused, the demonstration of these qualities is not dependent on winning. Players can successfully engage in these positive behaviours in training and matches – irrespective of whether they ultimately win or lose. On the other hand, when parents and players place excessive emphasis on the outcome of a match alone the core values are often lost, and fear, anxiety and anger can take over in children. It is vitally important that parents take a values-focused as opposed to a result-focused approach to their child in tennis. This allows children to understand that they can achieve in tennis in a variety of ways.

COMMUNICATING POSITIVE VALUES AROUND ACHIEVEMENT

In the 'Optimal Competition Parenting Workshop', we introduced the terms 'task orientation' and 'ego orientation'. When parents openly value self-improvement, persistence, learning from mistakes, and taking on new challenges then their child is more likely to internalise these values. Such values become part of their belief system about what 'achievement' means to them (i.e., I feel successful when I compete hard, try to improve my strokes, learn from errors, take on new challenges etc). When this happens, a task orientation is nurtured in your child. Conversely, if conversations in a family environment are solely placed on winning/not losing, ratings, rankings, and expectations around results (e.g., "you should beat her"; "he's rated lower than you" etc.), then the player creates a belief that success is solely down to being better than someone else (i.e., I only feel successful when I win!). This is an ego orientation – the one that opens the door to experiences of anxiety, fear of failure, and anger in young players. A player's ability to employ a task-oriented approach to competition is one of the biggest challenges that they will face, and one that requires resolute support from parents.

In addition, selecting a coach who is also focused on the development and well-being of your child in task-oriented ways is an important exercise. Parents can ask prospective coaches about the training environment that they create, how they help to nurture psychological skills and what their coaching philosophy is in respect of values around enjoyment, learning and development.

SECTION 2: KEY ROLES BEFORE MATCHES AND TOURNAMENTS

The vast majority of parents are the sole supporter of their child at a tournament in the absence of a coach watching the event. Therefore, by definition, you are the sole provider of mental and emotional support. There are a number of ways that you can actively help your child if you find yourself in these situations.

UNDERSTAND PRE-MATCH THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Parents will be aware that young players (and adults!) tend to get nervous and worried before matches. It's understandable because tennis is a sport of 'uncertainty' and pre-match is a time when the child will be processing the expectations they place upon themselves and that they perceive others (i.e., parents, peers, coaches) to place upon them. There is a big difference here between what we'll call 'excitement-nerves' and 'fear-nerves' in children before matches.

As tennis as a sport naturally fosters an 'ego orientation', many young players will worry about the result of a match and deduce their expectations of winning/losing before the first ball has even been hit. They will look at their first round draw and become worried and then they'll typically look ahead at the rest of their potential draw and make 'result-based' predictions. They will typically feel pressure from their seeding or ranking/rating or when playing a seeded player, and they'll probably make a whole host of irrational judgements about the match and the opposition. They'll also worry about who is watching their match and what the outcome of the match will mean for others and themselves in terms of consequences. Junior tennis can be particularly nerve-racking for players who are experiencing certain situations and environments for the first time, and 'fear-nerves' are an understandable yet unpleasant response to the demands that young players' experience. Below we highlight how you can help your child manage these demands.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND EMPATHISE WITH THEIR EMOTIONS

Parents can help their child before matches by acknowledging the way the child may feel and exploring the reasons for their emotions. Children may have a certain view of an opponent that is entirely different to your 'adult' view, and it is their perception that matters because it is their mental and emotional state that will influence how they perform. Talking about the match, the opponent, their thoughts/fears, your values, and expectations for them will go some way towards shifting the 'emotional needle' towards 'excitement-nerves' on the 'pressure gauge'. 'Excitement-nerves' reflect what is totally normal before a match - an emotional state where they are nervous to start the match, unsure of what may happen, but feel excited, challenged, and eager to start hitting some balls.



HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THE MEANING OF COMPETITION

Many young children have an inappropriate perspective on the meaning of competition in tennis, and lean naturally towards an ego orientation due to the nature of the sport. Parents can help them to enjoy their tennis more by adopting and sharing with them a clear attitude towards the challenges of tennis. Talking with your child perhaps the night before a match or early on match day, you have the chance to draw their attention away from a dysfunctional fixation and preoccupation with the possible result of a match. The prospective outcome can seriously define their thinking pattern, self-worth, and subsequent emotions such that they feel very drained even before they get on court! As a parent you can use storytelling about top players and refer to examples you have seen or media interviews where they have spoken about the qualities of their attitude in/to matches. Importantly, in your story to the child you can share that tennis matches present the player with two types of competition challenge – one with the self and one with the opponent that tennis has given them on that day. Express how these are opportunities for them to enjoy putting their skills into action and learning about themselves.

The self-challenge is a chance to execute strokes that the player has been working on, to play their strongest shots and see how well they can perform in relation to things like: ‘consistency of effort’, ‘concentration every point’, ‘calm and ready before points’, ‘fairplay and respect’, ‘confident body language’ and ‘brave decisions’. This self-competition is like ‘Personal Best Tennis’ and it is creating an opportunity for them to know and feel that you value the effort put into their performance irrespective of the result of a match. In doing so you will also be creating a task orientated environment.

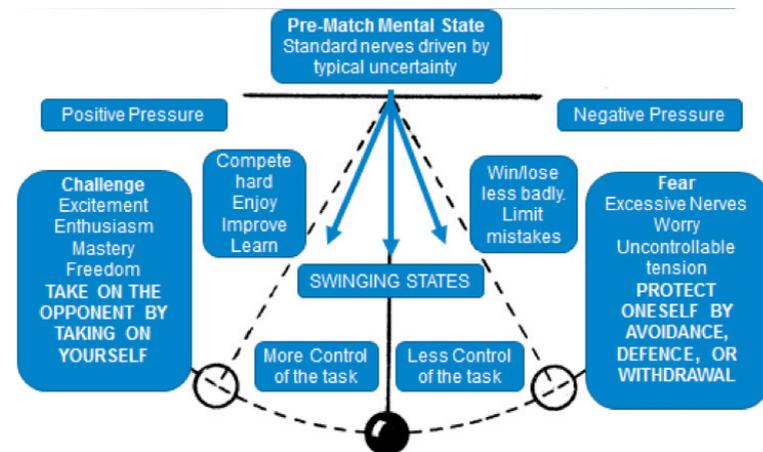
The ‘opponent- challenge’ is phrased in a way that breaks down irrational misconceptions of the opponent as many young players can see an opponent’s seeding, rating, ranking or current form (i.e., ‘she beat her 6-3, 6-2 last week in a Grade 4 therefore she must be brilliant!’) and automatically think they are a much worse [or a much better] player than the opponent. In talking through the opponent-challenge, parents can stress not to make assumptions based on an opponent’s perceived ‘status’ but to focus only on what they know about their gamestyle and personality (if anything!). Parents can emphasise that tennis will give them opponents to play of all abilities, sizes, styles and personalities, and it is just a journey for their child of being competitive against the standard that the opposition presents on that day. This means applying all of the elements of ‘self-challenge’ in addition to finding out the potential weak points of the opponent and trying to solve the problems created by the opponent. Parents can become skilled in the art of depersonalizing an encounter and turning the child’s mental volume button down on worries about ‘rivalry’ or ‘friendships’ and other ‘what ifs’. Young players are often full of ‘what ifs’ before matches (e.g., ‘what if I lose 1st round and you’ve travelled all this way, all that petrol money, time, accommodation expenses?’). Play the ‘what if’ game with them, get their fears and concerns out and try to ease them by presenting the points above and below in your own words. These two types of competition challenge (i.e., self and opponent) are present in every single tennis match. They are competitive opportunities that are rational and workable for all young players. Importantly, when shared with them skilfully, they help to create a positive ‘challenge’ mindset in players as opposed to a negative ‘threat’ mindset.

