

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

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

## **The ABC's of Balance for High School Athletes**

**By David Benzel**



The school-sport-and-life balance can become a bit trickier as kids enter into the high school years.

Challenges become even more evident once an athlete starts considering and applying to colleges. Suddenly, GPA's, standardized tests, volunteer hours, and essays become an essential focus.

It ends up making an already full schedule seem unbearable at times.

If you or your athlete find yourself always on the edge of disaster because **IMBALANCE** seems to be the new norm, take a look at these ABC's — they can be a starting point to guide you **AWAY** from the insanity.

## **A is for Arrange Priorities**

This may seem like an obvious first step, but it actually needs to take place at the start of EACH new season or EACH new semester. It's not just a one-and-done activity. Sports logistics and academic responsibilities will change, and so arranging priorities is an exercise that will need to be revisited over and over throughout the year.

It's important for parents to talk through this with their athlete. Although high schoolers are becoming more and more independent, setting priorities is a process that experienced adults will have insight into. And it's an excellent opportunity to teach them life-long skill sets.

**Pro-Tip:** Make a "coffee-shop-date" with your teen athlete at least 3 or 4 times a year. Bring a journal for them, and brainstorm through ways to make the top 3 priorities — that you choose together — to happen daily. Be creative as you problem-solve. Make sure that it is a joint effort.

## **B is for Ban the Extras**

High school is all about exploring the world. You probably encourage your teen to try new activities and learn new skills. Unfortunately, in all the excitement they can take on too much and end up running from one great activity to the next — without any downtime.

Burnout in sports and school is an obvious result of this crazy pace.

Banning the extras from your schedule is all about taking those priorities mentioned above and filtering all decisions through that lens. It doesn't mean you never have a lazy day on the couch, but it does mean limiting the day-to-day extras that are not a part of your priorities.

**Pro Tip:** Take a serious look at the time spent on social media. Encourage your teen to limit this outlet. Sometimes tallying up the actual time spent in a week on their phone or another device might surprise them at how much time they use it.

Additionally, don't be afraid to reduce the hours spent working an after-school job. Academics and sports participation will eventually come to an end but jobs will be there for most of life.

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

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

## **C is for Commit to an Accountability Partner**

If you are the only one trying to keep your athlete in a balanced world, it could negatively impact your relationship. Enlisting the help of her community is important.



Since keeping balance is all about daily choices, it is crucial that your athlete connects with someone that will keep her accountable for making the right ones.

Encourage her to seek out like-minded friends, teachers, coaches, counselors, study groups, and older siblings who could help keep “balance” on her radar.

**Pro Tip:** Facilitate study groups by offering to host them in your home. Encourage your teen to seek accountability from the responsible adults in her life.

If balance in your own life is a challenge ask your teen to help keep you accountable too, as you both strive toward better choices.

# GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

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

## Moving Forward

Our fast-paced culture does not lend itself to balance. We have to be intentional about our choices if “balance” is a trait we desire.

John Maxwell understood this concept when he said,

**“Nobody finishes well by accident.”**

You have to take action — on purpose. Use the ABC’s as a starting point:

- **A**rrange priorities
- **B**an the extras
- **C**ommit to accountability partners

## Share Your Solutions

Now it’s your turn. Perhaps you have found a creative way to help your teen athlete find balance. Please share in the comments what has worked in your family. You never know who you might help.

**David Benzel** is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience. David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"*  
[www.growingchampionsforlife.com](http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com)