



## THE CAR RIDE HOME & WHY IT'S SUCH A BIG DEAL!



In today's youth sports culture, "The Car Ride Home" has become a metaphor for the often-toxic nature of post-game/practice interactions between parents and children. This moment is commonly filled with high emotions, making it a challenging time for kids to absorb feedback.

Rather than feeling safe and supported, children often find themselves trapped in a situation where their parents, overwhelmed by their own unconscious emotions, project their need to resolve issues onto their kids. The dynamic can lead to a loss of trust and turn the car ride home from what should be a sanctuary of love and safety into a place of stress and survival.

Parents frequently, albeit often unintentionally, mistake these moments for a "teachable" moment and try to impose lessons on their child, not realizing their child more likely may simply need comfort and understanding at those times. Just like the child, parents are often navigating their own emotional responses, triggered by their child's public successes and failures. The result is a collision of needs where both parties seek validation and security, but neither is fully able to provide it. This misalignment can extend beyond the car ride home to other areas like the dinner table or during casual play, further complicating the parent-child relationship in sports.

The key to breaking this cycle lies in building awareness. Parents need to shift their focus from their thoughts to their emotions, understanding the underlying feelings driving their reactions. By doing so, they can choose words and actions that prioritize their child's well-being over their desire to coach or critique. Simple conversations can clarify that children often do not want post-game analysis and instead crave emotional support. The good news is that by recognizing these patterns, parents can begin to change.

## Reflect on your own experiences:

How do you typically feel during the car ride home after your child's game or practice? Do you share these feelings with your child?

Have you noticed any patterns in your reactions during post-game discussions? How do you think these reactions impact your child's perception of their sports experience?

Can you recall a moment when your child seemed particularly vulnerable after a game? How did you respond, and in hindsight, what might you have done differently?

What steps can you take to shift the focus from critique to comfort during those critical bonding moments, such as the car ride home?

How do you balance your own emotions and expectations with your child's need for support and understanding in youth sports? How can you become more aware of these dynamics?

If these questions sparked some curiosity and understanding for you, pick up a copy of **“Hero - Exploring the Depths of Parenting in Youth Sports”** and dare dive deeper. **3A Athletics** exists to transform the landscape of youth sports into a place where we all thrive. See you on the field.



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