



**BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE**



DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT DURING CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS, POSTPONEMENTS

The recent cancellations of playoffs, championships, games, tournaments, and meets at every level are disappointing, but I also am aware they are necessary to prevent further spread of disease. While cancellations and precautionary measures continue, how can I (as an athletic director, coach, or parent) talk to my athlete about this disappointment?

Positive Coaching Alliance's Response

Coronavirus has already made a massive impact on the world of professional sports, canceling nearly every major sporting event for the next 30 days, or at the very least, disallowing fans from attending. While it is a disappointment for all involved, it is especially devastating for all the student-athletes who were forced to end their season prematurely. The sacrifices they will make during this crisis ask them to draw on the very lessons they've learned through sports: to be resilient, have a growth mindset and become leaders in and out of sports.

Here is an example of just that, from senior collegiate baseball player Kyle Dockus of Mercer University, who recently posted this:

As an NCAA senior, today showed me some things are bigger than baseball. If we get the chance to play, we will be ready. If not, I can assure you most of us will do exactly what sports has trained us to do when we are punched in the mouth, and that's get back up and keep moving.

What we are all being asked to do is the essence of some of the best life lessons sports can offer. Athletes learn through sports that there is great nobility in fighting for our teammates and are now being asked to come together to support one another. Great youth sports coaches work with athletes to teach them that hard work, sacrifice, and a servant-leader approach are key components of success. They create team environments that speak to a higher calling, one that takes precedence over individual concerns.

The current crisis asks our athletes and all of us to apply these ideas in a more critical situation.

Coaches and parents won't be able to erase the disappointment of athletes. They can, however, help them see that living up to this difficult civic responsibility is honorable and should become a source of pride.

As an athletic director, organizational leader, coach, or parent, here are a few more talking points and resources you might consider in handling this disappointment:

- You could say, "It's OK to be disappointed if you're feeling bad" or "it's not fair to have your season postponed or canceled—that's understandable and you're right to feel that way."
- Sports teaches us that we can overcome whatever is thrown at us—you're the kind of person who is resilient.

- Even when you're disappointed, this is a time to work on shifting your focus and application of control what you can control.
- We want you to be an athlete for life, this is a time to work on how you'll do that in the future.

Beyond some of the ways you might talk to your student-athlete during this time, there are other action steps you can take. For instance, as a coach, you might think about ways your team can stay connected and motivated to help alleviate the disappointment.

As a parent, you might take the time to connect with your kids by playing sports at home. Ultimately, there are always ways to make ourselves, our teammates, and our community better, and you can see some of those action steps (beyond the talking points above) outlined here:

COACHES

- **Organize google hangouts as a way for teammates to connect.**
- **Encourage your players to communicate about individual workouts they are performing to keep each other motivated.**
- **Consider having their team watch [a sports movie](#) and then come together virtually to discuss the lessons learned.**

PARENTS

- **Set up routines (schoolwork in the morning, "recess" in the backyard) - help normalize the situation as much as possible.**
- **Play with your kid in the sport of their choice in the backyard or in the driveway.**
- **Read PCA's [Sports Parents Conversation Starters](#). Each week, your FREE subscription to *Sports Parent Conversation Starters* brings you as a parent closer to your children who play sports.**

ATHLETES

- **Recognize how important it is to take excellent care of your body when things are difficult. When we face disappointment, fear, or stress, it is important that we pay particularly close attention to our nutrition, hydration, exercise, and sleep.**
- **Continue to be a great teammate. If you are able, reach out to teammates and friends to ask how they're doing and whether they're ok. The act of supporting and showing care for each other will benefit and strengthen both of you.**
- **Be courageous about asking for help. Parents, coaches, and other trusted adults want to support you during difficult times. If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, or depressed, let one of the adults you trust know very specifically. Ask them for a time you can have an honest talk with them when they can be free of other distractions. Be honest with them about what's going on and how you are feeling. Don't hesitate to ask for help for fear that your concerns aren't important.**

Youth sports has been and will continue to be an outstanding platform to develop better athletes and better people through character development. Let's apply the lessons of youth sports participation; resilience, grit, determination, and selflessness, to name a few, to the current challenge we are all facing in the world today.