ENCOURAGE INTENTIONS THROUGH PRE-MATCH GOALS

With the points acknowledged in the prior section, the coaches of many aspiring players and those working with sport psychologists would typically help the player develop a routine of recording or writing down their aims and intentions before matches which are reviewed after the match (i.e., a player diary, log book, journal, or sticker book). As noted in the ‘Optimal Competition Workshop’, parents can help keep young players on track by reminding them about process goals for matches. These are essentially the ‘processes’ of the self-challenge and the opponent-challenge and reflect what the player has been working on technically, tactically or mentally in training (e.g., attacking the net on short balls; doing my ‘Jo Konta routine’ between points; Being ‘Federer cool’ during set-backs). Such techniques work in conjunction with the points above and help players to focus on a more thoughtful ‘map of the match’ - the skills and behaviours that are going to make the journey of the match and its roads easier to navigate. We encourage parents to collaborate with coaches and players on making this process more consistent. Remember this process mentally helps players to find elements of certainty (i.e., I can definitely manage how I use my time between points) and a sense of control within what is still an uncertain environment and adventure.

The diagram below illustrates how the mental and emotional states of players can swing before and during a match. Indeed, the easiest way to view this is just like a swinging pendulum of thoughts and emotions. Players play their most expressive, free-hitting tennis when they experience a positive form of pressure – challenged by the match and focused on living and executing some key values about competition. This lies opposite to a negative pressure mindset that is characterised by threat, fear and consequences for losing. Parents and coaches need to help players to keep their mental pendulum stuck to the left – immovable during the roller-coaster of a match. This next section offers some specific insights regarding how this can be achieved.

INFLUENCING THE PENDULUM OF PRESSURE



MENTAL STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH MATCHPLAY

When young players are called onto court, the mental and emotional journey accelerates forward and you are the source of emotional and confidence-building support as an observer if you are watching the match. Reflecting back for a moment on the demands of tennis, when you see players not coping well on court then you tend to see four different types of response:

1. Excessive anxiety. Overanxious players experience high levels of nervousness and worry that translates into muscle tension, arm tightness, heavy-footedness and defensive play. Tension hits the serve with more double faults and groundstrokes become slower, higher, more tentative because the player fears missing and takes drastic action to try and avoid making errors. It is basically a continuous speed-accuracy 'trade off'. Less speed means "at least I won't miss the court!"
2. Persistent anger and self-sabotage. Whilst players may feel anxiety before or in anticipation of a negative event happening, the response of anger comes after the event has happened (e.g. after a close line call; unforced error on break point down). While single episodes of frustration are understandable when competition matters to young people, more persistent examples of anger, ball/racquet abuse, self-hostility and anti-social behaviour are indicative of poor emotional regulation or control (otherwise known as low self-regulation).
3. Complacency. Complacency can be viewed as 'lack of attention to detail' and the detail here is the match at hand and the court upon which the player is competing. Some players fall into the trap, usually after breaking serve or winning the first set, of switching off and looking at other courts. Whether conscious or not, the brain takes the foot off the accelerator in a misguided belief that the match result is theirs now, and you may see young players completely distracted or 'off task'.
4. Tanking. This is a set of behaviours that you see in players where they withdraw effort from the task of competing and disengage from the match by hitting the ball out on purpose, giving their opponents easy balls to hit, and generally sabotaging any chances of winning the match. They do this because they sense they have lost all hope of winning, so rather than carry on trying hard and risk an even worse perception of their talent (i.e., they were beaten while trying their best!), they purposefully protect their talent by withdrawing mental and physical effort. In this way, in their own minds at least, they preserve an image of being 'talented' to opponents in the future. Feigning an injury or illness, withdrawing from a match that one fears losing are other forms of 'avoidance behaviour' to protect self-worth but none are as explicitly visible as tanking a match.

