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# CREATING A POSITIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS OF RECREATIONAL  
& COMPETITIVE PLAYERS

Tennis is a sport for a lifetime.

Tennis is one of the healthiest; least injurious sports young people can play. It builds self-confidence, and teaches self-discipline, self-reliance and respect for others, all while getting beneficial physical exercise and having fun.

Individual competitive sports, like tennis, teach young people how to work hard, manage stress, perform under pressure, and test emotional and physical balance. They can also impose pressures, which are damaging if not handled appropriately.

Competitive junior tennis can be especially difficult for both parents and children. For parents, it can be a complex experience, especially if they themselves have not played at a competitive level. For young people, problems can occur because the demands of competitive tennis can appear to lie beyond their control and abilities.

Research has shown that a parent's support and interest is crucial to a child's continued participation and success in tennis. It has also shown that some of the physical and emotional stress affecting the performance of junior players can originate with parents.

The consequences of excessive stress in junior competitive tennis are uniformly negative. It can lead to burnout and possibly result in the premature departure of the young person from the sport. In addition, if parents place unreasonable pressure on their child it can also have a negative impact on their relationship with their child.

**Tennis Alberta is asking parents/guardians to remember the opportunity they have to act as role models for their children, and set the standard for good sportsmanship, appropriate tournament etiquette, and positive interaction with their athlete.**

# HOW TO BE A SUPPORTIVE TENNIS PARENT

## NUMBER 1

### **Be positive, content, determined, calm and relaxed during matches.**

Avoid showing negative emotions by looking nervous or disgusted on the courtside. Be a good role model.

## NUMBER 2

### **Realize that tennis players usually need some space when they lose.**

A pat on the back or an unemotional word of encouragement is often sufficient as the player leaves the court. You can discuss the match later when they are less emotional. When they are ready to talk, ask questions such as, “How was the match?” “How did you play?” “Did you enjoy it?” which shows that you care about your child and their performance/enjoyment rather than the result. Avoid asking, “Did you win?” after your child comes back from a match.

## NUMBER 3

### **Ensure your child respects the principles of good sportsmanship, behavior and ethics.**

Avoid ignoring your child’s poor behavior (poor line calls; throwing racquets; using abusive/profane language; or treating others with disrespect) or overlooking critical areas of your child’s development at the expense of tennis. If this type of behavior occurs get involved quickly and be prepared to act and support tournament staff and Tennis Alberta in their actions to address any unacceptable behavior and conduct.

## NUMBER 4

### **Live your own life apart from tennis.**

Remember this is your child’s tennis experience not yours.

## NUMBER 5

### **Recognize and be generous in your applause of the performance and effort of your child’s opponents.**

Avoid ignoring or criticizing your child’s opponents. E.g. Clapping when your child’s opponent double faults.

## NUMBER 6

### **Be ready to help emotionally and offer encouragement especially when your child faces a difficult time.**

Make your child feel valuable and reinforce their self-esteem especially when he loses. Avoid using punishment and withdrawal of love, affection and warmth to get your child to try harder or perform better.

## NUMBER 7

### **Acknowledge your child’s achievements in tennis but keep sporting results in perspective.**

Emphasize that, “Win or lose, I love you just the same”.

#### NUMBER 8

### **Encourage your child to be self-reliant, to think independently, and develop the skills to navigate the highs and lows of competitive play.**

Avoid coaching from the sidelines or being too quick to offer feedback that minimizes their emotions. Speaking in any language other than English to your child during a match can be considered coaching and may be sanctioned.

#### NUMBER 9

### **Understand that the only expectation that you should have from your child's involvement in tennis is that playing tennis will help your child to become a better person and athlete.**

Avoid assuming or expecting that your child will become a successful professional player.

#### NUMBER 10

### **Avoid excessive training and burnout.**

Don't forget that your child is still growing.

#### NUMBER 11

### **Following a loss by your child, keep the loss in perspective by emphasizing that it is only a tennis match.**

Avoid verbally or physically abusing your child at all times - particularly following a loss.

#### NUMBER 12

### **Encourage your child to take responsibility for their success or failure.**

The main objective should be to help them to focus on doing their best.

#### NUMBER 13

### **Let the coach decide how much your child should train and practice.**

Avoid forcing them to train beyond identified expectations and do not criticize your child for failure to play more tennis. When it comes to training, quality is more important than quantity.

#### NUMBER 14

### **Understand the risks and look for signs of stress.**

Sleeplessness; hypercriticism; poor line calls during matches; etc. Avoid being insensitive to your child's expressions of insecurity and anxiety, resulting from their involvement in competitive sport.

#### NUMBER 15

### **Encourage your child to play other sports, to build relationships and to participate in other activities.**

For competitive players, tennis should remain the priority sport with respect to training, practice and match play.

NUMBER 16

**Compare your son or daughter's progress with their own ability, potential and goals.**

Avoid comparing your child's progress with that of other children.

NUMBER 17

**Reward your child for what he/she is as a human being not as a tennis player.**

Avoid tying special privileges, prizes, external rewards, etc., to tennis results.

