



These messages do a good job of showing support and allow parents to keep their end of the parent-athlete-coach triangle strong.

- I enjoy watching you ski/snowboard. *This is a supportive and non-judgmental affirmation.*
- I saw how hard you were trying and that made me proud. *Effort is something they can control, when you see good effort be sure to acknowledge it!*
- I love you no matter the result. *This frees your child to take risk, important for high level performance.*
- Tell me something you thought you did well. *Helps them to focus on a positive and to reflect and own their performance.*
- [HUG] Let's go get some food. *Wait and let them talk about their performance only when they're ready.*

The timing of your message is also important. Give your child time to take in their result. Be patient. Let them know you are there, but let them come to you. Your support will be more impactful if you give them this space and time.

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PARENT-ATHLETE-COACH TRIANGLE

Through the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, parents and coaches work together to provide a great athletic experience for their children. When coaches and parents each understand their roles and communicate well with each other, the opportunity for the kids is at its greatest. When parents and coaches don't communicate well or work in conflict, the kids suffer.

The parent-athlete-coach triangle represents the two-way communication and support that is so important for a rewarding season. When things go well, the coach and parent are each supporting every child in a complementary way.

Consider this example. Your child comes to the big qualifier competition with high hopes. She has prepared well, attended every practice, and finished up her assignments at school so she could concentrate on the event. On the first day of competition, she is charging hard but gets out of balance and has a fall. She finishes near the back of the pack. How do you address your child?

In many cases, parents with good intentions move into coach mode. They may try to give advice or share their appraisal of the performance with their child. Perhaps they say, "You know all you have to do is finish a clean run and you will qualify." Or, "You just have to stay in balance and keep your focus." This may be good advice, but does it sound a little like coaching? Sometimes the parent feedback may be more negative, "We invested a lot of money to get you here, don't blow this chance," or, "You have fallen in half your events, you've got to pull it together tomorrow." The negative message in the second two reactions is easy to see, but the first two also are at odds with the roles that the parent-athlete-coach triangle identifies. The coach's job is to evaluate performance. Our kids look to us to be non-judgmental about their performance. Can you see how even the first two comments can be perceived as judgements? They imply something must be corrected. Our kids perform at their best when our love and support for them is not conditioned on their result. In fact, the more loved they feel after a tough day, the more receptive they are to a coach's feedback, which by nature will sometimes be critical. When criticism comes from both parent and coach, it makes it very difficult for the child to draw the positive energy they need to come back strong day after day. See some ways to make sure your message sends support rather than adds stress on the left.



Conflicting messages coming from the parent and coach, especially relating to technical or tactical parts of the sport, lead to increased doubt in the athlete. When parent and coach give feedback that's out of sync, the athlete must choose and then there is fear of disappointing whoever's advice they choose not to follow. We usually see a tight or tentative performance as a result.

When should the communication between coach and parent happen? Never during the course of training or competition when the coach has responsibility with the athletes. Immediately after training or competition can be a good time. However, if there is a situation that has you emotionally charged, it is important to wait. Give it 24 hours so that you can be clear and concise with your concerns and have a productive conversation with your child's coach.