

# YouthFirst

*Parents Learning about Youth Sports  
The Sports Education and Leadership Program at UNLV*

## *Don't let anxiety get the best of you!*

### *What is Anxiety?*

Doctors would define anxiety as a feeling of apprehension and fear characterized by physical symptoms such as *palpitations* (unpleasant sensations of irregular and/or forceful beating of the heart), sweating, and feelings of *stress* (forces from the outside world impinging on the individual. Stress is a normal part of life that can help us learn and grow). Anxiety disorders are serious medical illnesses that affect approxi-

mately 19 million American adults. Most cases are the relatively mild forms, brief anxiety caused by a stressful event such as a first day of class or a sporting event. There are many different ways that the athlete and parent can take to control and stop anxiety before it starts to affect the athletes' play.

### *Ways to Prevent and Control!*

The two best ways to prevent and control anxiety are:

**Mental Preparation:** As a young athlete many people may not think they need to mentally prepare for their competition. In reality, one must go into every game, match, or event thinking they are going to win and they know how overcome any obstacles thrown their way.

**Planning:** Being able to plan is one of the greatest ways to prevent anxiety. When the word "plan" basically means to practice. Through practice anything in sports is possible. Many people think they can skip out on practicing or only go half as hard during practice as they go in the game.

However, the best quote and best advice one has ever given about practice and game play is: "Practice how you play"! By doing this it not only makes you a better individual, but it may also make your team better. By showing your team that they cannot just turn it on when the game comes, you can explain and show them that it takes hard work when there is not an audience looking and cheering you on.

## How Parents can help!

As a parent with a young student athlete it is big to be involved and be supportive. It may be a hard make it to be at all your kids games, but making the attempt to be at most of them is all that is asked. When going to a game say something that will get the butterflies out of your kids' stomach. Say things like "no matter what outcome is today you are no lesser of a person as you were before the game." This makes that realize that no matter if they play great or horrible, you are going to be there to support them no matter what. You can say something like, "it is okay to feel a little nervous, but know that you have practiced and you know what you are doing out there. So just go out there play like you know how to play and have fun with it"! This will let them know that they really are prepared to go out and play this game no matter what they may be feeling inside.

After the game is over and the outcome is a loss, you can be a great help to how your kid is feeling. You can let them know that they did there best and the outcome is not always a win. This will let them know that it is okay to lose and it is okay to feel bad about it, but there is always a new day with a new game to be played. Thus, your kid will feel better about the loss and be ready to go out and give it another shot next time around.

If the outcome is a win, let you kid know how proud you are of them! Tell them that you are extremely proud of how they played with so much energy and heart. Let them know that team really looked like they needed their help in order to win. But be careful when doing the last one because you do not want your kid to get a big head and start thinking she is better than the rest of the team. Just let her know that being a winner is a great feeling, but it would have been alright if she lost because it never changes the way you as parents look at her, or the world looks at her.

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## Websites You Can go to for Help...

**Prevent “Choking”:** <http://www.enhanced-performance.com>

**Dealing with Performance Anxiety:** <http://www.kenfoster.com>

**The Relationship Between Anxiety and Performance:** <http://www.athleticinsight.com>

**Competitive Anxiety:** <http://www.brianmac.demon.co.uk/companx.htm>

**A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Anxiety in Athletes:** <http://www.athleticinsight.com>

**Don’t Choke:** <http://sportsmedicine.about.com>

**Girls Participating in Sports:** <http://www.napa.ufl.edu>

**Girls Sports Facts:** <http://www.soccergirls.com>

**Over Come Anxiety:** <http://www.beating-anxiety-stress.com>

**A Study of Anxiety in Sports:** <http://www.getcited.org/pub/103374972>



*There is NO limit in what you can do  
if you set your mind to it!!*