



The Post-Game Conversation Guide for Sports Parents

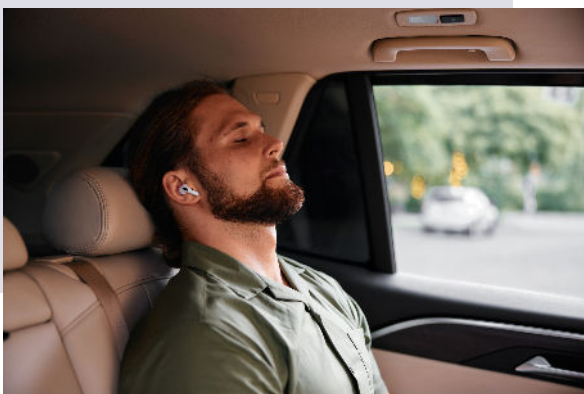
How to Support Your Athlete
Without Adding Pressure

WHY POST-GAME CONVERSATIONS MATTER

This guide is for parents who:

- Want to support their athlete without creating pressure
 - Sometimes struggle with what to say after games
 - Want their child to build confidence and resilience through sport
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“For many athletes, the car ride home feels worse than the game.”



For many young athletes, the car ride home after a game or competition can feel worse than any poor performance or moment of failure.

Parents naturally want to help, encourage, or teach. But for many athletes, these conversations create pressure, criticism, or disappointment.

Most athletes need time to decompress after competition.

For the past several hours they have been in an elevated mental, emotional, and physical state. They need time and space to return to a calm and neutral state of mind.

THE 2 HOUR RULE

At White House Sport Psychology we often recommend a **"2-Hour Rule."**

This means waiting two or more hours before reviewing the game or competition.

Striking while emotions are still high often backfires, especially after a tough loss or disappointing performance.

Even after a great performance, giving athletes time to calm back down helps them reflect more clearly and effectively.

When the time is right to talk, the goal should NOT be to analyze the entire game.

Instead, the goal should be to help your athlete **reflect, learn, and stay motivated.**

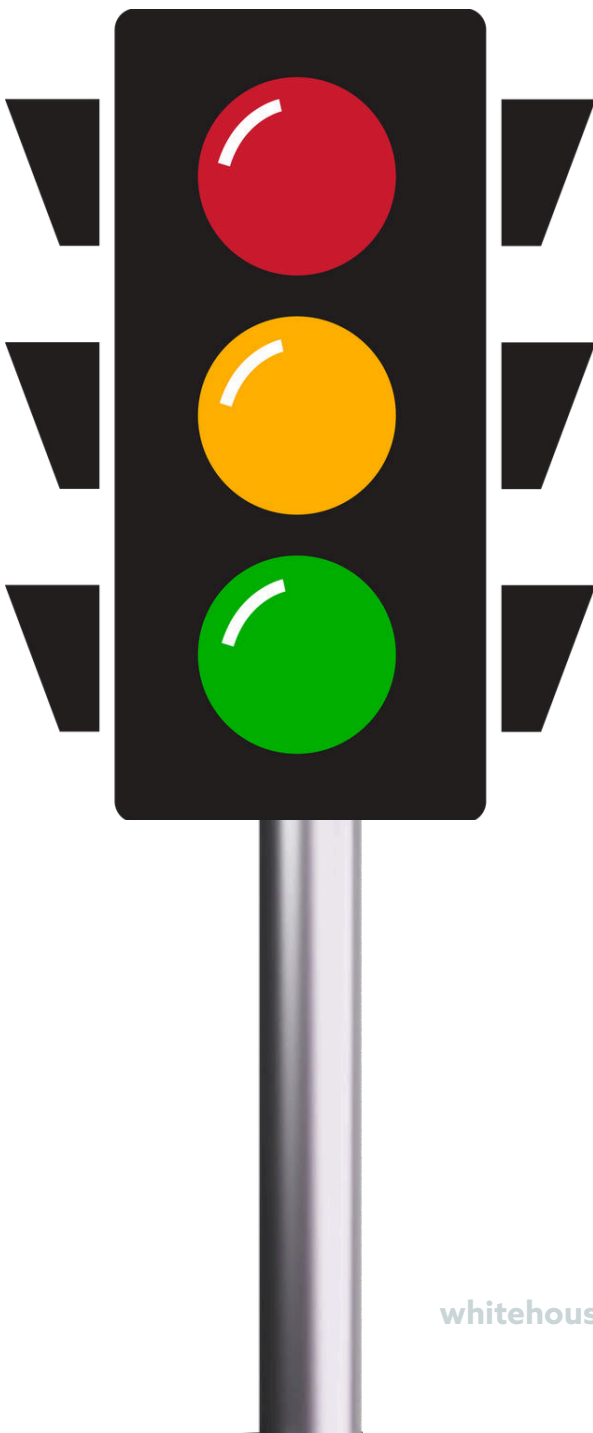


That's why, in addition to the two hour rule, we also recommend the The Traffic Light Method.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT METHOD

One of the simplest ways to guide a productive post-game conversation is the Traffic Light Method.

