



Are Your Kids Chasing Trophies?

Early in my athletic career, I thought having trophies meant you were a winner. When I looked around my house and noticed I didn't have any trophies or blue ribbons, I began to think of myself as "less than" others who had them. The harder I tried to win, the more disastrous the results. The trophy chasing just caused me to tighten up and perform poorly. This downward spiral was giving me more and more of what I didn't want! Then one day I had a big AHA. I realized I needed a new definition of what it meant to be a winner. I sat down and wrote my own definition of winning.

Here it is: ***"Winning is ending each day just a little better than you were that morning."*** With this definition I knew I could start winning the very next day. All I had to do was focus on small incremental bits of progress each day. If I could look in the mirror at the end of the day and declare where I had made the smallest amount of progress, I was WINNING. And if I could do that day after day, I was a WINNER.

The mental gymnastics of this change in my thinking transformed my athletic journey. I began focusing on learning something new each day; gaining new insights; always looking for something to feel good about by the end of each practice. No longer did I think about tall trophies, gold medals, and blue ribbons. I figured they would take care of themselves. And that's exactly what happened.

The more curious I became about learning something each day, the more progress I made. The process of practicing became more interesting as I set little mini goals for each practice session. Sure enough, my performance results started improving and first-place finishes started showing up.

Here's the take-away thought. Teach your children that trophies, medals, and ribbons are just symbols of an athlete's victory over fear and self-doubt. They are the rewards we receive when we're in love with learning new strategies and improving our skills through practice. Help them embrace a new definition of winning. End each day just little better than you were that morning, day after day. Then, let the trophies take care of themselves.





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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Ask your child, “What feels more important to you, winning a trophy OR improving your skills?”

2

Discuss the following:
Which of your skills would make the biggest difference in your performance if they were improved?