

Course Name: Sports Psychology

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WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Hello, and welcome to session 3. We are discussing perspectives about working with young children and young athletes. A coach has multiple responsibilities while working with young athletes right from coaching them, making them learn the technical skills and also molding them into good sports persons. Young players have to be guided at all points of time and the coach holds a very great responsible role in doing this. To understand how to work with young athletes and young players, we have Ms. Jayavanti here who is a very well known sports personality and also a very famous coach.

Ms. Jayavanti Shyam here. She is a former international basketball player, having a lot of credentials to her credit. She has captained the Indian team and also has been part of the Indian basketball team for more than a decade. She has also been a part of the Karnataka State basketball team for over two decades, captaining the team on many occasions and taking the team to victory and many medals at the podium. Transitioning her career from a sportswoman, she has now moved on to the coaching area. As a coach, she has very great credentials. She has also been the coach of the Indian national team and right now she is also the coach of the Karnataka State basketball team. She has been coaching the team, state team on many occasions, in national events and also in all India tournaments.

She has produced some great basketball players and currently she is the coach of a premier basketball club here in Bangalore. She has been doing this for more than over two decades,

producing players and making them hone their skills to a great extent. So, for all her contribution to the field of sport, the government of Karnataka has bestowed her many awards and many medals. She has received the prestigious Ekalavya Award, she has the Rajyotsava Award, the Dasara Award, the SWAB Award and many other state awards. So, we are going to hear from her about how she works with athletes and sports people and young players and we will try to understand what are the challenges and what it needs to have as a coach to work with them.

So, thank you Jayavanthi for being here. I welcome you for this discussion. My very first question is- you have very wide exposure to working as a coach with young players, right? So, we are looking at how you work with the players 11 to about 16 years and even the senior age group. What kind of coaching style is needed with young people?

The younger ones basically, first round we only concentrate on skills and fundamentals and then their mental strength and then basics because we are grooming them for the future. So, there are a lot of places where we have to tell them. They come with a lot of dreams. we have to show them the way. So, the only way which we can tell them is to start with a proper grounding with the fundamentals. Then they go on to the higher level which is always followed up with. So, the coaching style is more like you also have to assume a parent role also, or like in addition to because some of them are so young at the age of 12 and 13. Yes, for me I do because I not only communicate with the parents, I communicate with the child and then I do a lot of counseling to the younger children.

I always see that they come on to the court with a good frame of mind and then for me I check after the game, before the game and whatever fundamentals and then they'll have a lot of questions to ask. And so, I make it a point to answer those questions. So that it is clear for them.

So, like you're doubling up or tripling up the role right? Oh, yes. Like a coach, like a mentor, even a parent. I think your responsibility doesn't even end even after they reach home.

No, no, definitely. I see that they reach home also. We have a group luckily because of the cell phones. And I do check up when they've reached home and then everything else. And sometimes I even tell the parents what to give them, the food, the nutrition and everything. So, it's like a very holistic approach to what you use when you work as a coach. And a family kind of approach. In all areas. And at the same time I'm very strict about whatever I tell them. So, that they understand- You want to make it to a level.

You have to follow certain things what your mentor or coach tells. Yeah. I mean you can't take it easy. No, I can't. You need to work hard. If I want a level I can't take it easy. So, like I mean when you work with the older age group, the requirements are different and when you work with younger athletes it's more like investment is more.

Definitely. You invest a lot. Because they are our future. So, and also they come with, they think there is a short way, shortcut to success. Some are very broad minded. They take their time. So, you have to explain both kinds to those kids and reality is something else. Watching is something else. Doing is something else.

You know, in this age of young players, they have many things available to them, unlike the yesteryears when we played. How and what can be done to motivate them? I feel that with these younger players we have to show them that academics is important. But because the parents are forcing them, pressurizing them. But I have to tell them that it doesn't matter. Academics, when you are younger, is not that important.. You can go about with your homework. Don't expect the marks you want. Somewhere you will do it. When it is the final exam, concentrate. I believe in telling them that all through the year. That's what we have studied. I always tell them to just wait till the final exam. Midterms don't bother.

