

The thin line between teaching perseverance and pushing too much

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By Mario Campeau

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At first, let me make it clear: you should never force children to practice a sport or an activity that they don't like neither to force them to go beyond where they are willing to go.

Sounds obvious like that but it is scary how many parents I saw in my career that where seeing their son or daughter as the winner they never were or as the champion that they always wished to be. Do not forget: **YOU ARE NOT DOING THE SPORT, YOUR KID IS!**

Oh, we all know some success stories about a young gymnast who made it to the Olympics or a tennis player who turned pro early despite their tyrannical parents. But for 1 kid who made it, how many childhoods were broken? Thousands? Tens of thousands? Let kids be kids. If your kid is good and has the talent and the mind to go far, he will, with or without you. When I am talking to parents, I always say: "It is tough for a parent to help their kids to achieve success while it is so easy to make them fail!" Let me refer to the Issue #1 of Sports & Kids Newsletter for a humoristic but very true list of some "Don't".

Now, you will ask me: "Ok Mario, that is nice, do not push your children. Yeah, yeah! But I don't want my son or daughter to be a quitter, to always look for the easy way out when things are tough." Yep, you're right! You know the old saying: "When the going get tough, the tough get going!" As parents we all want our kids to be among the toughs. This is absolutely normal. But who said it is easy to be a parent? ;-)

First, it depends on the age of the children. Between 3 and 5 years old, we usually decide where we sign them up. Sometimes, if they have older brothers and sisters they might tell you: "I wanna play soccer" or "I wanna do cartwheels like my sister" but usually it is the parent's decision. We are usually influenced by neighbors, family, and local publicity. And of course, since it is our decision and not theirs, the chances to get it wrong are larger. You have to watch carefully your kid's attitude. Do not get too worried when they complain when you interrupt their playing time to go the swimming lesson or the soccer game. It is normal and usually has more to do with the fact that they have to stop their actual playing. As soon as they realize that they will be playing somewhere else they will be happy again. But if they are still complaining even when they are practicing their sport then you should start asking

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yourself questions. If it is a fight every time, do not hesitate and try something else. Do not wait too long. They will not become quitters at this time. They just want to have fun at this age. Most organizations have a refund policy, ask for it at the sign-up.

Older kids usually choose their activities. They are usually influenced by friends or by something that caught their attention on TV like in big events or professional sports finals. Olympics have a big influence in sports recruiting. Most sports represented in the Olympics know an increase in their recruiting in an Olympic year. Even more when a local athlete wins. For older kids that choose their own sport, make it clear right at the beginning: "If you sign up, you stay until the end of the season". This is called "keeping your engagements". It is important that they learn to make the proper choices and assume the responsibilities that go with it. Let's take a basketball team for example. The kid signs up in a team with a limited number of players. Maybe the organization even refused some inscriptions

because the team was full. If a player decides to quit after 2 or 3 weeks because "he doesn't like it anymore" or because "they lost the first 3 games", it is the whole team that is affected by his decision. So think about your choice and keep your word. If you think you didn't make the right choice then do not reenter yourself at the next session.

Also, at the beginning, validate your child's ambition. Does he want just to have fun, spend time with his friend and practice the sport just for the fun of it? Does he want to be good at it and perform at the highest level he can go? Or maybe he really wants to make it to the Olympics? Wow! I just got an idea for another article: My kid wants to go to the Olympics. What should I do? Well, this will be for issue #3. You will have to stay tuned, folks ;-)

Ok, back to our actual subject. Whatever the ambition is will guide you in the perseverance matter. If he is serious about being good and competing at the highest level then he has to be willing to make some sacrifices and you will have to be a little more "pushy" and insist a little more because sometimes it will be tougher than other times and sometimes he will loose and get discouraged. These are not good reasons to quit. "Au contraire", these should be times to increase the athlete's efforts. This is where the line between teaching perseverance and pushing too much is getting thinner and thinner. But good communication is always the best way to know where is this line. You know, there ARE good reasons to call it quit and you should always aim for your children's happiness first. Do not forget, your son is not a basketball player, he's your son. Your daughter is not a gymnast, she's your daughter. And do not forget that you might have other kids in your family, that are not doing sports and who also need your love. You might laugh but I saw it quite often. All the family focus is around the youngest daughter who wins tennis tournaments and the brothers and sisters do not exist. Sad.

Finally, to make it short (because I can talk about it for hours), always verify where you sign up your children. Is it a serious organization with a clean history? Who are the coaches, the volunteers? What are there background? Do they have criminal records? Yes, I'm serious, criminal records! As a parent, you are allowed, and you HAVE to verify this because you are going to entrust the most precious thing in your life to this person and sometimes for more than 20 hours a week for high level athletes. Be twice as careful with male coaches and volunteers. This might sounds like a prejudice but it's a fact; when we hear about horror stories, 80% of the time it is a man.

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Well, on this bright note ;-)) I say that's it for now. And don't let the last paragraph scares you. 99.9% of the organizations and volunteers are great with kids and you should encourage your kids to do some activities. With all those bad news about overweight kids in North America, we owe it to them to make sure to will live long and healthy.

Good bye and take care of your kids!

Mario Campeau has over 23 years of experience in sports organizations for children, 14 years of coaching, and is a father of 3 girls who are highly involved in competition sports.

Perseverance vs. Being Stubborn

By Susan Dunn

Perseverance vs. Being Stubborn by Susan Dunn, MA, The EQ Coach

DEFINITIONS

Perseverance – To go on resolutely in spite of opposition, importunity, or obstacles; to remain unchanged or fixed in a specified character, condition, or position; to stick with something, especially something difficult or challenging

Being stubborn – Bring unreasonably or perversely unyielding; mulish; unyielding and unopen to reason; performed or carried on in an obstinate or rigid manner; difficult to handle, manage or treat

COMPARISONS

Going forward vs. Stonewalling

Working toward something vs. Refusing to do something

Having a positive goal vs. Having a negative goal

EXAMPLE

Henry Ward Beecher said, "The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will, and and the other from a strong won't."

Selina persevered in her goal of becoming a teacher. She kept at it despite a lot of obstacles. At one point she had to stop and take a job to pay the tuition. At another time, her study was interrupted when her husband was transferred. To get her degree and become a teacher took a lot of time, energy and money, but she persevered and achieved her goal.

Evan was stubborn and withholding in his relationship with Esmerelda. He would not give her what she wanted under any circumstances. He would ask her where she wanted to go for dinner. She would

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say, "Mexican food." He would say, "No." She would ask him to suggest something and he would say again, "No, you choose."

KEY POINT

It's good to persevere, and not good to be stubborn. When you persevere, you are working toward a positive goal that's attainable. You are flexible and creative in pursuing possible alternatives toward your goal.

When you're being stubborn, you're either being negative to yourself (refusing to give up when you should), or to others (refusing to do what they want or to give them what they want), or to something (being in denial and refusing to face the facts).

BENEFITS

When you persevere, you make things happen. When you're being stubborn, you don't allow anything to happen. Being stubborn accomplishes nothing.

RELATED DISTINCTIONS

Being open to new possibilities vs. Saying no to new possibilities

Making suggestions vs. Just saying no to other people's suggestions

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