



# The Art of Controlling Emotions

The idea of controlling emotions seems impossible to some athletes. They believe their feelings of anger or frustration are the direct result of the events around them, and therefore out of their control. That's why you'll hear your children say, "The referee ticked me off", "The other team made me lose my concentration", or "My parents made me nervous." To these athletes, events (A), cause feelings (C), and they feel like victims. This is actually not true. Between any event (A), and the feelings that follow (C), is a short interval of a millisecond (B), during which we tell ourselves a story.

The story is our interpretation of what we believe the event means to us. A causes B, and B causes C. (A → B → C)

## Exercise:

Challenge your children to think of the events of a game that tend to cause a negative emotional response, like losing a comfortable lead. If the story they tell themselves is "They are better than we are", depression will likely set in. Now ask, "What other story could you tell yourself about this?" If your child interpreted the tied-score to mean "We lost our momentum, BUT we know how to get it back" the resulting emotion could be excitement and motivation.

Remember: 1. My feelings come from my thoughts.

2. I think my own thoughts.

3. Therefore I create my feelings and I am responsible for them.

Have your child practice healthy "story telling" for events that often have negative feelings. For each situation below create one negative and one positive interpretation of what it could mean.

- A good friend walks by and ignores you.
- A teacher criticizes your work.
- Someone cuts in line at the grocery store.
- A coach makes you run laps.
- Your parents ask you to stay home on Saturday night.
- A friend does not include you for a social event.





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## Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

List the situations in which your child demonstrated emotional control during the month and praise them for the effort.

2

Ask him/her to describe how “the story” was changed in their mind to gain a different emotional response.