NUMBER 18

**Understand that you and your child need to share other interests and will often need a break from tennis.**

NUMBER 19

**Take injuries seriously and if in doubt consult a doctor.**

Do not ignore aches and pains and never force your child to play when injured.

Tennis Alberta's mission is to inspire, promote and deliver quality opportunities for participation in Tennis in Alberta, with an emphasis on lifetime participation and building healthy, active communities.

Tennis Alberta supports the promotion of good sportsmanship and respect in all Tennis Alberta-affiliated activities, programs, events and tournaments, including without limitation any Tennis Canada activities, programs, events and tournaments (hereinafter, collectively, "Tennis Alberta Activities").

Tennis Alberta aims to assist all junior tennis players involved in Tennis Alberta Activities (hereinafter "Junior Players") participate in, enjoy, and excel in the sport of tennis. To help realize this goal Tennis Alberta expects parents and guardians of Junior Players (hereinafter, each, a "Tennis Parent") engaged in any Tennis Alberta Activities to conduct themselves in a considerate and respectful manner at all times. Tennis Alberta references Tennis Canada's Safeguarding Tennis Initiative and Rules of Court as guiding documents for player and parent/guardian conduct.

Tennis Alberta works to ensure that all Junior Players, Tennis Parents and other persons involved in the sport, including without limitation any Tennis Alberta Executive Director, Technical Manager, coach, board member, official, volunteer, spectator or other Tennis Alberta employee (hereinafter, each, a Tennis Alberta Member") are treated respectfully and remain protected from inappropriate, unsportsmanlike, disrespectful and/or abusive comment and behavior, and are at all times provided with a safe, supportive, healthy and productive environment for tennis development and related activities – whether on or off the court.

**Tennis Alberta has a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for any abusive or disrespectful behavior, contact or communication on the part of Tennis Parents towards any Official, Tournament Staff & Volunteers, Junior Players, other Tennis Parents, and/or Tennis Alberta Members.**

Further to this, Tennis Alberta prescribes the following for all Tennis Parents:

1. Tennis Parents must AT ALL TIMES respect and adhere to all tennis matters, standards, rules and procedures prescribed or adopted by Tennis Alberta respecting staffing, direction of programming and rules of conduct and play at Tennis Alberta Activities, and such matters, rules and procedures shall be binding upon Tennis Parents and will not be subject to modification excepting as may be specifically sanctioned and directed by Tennis Alberta.

2. All Tennis Parents must respect, observe and adhere to all applicable tournament rules, etiquettes and regulations as may apply to Tennis Alberta Activities.
3. Except with Tennis Alberta Technical Manager(s) expressed permission, no Tennis Parent is permitted to be on court during any Tennis Alberta activity.
4. All Tennis Parents shall act in an appropriate, sportsmanlike, respectful and civil manner towards all constituents\* in any contact, communications and/or meetings of any nature.
  - Tennis Canada and Tennis Alberta deems it unacceptable for adults/parents to label children (minors) as 'cheaters'. It is completely inappropriate for parents to spread rumours or write complaints to the association about children being cheaters. Matters pertaining to on-court play is subjected to the Rules of the Court and should be left to officials to address appropriately.
5. In the event that any Tennis Parent wishes to meet on any nature or matter of complaint with any constituent, including the Tennis Alberta Executive Director or Technical Manager(s), they must adhere to the following procedure:
  - Make initial contact with the concerned Tennis Alberta Member by email or phone, and advise of the subject matter for the requested meeting. During such contact the Tennis Parent may request a specific meeting date. When doing so the Tennis Parent should take into account that the Tennis Alberta Member may offer a meeting date and time that fits into the Tennis Alberta Member's working time frame/ calendar. On no occasion should a Tennis Parent appear unannounced and in person to seek a meeting with a Tennis Alberta Member. Tennis Alberta Members are not expected to make themselves available under such circumstance.
  - **There is a mandatory 24 hour cool down period in effect after tournaments.** Each Parent must wait 24 hours after the conclusion of the tournament before approaching association or TA staff regarding complaints/concerns.

*\* As Defined within Section 5: Discipline and Complaints Policy (Page 20) -*

*Definitions: Constituents - All categories of membership within the Alberta Tennis Association, as well as all individuals employed by or engaged in activities with Tennis Alberta, including but not limited to, athletes, coaches, judges, officials, volunteers, directors, officers, managers, administrators, spectators, carded players and parents of Tennis Alberta athletes who are card holding members.*

6. Tennis Parents are expected to be familiar with **Tennis Alberta CODE OF CONDUCT** that includes information about suspension points, suspensions and disciplinary procedures. Any and all Tennis Alberta activities are governed by the CODE OF CONDUCT.
  
7. In the event that any sanctions are applied to a player as a result of parent conduct, no Tennis Alberta/Tennis Canada fees will be reimbursed.
  
8. It is a further condition that any Tennis Parent's attendance at or participation in any and all Tennis Alberta Activities that they respect and comply with any sanctions as outlined in the CODE OF CONDUCT at any place or venue hosting a Tennis Alberta Activity.