The nature of tennis presented at the start of this guide understandably challenges a young player's self-worth and their perceptions of competence as a player. All four of these emotional responses are more likely to be triggered in players who focus excessively on the result of matches (i.e., those high in ego orientation). In other words, the pendulum has swung to the right. If this happens your role lies in helping players understand the true meaning and values of competition. In summary, when young players fear delivering on the outcome of a match or start to lose control over the outcome during the match, then expect the brain to open the floodgates to anxiety, distress, and anger. When players overconfidently believe they are in full control, then the brain mistakenly drops its guard. Finally (in relation to the 4th emotional response), when all systems are failing to guarantee the win then the self-destruct button is pressed.

In this respect, while reinforcing to players that effort and persistence are non-negotiable matchplay qualities, emotional control and control of attention are primary coping skills that young players should strive to master. Let us take a look at some basic strategies and ideas that players can work on through coaches, supported by their parents.



OPTIMISING THE WARM-UP

Players can switch on their mental focus and experience the positive emotions of ball striking during the five-minute warm-up. To build confidence and accentuate the 'feel' of concentration, players should be challenged to mentally differentiate what is a 3/10 (i.e., lazy footwork, no conviction etc) from a 10/10 shot in terms of attention to the ball, footwork and positioning, feel of the strike etc so that they begin to 'deposit' quality experiences in the memory bank. A player hits quite a few balls in a warm-up, and with a purposeful focus on each strike, crisp footwork and smart serve practice, they can arrive at the start of the match with a little more mental momentum and confidence to hit the ground running. Put simply, it's a golden five minutes to physically and mentally switch-on!

EXECUTING THE BETWEEN-POINT ROUTINE

The world's best players have clear between-point routines (e.g., see Maria Sharapova for an excellent example) which is a set pattern of internal thoughts/self-talk, action and behaviour that they go through on a point-by-point basis. Between point routines are the 20 second 'engine room' for mental planning and emotional control. They represent the cornerstone of a young player's self-regulation and they need to be practiced. About 60-70% of a match is 'dead time' where the ball is out of play, so managing this time is equally (if not more) important than optimising the 30-40% of playing time. An effective between-point routine typically consists of three phases or elements:

1. An acceptance or reinforcement phase where the player mentally acknowledges the last point – their performance, the opponent's performance, any situational issues – and moves on quickly. Positive, encouraging self-talk is very important in these opening seconds.
2. A recovery and composure element where the player physically re-groups, uses the towel, breathes rhythmically to control heart rate and attention.
3. A planning and intentions phase where the player evaluates the situation and any tactical strategy that is pertinent 'on serve' or for the next point (e.g., next serve is directed out wide).

As a parent with a young player it is important to work with the coach to ensure that the child works on their between-point routine in training and in matches for serve and return of serve. Routines are personal to each player (see Rafa Nadal vs. Andy Murray) but they tend to be most effective when:

1. The player engages in a set breathing pattern (e.g., at least 5 calming breaths during the 20 seconds) to help concentration and recovery. Reminding young players to listen to their breathing can be a useful attentional and calming 'cue'.
2. They have a library of 'self-accepting', 'positive' and 'planning-based' self-talk statements that they can call upon at-will (e.g., 'No problem, let's stay focused'; 'Great effort'; 'close, right decision; next point, come on'; 'let's go out wide on this one, test them out'; 'OK, this point then, solid' etc).
3. They partner their positive or accepting self-talk with a physical response or behaviour (e.g., shoulders back, walk to the towel; bounce away to back of court with a slight spring in step; subtle fist clench, and click the strings). Pairing sets of neutral or positive physical reactions with self-talk in a routine helps to create a more optimistic and 'move on' emotional state in the player. It also projects a message to the opponent that this player is able manage their emotional energy.
4. The player decides the space on the court they want to use in between points and owns that space every time as a platform to get themselves ready for the next point.
5. The player narrows their attention to an external focal point such as the ball in the opponent's hand when receiving serve (see Djokovic) or on the ball and target spot for the serve when they are serving.
6. They practice the above elements diligently in training.

