

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

*Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports*

## **Teach Your Athlete 3 Truths About Change**

**By David Benzel**



When faced with change do you typically embrace it or fight it?

Your answer probably has a lot to do with how change enters your life.

It usually happens in one of two ways:

1. You initiate a change
2. Change is thrust upon you

As you probably guessed, it is a bit easier to accept when you initiate it. Unfortunately, you are not always given that option. The opportunity that you do have, however, is how you respond to change.

As parents, we know that change is inevitable and so it is helpful to teach our kids how best to respond to it – regardless of how it comes into their lives.

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Here are 3 truths that will equip your young athlete to successfully manage the emotional and mental challenges that come with change.

## **1) Choose Change First**

The emotions attached to the two kinds of change are very different. When we **initiate** change because of some “writing on the wall,” we have already determined that the cost involved is worth the outcome.

For example, your athlete may choose to step down and take a spot on the JV team (even if they made varsity) because it involves more playing time and can make them a stronger athlete down the road.

However, if the coach removes them from varsity and places them on JV for the same reasons the change is harder to embrace.

Teach your athlete that very often change can be in their best interest. Choosing to change **first**, before the decision is made for you, can be the difference between feeling empowered and feeling depressed and angry.

## **2) Choose to Find the Silver Lining**

When a decision is made that forces change upon you, the knee-jerk reaction is often to resist it. The negative emotions that follow can rob you of the ability to see the good in the change – and frankly make you miserable in the process.

Perception is everything.

Teach your athlete the value of finding and focusing on the positive – or silver lining – in change. Sometimes you will have to help them “pull up,” and look at the situation from 30,000 feet. Always keep in mind the bigger picture.

Remind them that the sports experience is a **journey** and that they are not defined by little day-to-day moments.

Athletes that choose to focus on the positive are empowered to learn from every change that comes their way.

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## 3) Choose to Hold Off on Judgement



Have you ever had something happen that initially seemed like an unwanted change, only to discover later that it was the best thing that could have happened?

If you have, then you are not alone.

We often make quick judgments when something changes. However, it is usually without all the facts.

Sometimes the truth about a circumstance takes time to be revealed.

Teach your athlete to hold off on judging a situation. It might be helpful to share with them an experience you had that turned out to be different than what you initially believed.

For example, an athlete may be disappointed about a favorite coach leaving and the new replacement that has been picked. Talk to them about holding off on their judgment till the end of the season. They may be surprised to see that their opinion ends up changing.

### **Final Thoughts**

Life is full of changes – and choices.

Your kids will eventually encounter change that may be thrust upon them. As their biggest cheerleader, teach them that they always can, and should, **choose** their **responses** to that change. By teaching them the 3 truths – to choose change first, choose to find the silver lining, and choose to withhold judgement – you set them up for a more enjoyable change experience. And hopefully in the process, a teachable moment.

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