



Performance Slumps & Emotional Bumps

I vividly remember my son's worst baseball batting slump one summer. He had been such a consistent hitter year after year and then, suddenly it seemed like he couldn't buy a hit or get on base unless he got hit by a pitch. My first response was to analyze the situation: his swing, his batting stance, even how he combed his hair. Like a good dad, I wanted to fix things....you know, be a good problem solver.



But all this analyzing and fretting only added to the impression that this situation was a true disaster, and that just made things worst. What's a better approach? I learned that when parents make a big deal out of performance issues, they become even bigger deals. It's actually more helpful to sit back and display confidence in our child's ability to figure things out. Pulling our hair out during a performance slump only puts additional pressure on our kids.

I adjusted my approach when I realized that my son's confidence was becoming more of a problem than his batting mechanics. In other words, losing his swagger was more of an issue than his swing. So, this is what I said: "Your sports story is a success story in the making. But like all good stories there are times of crisis and hardships. This is one of those times. You'll come through this and be better than ever. AND you'll probably use this experience to teach another young player how to handle a slump when they're stuck.

Our little chat didn't fix his hitting immediately, but it did improve his mood and frame of mind. It made him more open to hearing the message he needed to hear from a trusted coach because he was ready for it. As parents, we can have more influence over their confidence than over their technique. The sweetest words we'll hear from our children is when they say, "They always believed in me." Remember, it's a lot harder for an athlete to fix their mechanics if they've lost their confidence.



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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Invite your athlete to talk about the frustration of performance slumps. How much control does he have over these times?

2

Ask your athlete to describe how she would like you to respond during the next performance slump.