It was the deciding game of the series to determine which team would continue to the World Series Ponytail Championships. At the bottom of the seventh inning, Halifax was winning 10 – 7 over Danville. The bases were loaded with two outs as Danville’s Wilkins walked to the plate. In her previous at-bats, Wilkins struck out. The Halifax pitcher threw two beautiful strikes. The count was no balls and two strikes. Wilkins tightened her grip and made contact with the ball on the third pitch. The ball sailed to center field, bouncing off the top of the fence. The outfielders chased the ball as three runs were scored. As Wilkins slid into home plate, the catcher tagged her. The umpire motioned and yelled “safe.” The crowd went wild. The Halifax parents were irate that the umpire missed the call. The Danville parents were cheering. As the bantering escalated to volatile levels, parents from both sides moved down from the stands to confront one another. The game was at a standstill as the players stopped to watch what was happening. The girls from both teams couldn’t believe their eyes. Their parents were ready to fight over a call the umpire made.

Scenes like this are more prevalent in youth sporting events than ever. Most parents intend to be supportive of their children when attending sporting events. However, their words and actions may send messages inconsistent with their intentions. For example, in the heat of a game, some parents forget that they are not the ones playing; often engaging in unhealthy and unsportsmanlike behaviors.

There are several types of snares that parents unwittingly place themselves in when being overzealous. These usually compromise the desire of children to joyfully participate, put undue pressure on coaches, and contribute to unhealthy environments at children’s sporting events.

Mr. And Mrs. Agenda

These parents over-schedule their children in sporting events, music, choir, drama, dance, etc. Some parents over-schedule to fulfill their own vicarious needs. Parents who arrange an overloaded agenda often feel their child must be successful in a myriad of activities in order to be the “perfect child.” For example, Mr. and Mrs. Agenda scheduled at least one extra-curricular activity for each day of the week. Often, in this scenario, scheduled practice for one activity is in conflict with another scheduled event. Unless parents are sensitive to this, their child may suffer from burnout. Here are some tips for teachers and coaches to help children with over-scheduling parents.

• Advise and provide opportunities for children to be open in telling parents their likes and dislikes and willingness to participate in scheduled events.
• Coaches can meet with parents (one-on-one) explaining the requirements for participation. In this meeting, the coach might suggest to parents the need to prioritize and select only the activity with which the child has interest.

Mr. Braggadocio

This parent type gloats constantly about his child’s talent to other parents, the coach, teammates, and anyone else who will listen. This parent also places undue pressure on the coach for concession and pressure on the child to perform up to his or her parent’s expectations. Often children of the Braggadocios will shrink with embarrassment when their parents are around. Here are some tips for teachers and coaches to help children with parents who constantly gloat.

• Actions speak louder than words. Coaches should communicate the philosophy to children and parents that “if you’ve got to brag about what you or your child did, it probably isn’t noteworthy.”
• At the end of the game, parents should become a part of the team for participation in end-of-game rituals. For example, parents from each team join the line and shake hands and offer compliments to opposing players and parents.
• Following the ritual with the opposing team, parents should gather with other parents and their children and offer congratulatory remarks and gestures.

Mr. and Mrs. Hothead

These parents behave appropriately until the game starts. After the start of the game, the Hotheads will analyze the coaching and officiating. If the coaching and officiating is contrary to their liking, a tirade of abusive comments will be showered upon coaches and officials during the game. The intensity is significantly elevated when there are multiple hotheads from each side. Here are some tips for teachers and coaches to help children with hothead parents.

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Obesity
(Continued from page 10)

Treatment duration and frequency

Research clearly shows obesity treatment duration is positively correlated with weight loss and long-term weight loss maintenance in adults; that is, the longer treatment duration the greater weight loss and weight loss maintenance. To date, there has been no clinical research studies designed specifically to examine the effects of treatment duration on weight loss or weight loss maintenance in obese children and adolescents. However, experts recently examined many studies comparing treatment duration on change in percentage of pediatric overweight. They found that longer treatment periods were associated with greater reductions in the percentage of overweight among children and adolescents. There is also some evidence to suggest that the frequency of treatments might impact weight loss and weight loss maintenance. Another study found groups that changed their behavior gradually had a significantly greater weight loss than those that changed behavior rapidly.

Treatment vs. Prevention

Some researchers have suggested that the focus of pediatric obesity treatment should be on prevention (i.e., preventing further weight gain) versus attempting to actually reduce a child’s body weight. Proponents of the “prevention approach” oppose treatment largely out of concern about the effects of energy restriction on growth and development. While less aggressive “preventative” approaches may be acceptable for children and adolescents who fall into the “at-risk for overweight” category, they are not appropriate for the overweight/obese youngster, particularly one who is already suffering the health consequences associated with obesity (i.e., cardiorespiratory problems, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, glucose intolerance or non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, etc.).

The Bottom Line

When it comes to obesity treatments, one size does not fit all. The successful management of pediatric obesity hinges on individualizing treatment protocols to meet the unique needs of each child or adolescent. Nonetheless, there are some general principles that should be incorporated into all treatment protocols or programs. First, both dietary changes (reducing calories and/or altering macronutrient composition i.e., low-fat, moderate protein and carbohydrate) and changes in physical activity (i.e., reducing sedentary behaviors while increasing the time spent doing both cardiovascular or aerobic exercise as well as strength training) need to be included. Second, the child’s parents must be involved in the behavior change process. Ideally they should undertake the healthy lifestyle behaviors themselves. Last, but not least, whatever weight loss program is utilized it needs to be of sufficient duration to instill permanent changes in behavior. It is generally recommended that a program be no less than 16 weeks in duration and there is some indication that increasing treatment duration upwards to one year may significantly enhance outcomes. Indeed, the longer the treatment duration the greater the likelihood those healthful behaviors will be incorporated into one’s lifestyle and last for a lifetime.

Overzealous
(Continued from page 6)

- The coach needs to conduct a parent meeting in which sportsmanship expectations are explicitly stated.
- Coaches facilitate the development of a sportsmanship contract with parents and children. Once the contract is developed, both parents and children sign it.

Mr. and Mrs. Over-Indulgence

These parents mistakenly think that the “more is better” philosophy will make their child perform better in the game. These parents shower their children with top-of-the-line name-brand shoes, apparel, and ancillary equipment. These parents also are likely to excessively reward their children for successful performances. The end result is that the children “have it all” with nothing to look forward to as they grow and mature. Here are some tips for teachers and coaches to help children with over-indulgent parents.

- The coach should develop guidelines to aid parents in the selection of safe and appropriate equipment for their children.
- The coach and parents should also develop rules, which support appropriate end-of-game and end-of-season celebrations. These guide-lines, should address: 1) recognition for all participants, 2) trophies, 3) food, and 4) location of the celebratory event.

Unless coaches and parents are sensitive to children’s needs, we allow ourselves to unwittingly compromise children’s enjoyment derived from participation in sporting events. Unless coaches and parents are careful, children’s desire to be life-long participants in sporting activity will be stifled. Use of the above tips can help parents and coaches to be sensitive to the needs of their children but also guard against the snares of overzealous parent behaviors.