



**Championing
& Celebrating
Responsibility in
Youth Sports**

MASTERY APPROACH TOOLS FOR PARENTS

Targeted Cheering

■ We all do it. Our kid's team scores, and all the parents in the stands start cheering. When the other team scores, of course we don't cheer. (Unfortunately too many of us have witnessed parents booing from the stands.) It's reflexive. It's how we are as fans at professional sports.

But as Responsible Sports Parents, we need to go beyond reflex to cheer for the things we want to see happen again. We call that Targeted Cheering. When we notice and reinforce desired behavior from our kids (and others on the team), we help ingrain into our kids those important life lessons we want them to get from their youth sports experience. Before a game, remind yourself of the priorities you have set for what you and your children want out of sports. Consider keeping a "cheat sheet" in your pocket listing things you'll cheer for during the game, such as great effort or demonstrating good sportsmanship toward opponents.

To send your children messages about teamwork, cheer for their teammates by name. To teach sportsmanship, stretch outside of the box, and cheer great plays by the opponent. (Sure, it's tough sometimes to cheer for the other team – but if they make a great play, isn't it just the right thing to do to celebrate it?)

Mistake Ritual

■ In the ELM Tree of Mastery, mistakes are OK. One way to help reinforce this is through what the professionals call a Mistake Ritual -- something that reminds players to bounce back and focus on the next play.

You may have seen these Mistake Rituals and not even realized that's what they were. And some of the best coaches in sports today use them. Rutgers University Head Football Coach Greg Schiano has his players make a "chopping wood" gesture as a means of an effective mistake ritual.

Establish a physical signal you can flash to your child from the sideline after a mistake, such as the "no sweat" motion of wiping your brow. Maybe even get all the parents together and agree on a team Mistake Ritual. (Responsible Coaches often have their own Mistake Rituals they use with their players.)

Whether you use the same signal as the rest of the team or your own private signal you establish with your children, it is important to let your children know that mistakes really are OK.

For more valuable Responsible Sport Parenting resources and information on how to earn a \$2,500 Community Grant or Responsible Coaching Award, visit Liberty Mutual's Responsible Sports™ program at ResponsibleSports.com.