Instead of reviewing everything that happened, your athlete identifies just three things about their performance.



STOP: One thing they want to stop doing.

KEEP: One thing they did well and want to keep doing.

START: One thing they want to start doing next time.

This method keeps conversations:

- Focused
- Constructive
- Athlete-driven

Most importantly, it **encourages athletes to think for themselves** rather than rely on external evaluation and feedback.

IMPLEMENTING THE TRAFFIC LIGHT METHOD

1 Let Your Athlete Lead

This method works best when parents create space for their athlete to think.

Try to:

- Ask for your child's perspective
- Allow them to do the thinking (and most of the talking)
- Avoid jumping into critiques or technical feedback

Your athlete has likely replayed key moments in their mind long before they got into the car.

If they ask for your opinion or advice, you can certainly share it. But **wait for them to ask first.**

This approach helps athletes build:

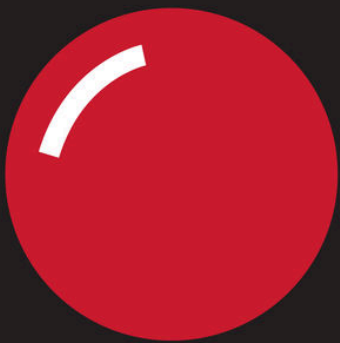
- ✓ **Ownership of improvement**
- ✓ **Problem-solving skills**
- ✓ **Internal motivation**



IMPLEMENTING THE TRAFFIC LIGHT METHOD

2 Use the Traffic Light Questions

When your athlete is ready to reflect, ask them to choose one item for each color. Then listen. You may be surprised how thoughtful your athlete's answers can be.

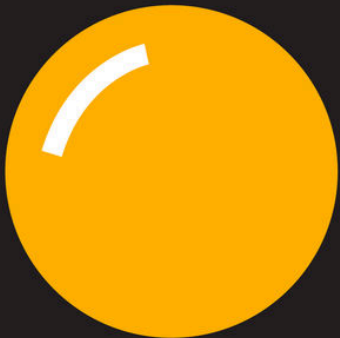


STOP

"What is ONE thing you want to stop doing?"

Examples:

- Blaming others for my mistakes
- Rushing my decisions
- Using negative self-talk
- Losing focus during key moments



KEEP

"What is ONE thing you did well today that you want to keep doing?"

Examples:

- Hustling every play
- Executing a specific skill well
- Encouraging teammates after they make a mistake
- Using routines to mentally prepare for the game/competition



START

"What is ONE thing you want to start doing in your next practice, game, or competition?"

Examples:

- Blocking out distractions with mental strategies designed to stay focused and "locked in"
- Using mental cues to focus on the process (vs the outcome)
- Communicating more consistently with teammates
- Using mental tools to let go of mistakes

WHY THIS APPROACH HELPS YOUNG ATHLETES

Young athletes develop faster when they learn to evaluate their own performance.

When parents or other adults immediately provide feedback, athletes can become:

- ✗ Defensive
- ✗ Passive
- ✗ Dependent on external evaluation

By contrast, asking thoughtful questions that promote self-reflection helps athletes develop:

- ✓ Self-awareness
- ✓ Decision-making skills
- ✓ Emotional regulation
- ✓ Long-term confidence

Over time, athletes who learn to reflect this way become more resilient and self-directed in and out of sport.



A SIMPLE SCRIPT FOR PARENTS

If you want a quick way to start the conversation,
try something like:

“When you think about how you performed today,



“What’s something you might want to **STOP** doing?”

“What’s something you did well that you want to **KEEP** doing?”

“What’s one thing you want to **START** doing at your next practice/game/competition?”



The Post-Game Parent Checklist

After a game:

Give your athlete time to decompress

Let your athlete reflect first

Ask START–KEEP–STOP questions

Listen more than you talk

A FINAL THOUGHT FOR PARENTS

Your child's sport experience should be a place where they learn, grow, and build confidence

The most helpful role a parent can play is often not the role of the coach, critic, or analyst but simply being a curious **supporter**.

Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is ask a thoughtful question and then listen.

Want Help Building Your Athlete's Mental Game?

White House Sport Psychology works with athletes, parents, and teams to help them develop the mental tools, strategies, and techniques they need to master the mind, master their game, and raise their performance to the next level.

We help athletes build skills such as Grit, Resilience, and Mental Toughness so that they can compete with confidence, move past mistakes, overcome perfectionism, and effectively manage stress, pressure, and excessive expectations.

Don't leave your athlete's mental game to chance.

Schedule a Free Mental Game Consultation at: WhiteHouseSportPsychology.com/contact

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