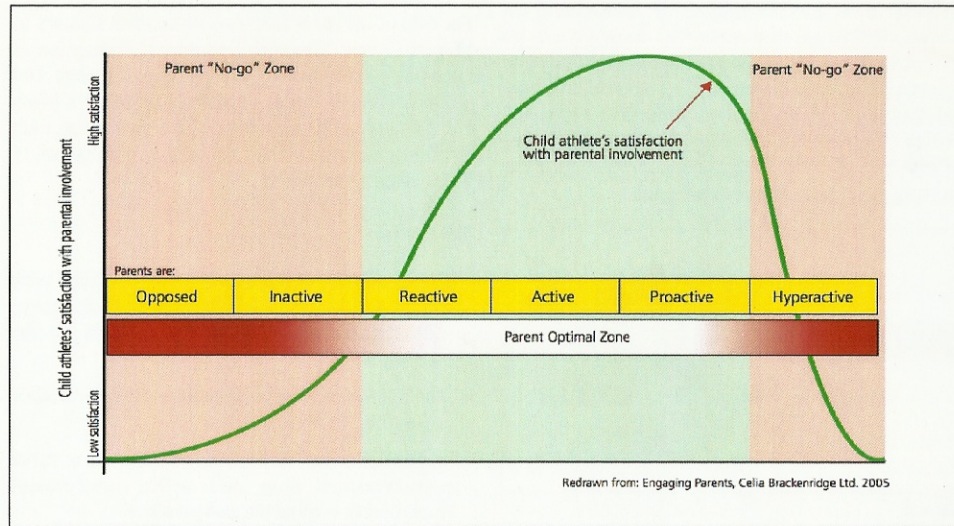


The optimal parental involvement zone



How parents can be involved in a supportive way

- Do not provide technical and tactical advice
- Comment on effort and attitude, not performance
- Provide practical advice
- Match nonverbal behaviors with supportive comments
- Respect swimming etiquette

A fact

Be happy that your child is having fun! Swimming children who experience fun while participating stay in sports longer.

If you are interested for more detail about the study you can contact a member of the club, or the author of the study, Anastasios Rodis at his e-mail address: anastasios.rodis@gmail.com



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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT MODEL

Be happy that your child is having fun!

by Anastasios Rodis
(in cooperation with HS)

Introduction

Sport plays a significant role in numerous children's lives. For many children, sport participation is a positive and enjoyable experience, where as for others, sport can become a negative and stressful experience. Children's sport participation may be influenced by numerous factors such as siblings, teachers, coaches, peers, officials and spectators. Eventually, all these factors can play a crucial role in influencing behaviors and attitudes, at least during childhood, regarding physical activity and sport participation for both boys and girls. However, there is a vast amount of research into the domain of competitive youth sport that signalize that children who get involved in sports are mainly influenced by the effective roles and behaviors of coaches and parents. While the task of the coach as professional aid may certainly be important, the informal role of the family is most significant. This is because most of the children remain in the family environment for several years, which provide ample opportunities for parental influence.

Both tennis and swimming provide some of the best examples of excessive parental behaviors. For example, Monica Seles' father was banned from Women Tennis Association (WTA) events and Andre Agassi revealed in his autobiography how his father's pressure made him 'hate' tennis. On the other hand, parents have also the capability to produce positive and inspirational behaviors promoting their children's athletic and personal development through sports. Eventually, parents have been recognized as critical providers to their children's sport experiences and as critical contributors to the Olympic achievement of elite athletes. A bright example to support that derives from one of the greatest swimming legends, Michael Phelps. Phelps, mentions several times in his autobiography that his mother was one of the most important elements for his athletic success but also one of the central persons for his personal life development.

Parental involvement model

Hellstedt (1987) was the first who described the relationship between parents and kids, by placing the theory into a sport context. Hellstedt customized the family system theory to include the sport context, which has resulted in a descriptive model of over-involved, moderately involved and underinvolved athlete families. Actually, through his family systems concept, he described parental behaviors by separating them into three categories.

In his first category, Hellstedt described the over-involved parents (Figure 1). These parents are emotionally overly involved with their kid's sport experiences and performance. They tend to spend enormous amount of time watching their kid's training sessions and they always watch their kid competing. Overinvolved parents have dreams of fame and great success, and they see their kid's talent as an investment for the future (e.g. to become Olympic or world gold medalists). Additionally, this type of parents is characterized by being overbearing with coaches and other members within the club. Based on Hellstedt's description, overinvolved parents are more focusing on wins and success rather than on their kid's skills, happiness, health and personal development.

