

## Building Young People

If you choose to train kids, or young athletes, you're choosing to take on a huge responsibility; one that should not be taken lightly. Not only are you choosing to be a trainer, you're choosing to be a role model, a coach, a counselor, a friend, a mentor. Training kids means having a lot of roles and much responsibility, but it can be one of the most rewarding things you can do with your time.

Most of us train because we like helping people reach their fitness goals. However, most of us don't train for free. We see training as a way to make money while we are doing something we like, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, when it comes to kids, you should consider if you are looking at a child or a dollar sign? Chances are if the child is under 16, he didn't search you out and drive himself to your door. His parents did. Many times a parent really wants their child to be the next "superstar" and they are willing to pay for you to make this happen. Sometimes the parent is far more driven than the child is. As a trainer, you may need to become an advocate for that child. I can't tell you how often I see burned out kids who no longer find the joy in playing their sport. They end up being miserable trying to live out their parents' dream. One of the first things I do when I meet a new kid who comes to train with me is I interview the child in front of the parents and then I interview the child separately from the parents. I do this because I don't want to aid in making the child miserable. I also want the kids I train to know that I am on their side; I care about them.

If the child truly wants to train with me on his own accord, great! Now he knows I care about him and we can get started. If the child is only there for his parents, he still knows I care and we may need to have a conversation with his parents. Here is one, of many, incidents where you suddenly become a counselor instead of a trainer.

Another thing to consider when training a young athlete is, Do you know anything about their sport or their position? If you don't you, may want to learn so you can truly help your athlete. If your athlete is a wide receiver, do you know the attributes a wide receiver needs to have in order to be competitive? Will you train the athlete accordingly? As a trainer, your athlete may need more help than just learning how to perform a dead lift, he may need help with his running mechanics too. You owe it to your kids as well as yourself to learn how to help your athletes be "athletic" in all areas.

Something else you may want to consider when training kids is teaching them how to lift weights. Many athletes are picked for positions based on their size and strength. You may not believe kids should lift weights or you may not focus on traditional weight training as part of your training philosophy, but your kids **are going to** lift weights if they're in middle or high school. And, someone is going to be showing them how to do it wrong. Well meaning coaches want their athletes to be strong and will require them to workout if they want to make the team. However, not all coaches know how to properly lift the weights they want their athletes to lift. You have a chance to teach your young clients how to properly lift weights to help ensure that they will not injure themselves in

the weight room at school. Don't just be their trainer, be their coach and show them proper weight lifting mechanics.

Perhaps the biggest responsibility that comes with training kids is that of being a role model. If your kids want to train with you and they trust you, you will become their role model. They watch you just like your own kids would. They watch what you do, how you speak, how you act. You become more than a trainer, you become friend, a mentor. This is a huge responsibility because like it or not, you have the chance to mold a young person's life. And you will, for better or worse. How you act and react with your kids will shape your kids. You are not just teaching them how to swing a kettlebell or how to run fast. You're also mentoring them into young adults. What you do matters, you are molding young lives. Do not take this lightly. Whether or not your kids go to play at a D1 school or make it to the pros, they will go on to be adults. You will shape their lives in some way. Everything you do matters.

Training kids, or young athletes, can be very rewarding. It is a great chance to make a difference in a young person's life. Not only are you training a child to be explosive, to control their bodies, to jump farther, or run faster, you are teaching a child things like integrity, character, perseverance, confidence, humility, etc... The list goes on and on. My only point to all of this is, if you train kids, you are more than just a trainer.

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