

## **A Dangerous Mix: Kids' Sports And Overly-Enthusiastic Parents**

from the American Counseling Association

Most kids handle their enthusiasm for sports pretty well. They play hard, get excited over wins, sad about loses, but usually just have a good time, enjoying some exercise and healthy competition.

Now if only all that were true for their parents. We've probably all seen reports of fights during little league games, soccer referees being attacked and coaches facing verbal abuse or worse -- violent reactions not from the kids, but from the parents.

While it's understandable that parents want their children to do well and be treated fairly, some parents have made their child's sports so important that their emotions override their judgment and they end up reacting violently to what happened on the playing field.

The source of such emotions aren't difficult to understand. If a child isn't performing up to parental expectations, the parent may feel frustrated. Such feelings can be complicated by the parent's projecting his or her own athletic dreams and fantasies onto the child. Some parents then accept that a violent confrontation in sports is a means of venting frustration.

When that happens, it's often a sign that sports are playing too important a role in family life.

A good first question to ask is whether the family's life revolves around the children's sports. Are the kids being "pushed" not just to play sports, but to train harder and to excel, maybe at the expense of school work or other activities? Do you find that you have mood swings associated with your kids' success or failures in sports, and that your children are rewarded, or teased, mocked and criticized, depending on how well they performed? Do you blame the coaches if your child's team loses and make fun of children who don't play at your child's level?

If the answer is yes to some or all of these questions, there's a good chance that you're making sports too important a part of your family's life. And if you have had thoughts about having reacting violently to other parents, or coaches, or referees when things have gone poorly, it's a clear indication that help is needed.

Try talking to a professional counselor specializing in family counseling. He or she can help you readjust your perspective on your expectations and your children's sports, and can help reestablish a healthy emotional balance between sports and your parenting style.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)*

###