

Learning Guide #8

For Watching the 2010 Winter Olympic Games/Major Sporting Events with Children

Dealing with Nervousness

Watching the Olympic Games or a sports event can be a valuable learning experience for young people. Just in time for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) has developed a series of learning guides for adults and children to use while watching sports on television or in person to promote healthy dialogue regarding sport. This guide suggests certain observations and presents several questions to discuss together. The learning guide concludes with a brief summary of important facts regarding the topic.

Observation and discussion questions: Dealing with Nervousness

While you watch the 2010 Winter Olympic Games or another sports event:

- See if you can identify several athletes who seem to be nervous.
- How can you tell that they are nervous?
- What do you think they are thinking and feeling?
- Do you think that this helps them perform well or does it get in the way?
- Have you ever felt nervous before performing in a sporting event, acting in a play or taking a test in school?
- How do Olympic athletes deal with nervousness?
- How do you deal with it?
- Would it be helpful to learn how to control your nerves (not become nervous) better?

Lesson Conclusion

Being nervous is common before a game or event when the outcome is really important to you. For many athletes, being a little nervous is a sign of being excited, which can be a good thing. It can motivate and energize you, and even help you pay attention. For most athletes, being a little nervous is a normal feeling before competing. However, being too nervous can get in the way of a good performance. This is sometimes called "stage fright" or "choking". Olympic athletes practice many different ways to control their nerves. Some will think about, or visualize, playing well. Others may take a deep breath just before starting. Sport psychology consultants can teach athletes and other performers how to relax under such pressure.

AASP encourages adults to do their part to create a supportive youth sport environment so children will develop a lifelong interest in physical activity and sports. By teaching fundamental sporting principles, you can help children develop winning attitudes, both in sports and throughout life.

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The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) promotes the ethical practice, science and advocacy of sport and exercise psychology. Founded in 1986, AASP is an international, multidisciplinary, professional organization that offers certification to qualified professionals who practice sport and exercise psychology. With more than 1,200 members in 28 countries, AASP is a worldwide leader, sharing research and resources with the public via its Web site, www.appliedsportpsych.org.

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