



When Your Kids Don't Feel Like It

Teaching our children self-discipline is tricky. It's normal for kids to think, "If I don't feel like doing something, why should I do it?" This is especially different when we're looking at team sports vs individual sports. I can share with you what we learned in our family. We made an agreement with our children when they signed up for team sports. We asked them to agree to a commitment to go to practice, even when they didn't feel like it.



We assured them that there would be days when they wouldn't feel like going, but that we would go anyway, unless they were sick, because of the commitment they made to the team. We wanted to teach the lesson of commitment and help them understand that it's possible to do something when you don't feel like it because of the commitment they made to a team.

When it comes to individual sports like figure skating or tennis, it's a little different because there's no team. Our daughter's goal was to become a national champion in her sport, competitive water skiing. She asked me to come home early from work one day so I could drive the boat for her practice. By the time I got home the weather had changed. It was a bit windy and rainy. She said, "Dad, I don't feel like practicing now. It's nasty out there." I said, "I totally understand...I'll get the boat ready." She replied, "But I don't feel like it." I told her I thought that was interesting, and understandable, but "What's that got to do with it?"

I was trying to make the point that you can feel like NOT doing something, then take a deep breath, and decide to do it anyway. That is the essence of self-discipline! I wanted to teach her that it's possible to go against the feelings she was having. I didn't want to force her to practice because then it's not SELF-discipline. I told her we could keep it short and fun, and then asked, "What do you say?" She thought about it and said, "Okay, let's go."

We had a good practice session and afterwards she said, "That was great. I'm so glad I made myself go out there." This is what we want our children to experience; to go against their feelings of laziness or the path of least resistance, and choose to do the more beneficial thing. This is a tricky lesson to teach, but an important one.



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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

If your child is in a team sport, how will you set an expectation about honoring the commitment to the team?

2

If your child is in an individual sport, how can you help your child choose self-discipline when he doesn't feel like doing the work?