

A patience plan for hockey

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The Ps of Patience

Why do we need PATIENCE from today's hockey coaches, parents and executives? We need patience because we need players who love the game and are happy people both at the rink and away from the rink. It's all about the kids!!

A patient approach does so much for a player's development now and in the future. Young players need to feel supported and comfortable in a nurturing environment that promotes healthy self esteem and appropriate development time.

As Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated **"Nature decrees that children should be children before they become adults. If we try to alter this natural order they will reach adulthood prematurely but with neither substance nor strength."**

Kids are not mini adults who can understand a coach or parent getting so upset about a game. **A fifteen minute tirade after a novice game just tells a kid that he's doing things all wrong and making the coach angry. A parent giving negative feedback on the ride home is telling their child they aren't good enough. It has nothing to do with development but instead shows impatience with the process.** My observation of many coaches today is that they are "over the top" serious. They use too many angry tones that put kids on edge and make it hard for them to perform to their

potential. Many parents today get too caught up in comparing their kids to others and expecting them to be better than they are capable of. So the question is how do we get these adults to take a more long term view and a more patient approach to hockey? Having a patience plan might be the answer. **Following the Ps of patience can help players build confidence in themselves and eventually become the best player they can be.** It might not mean an NHL career but it will mean they will continue to love the game and want to be involved in the future. Here are the Ps of patience.

Right Purpose

We have to start with our organizations taking a long term view not just going with year to year quick fixes. The executives who choose the coaches and develop the programs must remember that there is no use winning if winning makes some kids feel like losers. **A coach who wins a championship by over playing 3 or 4 kids does not have the right purpose.** The organization has to recognize this and not allow it to happen. Winning is just one component of success along with development and retention of players.

Commitment to Process

A commitment to “Long Term Athlete Development” has to be the philosophy. Athletes develop best in a positive environment where relationships are important. Teaching kids how to win and how to be successful is the key rather than focusing just on wins and losses. **Focus on the process and the small steps that lead to big leaps when the time is right.** Pushing too hard too soon just leads to frustration for everyone involved and in fact pushes kids out of the game.

Healthy Perspective

In the mental health field **perspective is everything.** **Remembering “its only hockey” is a good place to start.** Coaches and parents need to leave their egos at home in order to develop some self control around the rink. **Reflect** on what occurs when you become impatient. As a parent, what affect are you having on other parents or on your own child? As a coach, what affect are you having on the team? What affect is your impatience having on the process of development? Practice responding to situations rather than reacting. Be the calm one and remember that “Angry can’t be Patient”.

Persevere but be Proactive

We need to persevere but at the same time remember that patience isn’t lazy or laid back. Instead it’s action without the tension that causes stress. Try new ways of doing things: new drills, new approaches before games, new goals. **We should be challenging the players in positive and realistic ways that are consistent with their skill level.** Recognize there will be ups and downs in a season; kids are kids and they get tired and lose focus. **Patience allows a player to make mistakes and learn from them.** It puts the focus on what’s right with the player not what’s wrong with them; on their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

Peak Performance

Ultimately our goal as hockey stakeholders is to have patient players who are performing at the peak of their abilities. **“Patient athletes display composure, perseverance and diligence in their performance. Self control is an asset in sports because it makes you better and it helps you make right decisions at the right moments.”** (M. Edger) We want players who are physically and psychologically fresh. Not under the pressure that fear and an impatient approach bring. Be patient and let them play! They will develop that love for the game that hockey should be all about.