



Wrestling Parent Education Meeting

There is one thing we all have in common here: We all care very deeply about a boy/girl who is participating in the Lovejoy wrestling program. I know that you want him/her to have a good experience in wrestling this season... and beyond. I know that you want him/her to be successful. What I would like to do at this point is to help you make your son/daughter's experience in wrestling a good one AND to help YOU help him/her to succeed.

Parents, NEVER underestimate how important you are in the life of your child. Most of you have gone to great lengths in time, energy and in money to help your child to be successful in wrestling. You've undoubtedly spent a great deal of time driving, watching, waiting for and in some cases even coaching your child. Without you and without your support, your child would not be who he/she is and would not be the wrestler he/she is today. As a coach (and as a father) I appreciate what you do.

Once again, the reason I am speaking to you this evening is that I would like to help **YOU**... to help **YOUR SON/DAUGHTER**. I am hoping that by passing on some of what I have learned during my years as a parent as well as my years as a coach who has observed thousands of wrestlers and their families, I can help you avoid some of the problems that have occurred in the lives of many. I have seen good things... and I've seen some very bad things... that parents have done to their children. The interesting thing is that in probably EVERY case, the parent has meant well. When it comes to "helping" our son/daughter succeed as a wrestler, **meaning** well does not **always** get the results that we are hoping for. In fact, the opposite frequently happens. We all want our boys/girls to succeed... and there is certainly nothing wrong with that. The problem lies in the way we often times go about trying to make this happen.

Perhaps the most important thing for us to know is this: every athlete needs to **enjoy** this sport. If he/she is not enjoying it, he/she will not improve as quickly. In fact, if he/she's not enjoying it, he/she may even quit... and this can happen **regardless** of his/her talent or the amount of success he/she has had. **We** (both parents and coaches) must be very careful not to be **overly** concerned with success in terms of wins and losses. If we are, the wrestlers' enjoyment of wrestling will drop significantly. This is *especially* true for the early period in the wrestler's

development. We would do well to remember this: The greater the **enjoyment**... the more improvement they will experience. We should NEVER be responsible for taking the fun **out** of wrestling for our children.

We also need to understand that just because a wrestler wins does NOT necessarily mean he/she is a good wrestler. He/she is a good wrestler if he/she is in the **process** of mastering the art of wrestling... in each and every situation. With this approach, you should see consistent improvement. Your child's training is designed for him/her to master the art of wrestling – NOT just win tomorrow. **This is a process**... and it takes time. If he/she can simply keep getting better, winning will take care of itself. Also know that no two wrestlers make progress at the same rate. But, if he/she sticks with it, he/she will undoubtedly succeed.

The first thing **you** can do to help **your child** is for you to understand what your role should be. You are your child's SUPPORT SYSTEM. This means that your role (job) is to "help" your child make good choices and assist them in wrestling, school and in life. This role is critical and no one else can fill it other than you.

What you should **never** try to be, however, is your child's coach! This is the biggest mistake that we as parents make – trying to *coach* our sons/daughters... rather than simply supporting and **encouraging** them. Your support role is vital. But, your child does not **want** to be... nor **should** he be... coached 24 hours a day. Wrestling practice and competition is extremely tough. When your child leaves the battlefield of the practice room or the competition mat, he/she needs to be energized and **encouraged**. He/she should never be criticized, coached, given a "clinic" or "trained some more" because you "think he/she should be better" or "could be doing more." That is what the coaches do. This is their role.

So what **should** and **can** we as parents (now aka our child's support system) do to help him/her?

1. Be positive. Encourage your child. Do NOT criticize his/her performance. Praise good efforts in both victory AND defeat. Enforce the positive points of the match. Praise improvement. If you see something negative in his/her performance, **keep it to yourself**. Never yell at... or certainly never physically abuse your child after a game or practice. This only hurts... especially later on as the **negative** effects are often delayed. You and your home should be an "oasis"... a place for your child to go for refreshment. Wrestling is tough enough in both practice and competition. He/she needs someplace to go where everything is OK... where he/she doesn't have to "hear it" or defend him/herself. And, while he/she may "put up with it" when he/she is younger, it will come back to haunt you later.

