

Mindset Tip Sheet for Parents

*Providing high performance expertise
to sport and athletes in Scotland*



We know that you want the best for your child. We also understand that knowing what to do to help them through the ups and downs of sport is not an easy task. We are convinced that developing a growth mindset is a significant advantage for athletes as they strive to achieve great things in their sport. So what can you do to help your child develop a **growth mindset**? Below are some suggestions in key areas.

Beliefs about talent

While an athlete needs to be physically suited to their chosen sport and they need quality coaching, their beliefs about talent can also have a significant impact on what they achieve. To help your child develop the belief that sporting ability is a **process of learning** you can:

- Avoid statements that suggest their abilities are down to 'natural talent'.
- Praise continued effort on developing skills that will be important in future.
- If they have been competing, ask about their experiences rather than the result. Help them see competition as an opportunity to learn how to improve and not as a way of finding out if you are good or not.
- Celebrate when they do well but make sure they associate success with hard work and preparation in key areas. Talk about the little things they have been working on and how they have had a positive impact on their performance.
- Encourage them to say, "I can't do it **YET**" if they are struggling. Focus their energies on working out how they could improve or how they could find more time to practice.
- Stress that time on task is the key to developing skills. If they don't believe they can improve ask them to think about something they are good at and then relate this to how much structured and unstructured practice they have done in the past. Help them see that getting good at anything will take time.

Response to challenges

One of the characteristics of an athlete with a growth mindset is that they **embrace and learn** from challenges rather than avoid them. To help your child learn to do this:

- Ask about the areas of their sport they are working on and why it is important. If they are not sure encourage them to talk to their coach or look for other ways to find out more (Google it!).
- Praise them when they take on the 'tough challenge' when they could have gone for the easy option. Let them know you value their choice.

- Encourage them to keep working on areas they feel they are not so good at. Not addressing weaknesses you can get away with at age group level will really limit your chances of becoming a successful senior athlete.
- Remind them to keep working hard on the areas they are already good at – being good enough now is no guarantee you'll be good enough in the future.
- Accept that when your child does embrace challenges they will fail at times and this is a great opportunity to learn. Help them to understand that failure is all part of the non-linear development process and if the challenges are too easy, then this can limit how much they can learn.

Response to setbacks

Setbacks will happen in sport. Here are some examples of how you can help your child to **persist** following a setback rather than let the setback undermine their belief in their ability:

- Help them to see a setback and the emotions they feel as a very important part of the learning process. It is normal to be disappointed when a setback occurs. Help them learn to manage their emotions and not let the setback make them feel they can't do something.
- Pick your time wisely but do speak to your child about the learning opportunity that comes from a setback. When things don't go quite to plan it is a good time to stop and reflect on what happened and what you may need to do differently in future.
- Talk to your child about **their** expectations. Young athletes often focus more on what others are doing rather than what they are doing and perceived setbacks are often a result of unrealistic goals. Help them understand that athletes develop at different rates and focus their energy on what they need to do to keep improving.
- Talk to your child about **your** expectations. They won't want to feel like they have let you down. Does your child think all you care about are PB's and medals or do they understand you are proud of their consistent hard work and learning how to improve?

Response to negative feedback

Accurate feedback is crucial in sport but is not always delivered in the most constructive way. It could however be very useful and to help your child **learn** from rather than ignore negative feedback you can:

- Help them look for the useful information when they receive feedback. They may not believe they could have done any better so help them see things from another perspective.
- There is often a strong emotional response when athletes receive negative feedback (some go very quiet and others can get very angry). Emotions are an important part of who we are and you may need to help them learn how to manage their emotions first before they can see the useful information in any feedback.

- If feedback is limited after training or competition ask your child to reflect on what they can learn from other forms of non-verbal feedback (how they felt physically, what they were focusing on, their perception of what happened etc.)
- Help your child to understand that even world champions are asked to work on areas they can improve.
- Let the coach be the one to provide areas to work on. Your role is to help to reinforce why these areas are important and support the ups and down as they progress.

Ability to take ownership

As much as possible encourage your child to be responsible for their own development (at an appropriate level for their age). For example:

- Let them know you are happy to take them to training but you expect them to make sure they are ready in time.
- Let them pack for training and competitions so they know what preparation is needed to help them to perform well.
- Encourage them to ask questions and speak to their coach (where appropriate) rather than you doing it for them.
- Ask about their personal goals to help them build an understanding of what they will need to be good at in future. Ask about process goals ('how') as opposed to outcome goal ('what'). An outcome goal might be selection for the Commonwealth Games and the process goal might be to improve power by working hard in all gym sessions and once a week doing something extra approved by the coach.