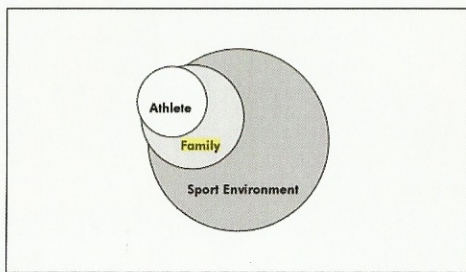


Figure 1

At his second category, Hellstedt referred to the moderately involved parents (Figure 2). The main concern of this type of parents is to create a beneficial balance between their kid and the coaching staff. They attend competitions and some practices but they leave the coaching part completely up to the coach. Although they invest time, emotion and money on their kids' sport participation it is vital that moderately involved parents give more emotional and actual space to their kids allowing them to make and take their own decisions about different sport related issues like goals, participation and commitment.

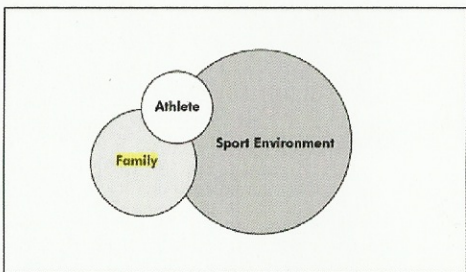


Figure 2

Lastly, Hellstedt concluded by describing the under-involved sport parents (Figure 3). Underinvolved parents are the type of parents who show little or no interest in their kid's sport participation and athletic progress. They lack investment of emotional, financial, and/or practical energy in their kid's sports activities. Normally, this type of parents tends to put no effort at all in guiding their kids through their sporting participation and experience.

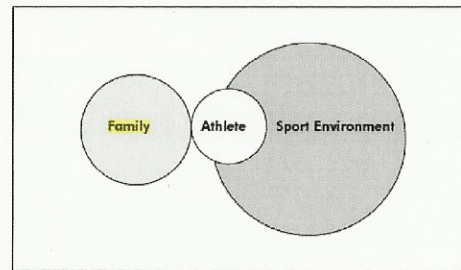


Figure 3

How your involvement influence your kid's sport participation:

- Moderate parental involvement is ideal, since it promotes a healthier relationship between parents and kids.
- Over or under-involvement parental involvement creates a negative environment for the kids.
- It is more likely to reduce kids' enjoyment
- Increase kids' stress level in relation to their sport participation.

The study

The title of the study that took place from January to May 2013 was "Swedish Swimmers' Perception of Parental Involvement". The participants were 104 (61 female & 43 male) swimmers, aged 9-18 years old. They were all members of the swimming club at various competitive levels, with an average of 11 hours training per week.

The findings

- Young Swedish swimmers are nearly satisfied with their parent's level of involvement in their sports, indicating the moderate style of Swedish parents involvement.
- Young athletes want their parents to be more active involved in their sport
- The athletes perceived their parents using more praise/understanding and active involvement than directive behavior and pressure.
- It reveals the protective and caring nature of Swedish parents in relation to the sport of swimming.
- Positive relationship between directive behavior and pressure.
- Young Swedish athletes showed to enjoy swimming.
- Youth swimmers' enjoyment in swimming was not impacted by their parent's level of involvement
- A positive relationship was also found between directive behavior and total anxiety

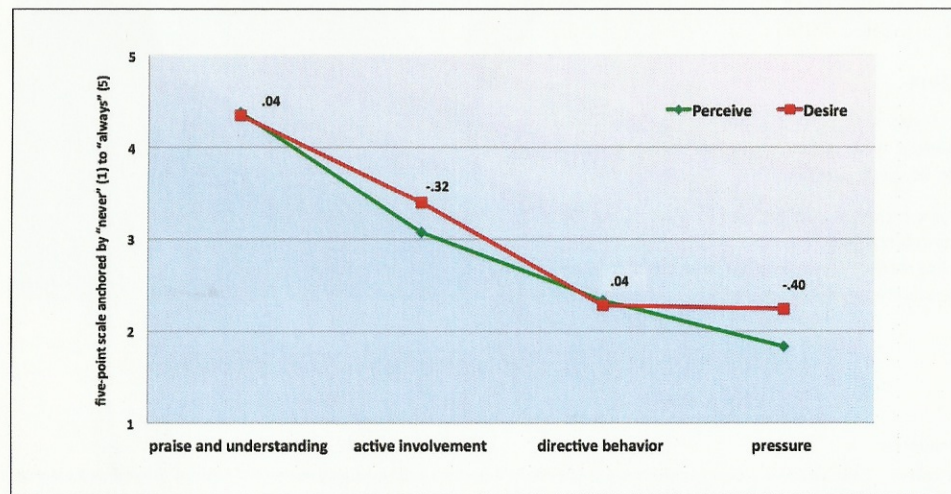


Figure 4: Athletes satisfaction in relation to perceived and desired level of parental involvement