

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Is Your Athlete Seeing the Big Picture or Riding an Emotional Roller Coaster?

By David Benzel



On a list of factors that impact the youth sports experience, **perspective** is at the top. How you and your young athlete view victories, challenges, and losses determine whether or not it feels like a roller coaster or a smooth sailing vessel.

Keeping a positive perspective is easier said than done, however.

In the pursuit of sports excellence, it is easy to get caught up in an unhealthy or unrealistic mindset. As a parent you might be so close to the sports journey your young athlete is on, that your perspective gets blurred.

When this happens, the best way to create a perspective shift is to take a step back – and look at the big picture.

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Clear Perspective

A good illustration that demonstrates this, is one that I use in my workshops and it is a powerful reminder of how impactful one's perspective is.

It goes something like this.



If you were to draw a life-sized graph based on the history of the stock market, it would include a lot of jagged up-and-down lines.

Now if you were to stand very close to this graph – so close that you could only see one section – you might describe the stock market as simply being inconsistent and kind of a mess.

However, once you step back and view the whole journey of the market you would see that it generally has traveled upward.

Your interpretation then would have everything to do with your perspective. Are you focused on only one section – and defining it by that information – or are you able to look at the overall picture, which is a **sum** of all the ups and downs?

An athletic journey is best viewed in a similar light.

Certainly, the temptation to focus on one play, one game, or even one season is there. However, that is not a true picture of your athlete's story. It requires a better perspective that is a sum of all the ups and downs.

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In addition, perspective is not just about what view you are focused on. In large part, it is also about your **interpretation** of what you see.

For example, in our stock market illustration someone that understands how the market works would interpret any particular drop as a part of a larger pattern that is inevitably also going to go up.

You probably would not want someone handling your portfolio to just focus on one drop and make all important decisions based on their fear that the market will never go back up. Rather, you would want your stock handler to see the overall picture and interpret the drop as simply one piece of the pattern.

As a parent, you play a critical role in how your athlete views and interprets the inevitable ups and downs of their sports journey. Guide them to see the **summation** of all that has happened, all that is currently happening, and all the hopes and plans for tomorrow.

Here are 3 “time zones” to be considered as you and your athlete navigate toward keeping a healthy perspective.

The Past

There will be mistakes and regrets in your athlete’s story. It is inevitable. In fact, it is often in the mistakes that most lessons are learned – and as a result much growth can occur in that space.



Rehashing those mistakes or staying focused on the regrets, becomes problematic and can negatively influence performance.

A better approach is to relive the good moments from the past. This is an exercise that has great value. When you and your athlete take time to

savor the “ups”, you can create mental images that are useful towards improvement.

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The Present

Enjoying the ups, wins, and personal bests is a large part of why families participate in sports. It's what makes it fun. Additionally, it is a great bonding time when you celebrate an athlete's success together – and that is certainly a bonus for family unity.

Be careful to keep each win and each loss in proper perspective of the overall progress. Going to emotional extremes when you acknowledge either end of the spectrum is not necessarily helpful.

For example, if you “kill the fatted calf” every time you win, or you go into the depths of despair whenever there is a loss, you may be sending the wrong message to your athlete – one that is not keeping sight of the bigger picture.

The Future

Encourage your athlete to have a vision for their future in sports. Help them to set specific and realistic goals to strive for and keep them accountable to working toward them.

Good skill sets are learned on the road to striving after goals.

If you notice that stress or worry over whether or not goals will be accomplished begins to dominate your mood or theirs, it is time to take a step back away from the story.

Remember that unmet goals, just like losses, are spaces where character building and learning can take place.

Living in the Moment

Riding the roller-coaster of emotions does not have to define your journey.

Thanks to the lessons of the past and the plans for the future you and your athlete can appreciate the here and now.

Keeping the bigger picture in view, helps to shape and maintain a healthy perspective for years to come.

[CLICK HERE](#) to ask David Benzel a question about this topic:

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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