2. Don't force a conversation about wrestling unless your child initiates it... *especially* after a tough loss or poor performance. If he/she doesn't want to talk about it – don't! And don't fret over his/her silence. He/she most likely will talk at some point – **especially** if you are consistently complimentary, encouraging and positive. Also, if he/she wants to talk about a match, let **him/her** do the vast majority of the talking. Don't use it as an opportunity “teach him/her something” or tell him/her what he/she ought to have done or how he/she can get better. Show him/her that you are listening and that you care.
3. It will also help to remind you that wrestling is HIS/HER thing, not yours. Remember that you want to support him/her, to let him/her know that you are on his/her side. If he/she talks to you about it, your goal should not be to give advice on how to become a better wrestler. Adopt the attitude that you want your child to tell-you-more (i.e., "I really want to hear what you have to say."). Then, actually **listen** to what he/she has to say — even if you don't agree with it or like it – rather than waiting for an opportunity to talk. He/she does NOT want to hear how he/she could have done better. It should be: He/she talks and you listen... NOT the other way around – no matter **how** much you have to say.
4. The exception to this rule may be in the area of poor sportsmanship or other inappropriate actions involving school, opponents or teammates. Some of these may include disrespectful actions or attitudes toward opponents, his/her teammates or coach, humiliating an opponent, throwing a fit during or after a loss, not supporting his/her teammates, arrogant behavior, etc. In this case, firmly remind him/her that this not something that will be acceptable or tolerated in the future. My approach to an athlete who fails to respond appropriately after a loss has been along this line: “I really like that you hate to lose. Hating to lose is a great quality. However, showing it with poor sportsmanship is a sign of weakness. No one should ever see this again.”
5. Be supportive of the coaching staff. Whether you agree with us or not, you should never communicate to him/her (or to others) a difference of opinion, make negative comments about us personally or our ability to coach. It will accomplish nothing positive and will undoubtedly adversely affect his/her attitude as well as his/her effort in the future. If there is a disagreement or a problem, discuss this with the coach/coaching staff privately. These things are just as “contagious” among adults. Help the team by **supporting**... not tearing down.
6. Do not criticize or “talk down” other members of the team to your child. He/she will learn sportsmanship and leadership (be it good or bad) from you. My experience has shown that the best leaders consistently come from positive parents.

7. Do NOT make the mistake of trying to approach wrestling in the same manner as some **other** parent has... simply because his/her child has/had competitive success. Being “overly involved” with your child carries with it problems that may not show up until sometime in the future.
8. “Honor the game” and avoid embarrassing your child. You can do this by being respectful toward officials and opposing coaches and players. Focus on cheering for **your** team... **not** cheering AGAINST the **other** team.
9. Make good nutrition a **family** thing, not just for the wrestler.
10. Be sure to provide a good environment for academic work at home. DEMAND GOOD ACADEMICS.
11. Don't be a fan of other wrestlers. The last thing your child wants (or needs) to hear is how good someone else is... or what some other wrestler does. You should be a fan of the team and your child.
12. Get involved with fundraising, etc.
13. Be sure your child has clean workout gear and a clean towel every day. This includes uniforms. Skin infections can be prevented by cleanliness, proper rest and good nutrition. (MRSA, ringworm, etc.)
14. Make sure that your child gets to practice and meets... EARLY! Make certain that he/she takes care of the details of his/her life that must be completed.
15. Remind and enforce any rules and/or procedures the coach establishes.
16. Provide a great environment for sleep. Get your child to bed.
17. Take in high school and college matches... **IF** your child wants to do so.
18. Remember that wrestling is for the student-athletes – NOT for the adults. It is your CHILD'S thing... not YOUR thing.