Just play your heart out. Because in the younger level if you don't get your breakthrough, again it's a cause for disappointment. So, that is very important. Getting the breakthrough. And when you get the breakthrough, how you continue with it, and how you give value to it. And go all out. Yeah. So, you know, in addition to this, like you can I think, you also give them a lot of

feedback about their performance, about how they played, after every match, after every session. Right. I mean sometimes I do keep quiet. Because I say this girl has time to improve. But then if that child I know has the capacity. I pile on them and I see that they come to a certain level.

That is my gut instinct as a coach. I may go wrong sometimes. But then again, any time for children, skill development, fundamentals and continuity. That's very important. And consistency.

How do you keep, you know, you work with the mini age group, then you work with the sub junior levels also. How do you keep all these teams together? Do you have children coming from different backgrounds? Yes. Different schools. And how do you keep them together? Do you have any mantra or something? Oh yes.

I do have the reason why nobody leaves me. Of course for my club, let me tell you frankly. I have children who have played from the past 17 years. From the time they were 10 years old till 29 years, they have never left me. And there is a reason for it because what I do is other than be strict on the court, off the court I am very friendly with them. I check out their problems if they have any issues at home. I mean, I'm not a counselor. Because the coach actually has to double up. Because besides the home, most of the time they spend with you, right; Morning practice, evening. I do and I guide them right away. You know, I tell them there are always ups and downs in everybody's life because sometimes peer pressure, sometimes what is happening at home, nobody's going to know.

Each child goes in about a different way. And we don't know. So I'm a little compassionate like that with the younger kids. And then I always help them out.

If I have a girl who comes from a lower income. If I have somebody from a higher income and if they're going somewhere the same way and they live in the same area, I request the older one to drop her, so that she can come for practice easily. There are so many things. So you're developing that camaraderie. Yes. And teamwork, which is very, very important for basketball.

Yes. Everybody is special in their own way. And then I always have this concept. Each child has something good in them. And there is a weakness too. So we have to work on the weakness, but the good part has to be exploited on the court.

In a team like what you said, you have some players who are like, genetically they're very good. They have a good jump. They are very good. And you also have certain players who are, you know, taking time to develop. So how do you work with these people who are like slow learners?

So this is what it is. There are some who are talented, some who are hardworking. So what happens, the talented, they don't practice much, but it's natural. Then you have the hard workers who practice hard. But I believe in the hard workers because somewhere they will peak. They always say, practice makes perfect. So they will peak somewhere and I keep telling them this will happen, this will happen. And then I mean, your time will come or before, you know, the talented one may go backward and this hard worker will go through. So it's a talent plus hard work. It makes a lot of difference.

So in this age group, we also have a lot of parental involvement., right?. Yes. Because they are the younger lot. Yes. Like what kind of support do the parents give them? See, parents make a major, major thing about this because if I do, if I have a practice session at six or I have a practice session evening, seven or something, and if I tell the parent to get her, if they don't get her there, then what is the use? So what happens is ,if the parents have other issues and they can't reach them there, there itself, you're going backward. And finally, the parent has to have a good relationship with the child where they can bring the child. And then sometimes the child will be stubborn. Again, the parent has to motivate them and tell them the reality of life and say, this is how it is, you have it in you, other than me telling it. What I do without the child knowing, I communicate. I'll say, why is this happening? Then the parent will explain. As soon as she explains, we plan. How we are going without the child knowing, how we can help the child. I do a lot of that.

I know that the parents help a lot and they play a great role, but what are the challenges working with parents? Like sometimes, they're more ambitious and all that. They're over ambitious, some of them. And then I tell them, take it one day at a time. It'll happen. But then they're so over ambitious. They listen to other people. And then I tell them, okay, there is a limit to everything. So I do guide them and I tell them, but if after a point, they are not understandable, then yet again, it's left to them. You know, they are spoiling.

Do they get involved in the game? Like some parents get involved. I see that many of them accompany the children to the matches. I've been very unfortunate. Maybe one is to 50 of them, the parent gets involved in the game. But I have parents where they get the food, they get the snacks, everything, you get all kinds of energy. And they get it for the entire team. So like the days we played, no parents came to watch us. Nobody knew what we were doing. But we still did well. That's why I suppose we did well. These are a little spoiled. But then luckily, I insist if they get only for one girl, no, I'm not happy. I tell them to get for everybody.

