

# A MESSAGE TO PARENTS ...

## BE A GOOD GOALIE PARENT

It's easy being the athlete, but it's tough being the parent. Unfortunately, it's the adults that sometimes make it tougher than it should be to be an athlete.

Goalies are a unique breed, and their parent's should be as well. Simply a good goalie parent is one who is "supportive." My idea of what 'supportive' means is outlined below.

**1. Properly Equip Your Goalie** – Make sure your goalie has gear that properly protects and properly fits. Make sure the equipment is not too heavy. Spend your money on quality, not fashion. Why spend \$250 for a fancy mask paint job when the goalie wears inadequate pants or arm pads?

Insure that the goalie's stick fits and is not "worn out." Some kids use sticks for a season. They never crack, but the heel is totally worn out. Keep the goalie in "fresh" sticks.

Bigger is not better. Often in an attempt to "help", parents buy goalies gloves which are too large. A catch glove which is too large, makes it tough to hold onto pucks. A blocker that does not fit, hampers a goaltender's stick control.

**2. Teach the Goalie to Dress Him/Her Self** – You are NOT helping by dressing your goalie when he/she is 10 or older. At a recent goalie camp, a dad insisted on dressing his 12 year old. Was he going to stop the puck for him too? This is the start of teaching independence.

**3. Make the Goalie Carry His/Her Equipment** – While parents may help the real young ones (8 – 10 year olds) by carrying the stick and maybe pads, the goalie MUST carry his/her own bag to/from the car. It's about teaching responsibility and more chances to stress independence.

**4. Be Realistic . . . Remove the Pressure** – While kids get scared when "home alone," I have rarely seen kids scared to play sports, especially goalie. It's parents who put pressure on them that creates the anxiety. Pressure to win, pressure to get a scholarship, pressure to make the team, etc., etc. Assure them that you will love them and be there regardless of the results. Do your best, try hard, compete . . . but have fun!

We are trying to develop good citizens first, hockey goalies second. Remember the "big picture." Playing is a life lesson, not life or death.

**5. Say the Right Things . . . Teach Responsibility . . . Blame No One** – What a parent says, and how it is said can have a long lasting impact on a child . . . goalie or not. Innocent statements, in an attempt to sooth your child, or 'motivate' them, often does not turn out to be "support" at all.

#### For example:

1. Situation: A "bad" goal is scored.  
Do not say: "That was horrible."  
Do not say: "If the defensemen would have hit the guy in the neutral zone, the play would have never happened."

**You should say:** "I bet you'd like that one back. What did you learn from the goal? Why did it go in?"

2. Situation: The defensemen turns the puck over in the slot, the goalie was not expecting a turnover, and the opponent scores.

Do not say: "That defenseman is horrible."

Do not say: "The goal was all his fault."

Do not say: "How can the coach even play him?"

**You should say:** "Were you ready for something unexpected to happen? Regardless of who's error it was, you (goalie) must be prepared to give yourself a chance to make a big save for the team."

3. Situation: The team has lost five straight, all by one goal.

Do not say: "The team has to score more goals."

Do not say: "If it wasn't for those stupid penalties, you would have won."

Do not say: "It's the ref's/coaches fault."

**You should say:** "The goalie has the most opportunity to get this team out of the slump. You have to try to find a way to make one or two more saves per game."

4. Situation: The goalie gives up a big rebound off his/her chest, and an opponent scores.

Do not say: "Your defense has to clear that rebound."

Do not say: "You had no chance."

**You should say:** "Some rebounds, like that one, you could control. How about at next practice, you work on trapping pucks on your body?"

It's simple, do not let your goalie blame anyone else or make excuses. Take responsibility for the goal (regardless how it occurred) good or bad and learn from it. Regardless of age, the goalie needs to be accountable, yet be able to "let go" after the goal and learning phase, and move on. You are not helping your goalie by encouraging the blaming of others, or letting him/her get defensive with excuses.

6. **Be Quiet In Public and at Games** – Thank goodness my dad was just a spectator. Today, many parents get more worked up, more nervous, than the kids. Chill Out! Nothing embarrasses a kid more than hearing his parents in the stands. Well, maybe a simple "way to go on a big save," but that's it. No cheering, no yelling, no ridiculing the other team, no taunting the other goalie. Being loud is often confused with being supportive . . . it is counter productive. Please just watch, be quiet and enjoy the fact your goalie is playing the toughest position in sports.

If handled correctly, these goalie experiences will help make him/her a good goalie, but more importantly will help them grow up to be a fantastic adult.