The above elements help regulate emotion and attention on the task – i.e., the present point. However, matches will place the young player in a variety of situations (e.g., ahead in a match, behind, break points for/against, serving for sets/matches, starting the 2nd set off, receiving tight line calls, missing easy shots, opponent hitting winners...and combinations of these in a row!). Players should be practicing their routines between points in these situations and role-playing match scenarios when things are going well and when they aren't going well. In sum, practicing mental and emotional responses in different game situations is 'bread and butter' stress-dosing for aspiring players and good coaches should routinely set these situations up for players to train their responses to these inevitable scenarios.

OPTIMISING THE CHANGE OF ENDS:

Whereas players have 20 seconds in between points, they gain 90 seconds at the change of ends and this time represents another golden opportunity for young players to mentally and emotionally check-in with themselves. This is time to recover physically, refuel and hydrate but also to refocus on the state of the match, acknowledge strengths and what is working, and what the opponent-challenge has been bringing. It allows the player to think of one or two qualities that they want to demonstrate as a competitor in the next game. Consider it like plugging a hybrid car in the electricity port and ensuring that when the player leaves their seat, they are fully charged with:

1. Total physical commitment to the next two games (before the next change of ends).
2. Total mental commitment to a quality, plan or strategy that acknowledges the situation.
3. Staying in the present moment and responding positively on a point-by-point basis.

For young players, sticking a set of mental reminders on their water bottle can be a useful technique. They can select the words or phrases they want to be as a player, and spend a few moments focusing on these and what they mean for the next game before they leave the chair.

GATHERING EVIDENCE OF STRENGTHS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNING POINTS

As explored in the 'Optimal Competition Parenting Workshop', while your son or daughter is navigating their way through the match, you are managing your own journey - keeping your emotions in check, reinforcing positive behaviours, and offering praise and empathy. However, there are some ways in which parents can be useful for players in gathering evidence for the coach to assist their coaching. For example, with permission from the referee and opponent, you may be able to record the match so that your child can see themselves in competition and review their performance. A coach might also teach you how to chart a match or make notes on when you saw certain strengths and other responses in your child. We encourage parents to support their child through respectful praise; but perhaps also to plan with the coach and their child around observing any elements that they can look out for and note during the match.

OPTIMISING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR CHILD

When the match is over and players shake hands at the net, there will be another transition period for players where emotions (e.g., happiness, relief, disappointment, sadness) are processed. Such emotions will typically arise from an interaction between the match outcome (i.e., won/lost), the quality of their performance, and the quality of the opponent's performance. When the time is right, one of the most important exercises for a young player to do is to review their 'self-challenge' and 'opponent-challenge' - so we go full circle back to the start of this guide.

The key point to help players recognise here is that a tennis match, typically made up of 100-150 points, will yield a lot of learning information. Such a body of information is much broader than can be reduced to a simplistic 6-3, 6-4 scoreline. There will be information on their quality of decision-making, their behaviour and reactions, their physical effort and movement, their fairplay and respect, their technical skills as well as their management of 'being ahead' and 'behind'. A match experience is full of riches that lie well beyond the score or result. Therefore, parents, coaches, and players really do need to work together to mine the riches and maximise the learning experience (once the emotions have gone!).

Optimising the learning experience for your child is a matter of them taking their time with yourself and/or the coach (if available) and sharing their thoughts and feelings on the match. Challenge your child to think about what they did well (i.e., behaviours, self-management, game style, routine, fairplay, sticking to goals), what they could improve upon (be mindful of not labelling these areas for improvement as 'issues' or 'problems') and what they could do differently next time. Your discussions should be guided by the expectations, values, and goals which were established before the match (try not to be blinded by the result!). The key here is to help your child to briefly reflect, through careful questioning (e.g., "what did you do well?"; "what did you find difficult?"; "what could you have done differently?"; "what did you learn from the opponent/match?") and probing (e.g., "what do you mean by that?"; "what makes you think that?"). Ideally, they should be doing most of the talking! Guiding children through this process is crucial to optimising their learning experience and over time children will become more proficient at doing this independently during and after matches.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The aim of this guide was to share the fundamentals around nurturing the development of mental and emotional skills in your child for tennis competition. In doing so we highlight the importance of adopting a values-based approach and proactively working together with coaches to develop specific characteristics and skills in your child. In addition to this, we have suggested roles and responsibilities in helping your child to develop the skills and strategies that they can employ to manage the emotional rollercoaster of a tennis match.

