

# TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF YOUTH SPORTS FOR THE PARENTS!



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Being a sports parent is rewarding in so many ways but as with most things, there are two sides to the sports story! The grind of coordinating logistics to get your athletes to practices, washing the gear, keeping up with changes, new opportunities, lost opportunities, and emotions can present real challenges—and stress—for parents. So, how is it that this seemingly enjoyable experience becomes nightmarish for parents and how can we survive and thrive in youth sports?

Partnership is key—with coaches, with other parents, and with organizations that are there to help. That's why Rush Union Soccer has partnered with Soccer Parenting Association (<https://www.soccerparenting.com/>) and offers all player parents complimentary access to the SPA Resource Center, which includes a wide range of resources to help parents navigate the sports journey at any level. SPA founder, Skye Eddy, recently conducted a free webinar for our parents during which she shared tips to keep soccer fun, rewarding, and productive for both parents and players.

Here are some basics that parents can use to help make the sporting experience more enjoyable for them, and the athlete.

**1. Let it be your child's experience.** This sounds so simple, but it is so easy for us to rob a part of the experience when emotions take over. The best growth environment has equal parts success and failure. Yes, failure... Let them fail. Let them fall, so they can pick themselves back up. Let them be challenged against the bigger, stronger kids, or in a new position that feels foreign to them. Let them drive the conversations with their coaches about

opportunities—or missed opportunities. Teach and encourage them to advocate for themselves. This personal experience, shepherded by parents, can be vital to their performance on the field and in other areas of their lives.

**2. Create a positive relationship with your child's coach.** Believe it or not, your child's coach wants all the kids on his/her team to be successful. The success of a player means the coach has done his/her job developing that athlete – at any level of play. Thank your coach, address them when the time is right, and recognize you are on the same team. Your goals are the same. By being positive with the child's coach you will set a wonderful example to your child that you believe in the position and are invested in cooperative development. Negativity on the sidelines, questioning calls, or speaking poorly about the coach is confusing to the player and damaging to the productivity of the team.



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**3. Decompress to lower stress.** Though sports are fun, they can create a flood of emotions—good and bad. Tom Hanks’ famous line in *A League of Their Own*, “there’s no crying in baseball” ironically reminds us that there actually could be—and in soccer too. Right after a game, when your child is tired, frustrated, happy or sad, may not be the best time to talk about the game or his/her performance. Chances are, if you noticed something, they did too but may not be ready to revisit it quite yet! The number one thing that players cite as a downer after a game is the car ride home! If you want to talk things over with your player, you absolutely should but give them a minute to refuel, think things over by themselves and ideally, wait for them to come to you... and be prepared that sometimes they may not.

**4.** Finally, when joining a new program, or resigning with an existing one, ask the leadership what resources they have that are available to you, including the Soccer Parenting Association. And ask about unsanctioned resources as well, like does your league hold parent information meetings? Do they have a subscription that you could sign up for? Do they have staff available to answer questions? What is their primary means of communication? Are there ways you can support their objectives at home?

Skye Eddy’s association is just one example of how you can leverage a professional organization to alleviate the stress that can come with youth sports. At the end of the day, soccer—and other youth sports—is meant to bring great joy, healthy bodies and minds, and emotional and athletic development to players and parents. RU Ready?

*For more information on Rush Union Soccer or Soccer Parenting Association, visit us at [www.rushunionsoccer.org](http://www.rushunionsoccer.org).*

