

Best Tips for Navigating a Youth Sports Injury

by David Benzel



“I love being injured,” said no one – ever.

Regrettably, injuries are often a part of the youth sports experience.

And just like other aspects of participation, there are lessons to be learned and attitudes to embrace when faced with this kind of “bump-in-the-road.”

It’s OK to be disappointed.

Whether it was a sudden and unexpected setback or it’s been a chronic and irritating nuisance, injuries are not fun.

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

However, once you are past the initial upset, there is great value in having a healthy perspective on this part of the sports journey. And that applies not only to the athlete but to parents and coaches as well.

Here are 3 stages to pay attention to.

What?

Obviously, figuring out “what” kind of injury your athlete has, is paramount to knowing how to treat it appropriately. Depending on the severity you might need the insight from an athletic trainer, tests performed by a family doctor, or the expertise of a specialist.

A less apparent question that needs to be answered is, “what caused this?”

Was it just a fluke accident during practice or a game – that no one saw coming?

Or was it a result of:

- Overtraining
- Poor technique
- Not warming up properly
- Wearing the wrong footwear or inappropriate apparel
- Forgetting to use the right safety equipment

Deciding what LED to the injury may influence decisions about how your athlete approaches training moving forward, primarily if the injury resulted from bad choices.

Pro Tip: Don’t allow acute injuries to turn into chronic problems because of a lack of follow-through. Encourage your athlete to diligently follow the instructions given for recovery – such as icing, rest, immobilization, etc. The small inconvenience now will help you to avoid heartache later.

So What?

Once you have the answers to, “what kind of injury is this?” and “what caused it?” it’s time to take a step back.

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

More than likely you have a clear micro-view, and now it is time to gain some perspective by getting a macro-view of the detour you did not expect to take.

These are some valid questions to answer during this time:

- What are the implications for me during this season?
- Is this a career-ending injury?
- How will it impact my family's schedule, expectations, and resources?
- Does this injury change how I "do" school?

Asking the right questions can be a good reminder that this is probably a short "blip" on the longer sports journey.

Pro Tip: It is critical for the injured athlete, parents, and coach to be on the same "page" when it comes to an injury. The adults in the equation should be striving for an optimistic, proactive, and realistic approach to the recovery time.



GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Now What?

You have to move forward mentally if you expect to move forward physically. **And it is true that our body responds to what our mind tells it.**

What does this look like? Focus on:

- Diligence in regards to medical protocol
- Strengthening other areas of your body
- Improving your mental game
- Continuing to learn your sport
- Utilizing the time to focus on character-trait development
- Looking for ways to support your team

Pro Tip: Remember that an injury is just another challenge to be faced in sports participation. Make sure that your athlete is surrounded by a supportive community as he takes the necessary steps to recover completely.

Athletes that have a realistic but confident approach to healing are more likely to get back on the field quickly.

Final Thoughts

It's true that dealing with an injury can be difficult – for everyone involved.

However, parents have the opportunity to set a tone that can turn this challenging time into a great learning moment.

As you lead your athlete through the stages of “What, So What, and Now What?” take the time to be grateful for all the advantages that sports participation brings to your athlete and the entire family.

As Zig Ziglar said, “Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.”

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

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