As a final comment, there is a very tangible sense of joy and flow that players can experience in the heat of battle in tennis. Such experiences and sensations of feeling alive grow and surge from a cast-iron mindset and attitude towards what a competitive tennis match is all about. The most important take home message that we offer to parents is 'please help your children to understand the true meaning of competition and reinforce that how they go about the challenges of tennis and learn from the experience is far more important than the result'.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Although the emphasis of this booklet has been on nurturing your child's mental and emotional skills during competition, below we include a list of online resources for sport parents on a range of topics which you may find useful going forward:

SportParentEU (<http://www.sportparent.eu/en/resources>)

SportParentEU is a website which was developed through an Erasmus+ funding grant and includes a number of evidence-based resources for sports parents on a range of topics including: 'Parental involvement', 'physical considerations', 'psychological considerations', 'safeguarding' and 'talent and elite athletes'.

Child Protection in Sport Unit (<https://the cpsu.org.uk/>)

The child protection in sport unit (CPSU) is a partnership between the NSPCC, Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland and Sport Wales. The Unit was founded in 2001 to work with UK Sports Councils, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) and other organisations to help them minimise the risk of child abuse during sporting activities. Each year (usually during the first week of October) the CPSU run the 'Parents in Sport Week' initiative. The CPSU website has a section specifically for parents and a number of excellent resources, leaflets and videos.

PYDSportsNet (<http://www.positivesport.ca/about-us/>)

PYDSportNET is a North American network to stimulate knowledge generation and exchange in the area of Positive Youth Development (PYD) through sport. PYD SportNET aims to link researchers with practitioners, sport organizations, parents, and coaches and provides evidence-based resources for enhancing the sport experiences of children and adolescents.

GLOSSARY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS

Anxiety: A subjective feeling of nervousness and unease which can range in severity. Mental (or cognitive) symptoms can include worry and concern, whilst physical (or somatic) symptoms can include increased heart rate, butterflies in the stomach, increased muscle tension, feeling sick, and difficulty sleeping.

Ego Orientation: A dispositional tendency to feel most successful in an activity (e.g., competition) when demonstrating ability relative to others (e.g., outperforming others, winning)

Emotional Regulation: The processes by which individuals modify the type, quality, time course, and intensity of their emotions.

Flow: An intrinsically rewarding, harmonious psychological state involving intense focus and absorption in a specific activity with a sense of everything coming together or clicking into place, even in challenging situations.

Goals / Goal Setting: A strategy in which an individual develops a plan to achieve a desired standard or objective. The goals set by an athlete can be typically characterised as outcome, performance, or process goals. Outcome goals focus on the result of a competition, performance goals emphasise achieving a desired personal performance standard, and process goals focus on the specific actions an individual must take in order to achieve greater performance.

Life Skills: Personal assets / abilities (e.g., emotional control, goal-setting) that can be learned/refined in sport and enable individuals to succeed in different life domains (e.g., education, work, social life).

Mental Skills: A set of trainable mental abilities which can be used to facilitate successful learning and performance. Basic mental skills include goal setting, imagery, relaxation and self-talk.

Self-Reflection: A purposeful process that facilitates the examination of an experience. This examination occurs through questioning and transforms experience into learning. Reflection can occur in-action (e.g., during performance) or on action (e.g., after performance).

Self-Talk: An individual's internal dialogue which can be positive and motivational or negative and demotivating.

Task Orientation: A dispositional tendency to feel most successful in an activity (e.g., competition) when demonstrating ability relative to the self and personal improvement (e.g., an individual's own personal progress, improvement, and effort).

Written By

Professor Chris Harwood, PhD
Loughborough University

Sam Thrower, PhD
University of Roehampton