

Learning Guide #3

For Watching the 2010 Winter Olympic Games/Sporting Events with Children

Cooperation vs. Competition within a Team

Watching the Winter Olympic Games or a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. Just in time for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) has developed a series of learning guides for adults and children to use while watching sports on television or in person, both on the snow and ice, to promote healthy dialogue regarding sport. This guide suggests certain observations and presents several questions to discuss together. The learning guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic

Observation and discussion questions: Cooperation vs. Competition within a Team

While you watch the 2010 Winter Olympic Games or another sports event:

- Observe a couple of team sports.
- What is the difference between playing on a team sport versus playing a sport as an individual?
- What is the difference between cooperating with others versus being competitive with them?
- Is being competitive with people on your own team helpful or harmful to the team? How can it help the team? How could it hurt the team?
- Have you ever been on a team where someone was very competitive with their own teammates? How did that make you and other teammates feel?
- What do athletes say or do that shows you they are cooperating with their teammates?
- “Do you think everyone on the team likes one another? If not, how do they make it work?”

Lesson Conclusion

Participation on a sport team can present unique challenges for athletes. For example, in Olympic competition, some athletes may have previously competed against someone who is now their teammate. Before, they were competing against them, and now they have learned to cooperate with them. One way they do this is by focusing on achieving team goals. Only by working together can a team be successful. Athletes also compete against their teammates for playing time, which can create unhealthy competition within the team. A positive team atmosphere can be encouraged by emphasizing that “friendly competition” will make everyone a better player. Athletes can find a good balance between cooperation and competitiveness by helping each other improve by working hard in practice while also supporting one another. This will help the team remain unified and play to their potential. Learning to cooperate will increase confidence and self-esteem in young athletes and lead to a fun youth sport experience.

AASP encourages adults to do their part to create a supportive youth sport environment so children will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help children develop winning attitudes, both in sports and throughout life.

Prepared by Dr. Andrea Corn, a psychologist who works in private practice in Plantation, FL at Child & Family Psychologists. She serves on AASP's Organizational Outreach Committee.

The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org.

Readers are permitted and encouraged to copy, distribute, or forward this article to any interested persons with the stipulation that it be reproduced in its entirety, without modification, and with appropriate credit to AASP.