Nothing wrong. So that it may help. Of course, some may refuse. But yet again, so the parents other than that part, nutrition and everything, they get and help out. They have this where they say it's okay, my daughter didn't play well today, tomorrow she'll play better. Accept it. And they and they help out, they'll get the water, they'll get everything.

All the support systems, everything. And they get them on time. So that's great. Getting them much before the match on time is a very important thing. Because they all live far off nowadays. And also that in today's world and today's era, everybody knows that along with sports, you need to be educated. So that is also a problem for you.

How do you deal with that? Like suppose you have matches and they have tests and everything going on. How do you work around that? So what happens is, I tell the parents beforehand, please go take permission. Some schools may not, so I tell them to insist, make them understand how important sports is, how important for the child it is, for her development, for her future.

So then they do the groundwork. Like I said, some parents are very good. One or two. And then when they lose out on that particular tournament, the next tournament, they come back, they realize.

So that also is good. Sometimes you can't help it. Both the parents are working. They have no time and the child is very good. But what are you going to do? the support system is not that much. And in today's era, where children have access to the internet, YouTube channels, where everything is there. So how do you, does it pose a challenge to a coach? Like suppose you show a particular drill and then do you have any instance where a child is at, have seen it on YouTube? Yeah, it does. But you know, the funniest part is, in India, we do the same drills indirectly, what is happening on YouTube. Only thing is our infrastructure structure.

We don't have Indoor courts. We do it outside. And so you feel that you are not doing that. But we are doing the same thing. But the energy is much lesser. But when you play outside, you are exposed to the highest level of tough game. Because when you play in an Indoor court, you are mollycoddled. You are playing in an Indoor court. So when you come out to play an outside match, your body won't move. So vice versa. So I prefer the outdoors. I'm a very old school of thought. So you're saying is like, when you watch YouTube, it's like when it is in an indoor and when it is shown that way, there's a lot of difference to play. Which the players have to adapt. We are doing the same thing. There is a lot of difference. So like I said, I prefer it because I make my girl tough when I play outside. So when they play indoors, they give a better game because they're getting a good court. Yeah. Of course, everywhere, if they do the same thing, Indoor courts everywhere, then we can follow the same thing.

One of my last questions to you is, what are the typical challenges a coach faces working with young people? Have you any instances where a child has been challenging to you and you have tried to work and help the child or anything? A lot of challenges because I always have a big headache because four players will be of the same level. And then what happens is, three make it and that one child whom I felt has done very well and she gets dropped. So that is one of the major challenges because the child cannot understand why she's dropped. And they get

disappointed. She knows and she's disappointed. You're all the time counseling and saying no, it happened. You get the next time. But yet again, peer pressure, friends pressure. They want them. Yes, seeing others go to the thing. And it's very, very tough. Yeah. I mean, I'm all the time facing it because of my bad luck. I have four or five players of the same level. So, these are the small things.

So thank you, Jay, so much for sharing your perspectives. Thank you. Let me tell you because it's so important for learning from you as a coach about what it is to deal with young players. It's very important. Yes. Because in theory, we learn something else. In practical, it is something else. For us, it's for me, it is both as a counselor and as a mentor and as a coach.

As a coach, I'm ruthless with the girls. And as a mentor, I guide them. And as a counselor, I make them feel special. You know where to be hard and where to be soft.

Yes. Thank you so much, Jay. Thank you. Bye.

Hello, everyone, and welcome to this session. Significant people who form the inner circle of a sports person are the coaches, the parents, the mentors, the peers and the teammates. Parents form the backbone for the development and grooming of athletes, right from introducing them to the sports, taking them for practice, taking care of their nutrition, accompanying them for their matches, providing the support and encouragement. The parents do it all and try to leave no stone unturned. In this session, we are talking about working with young athletes, and we are looking at the parenting involvement and all the challenges and all the effort that parents put in in working with their young wards.

We have Mrs. Vaishnavi Reddy. Hello. Mother of two talented young basketball players. Older daughter, Niharika is a junior international and also the current member of the state team. Her younger daughter, Nilaya, is a club level player who is knocking on the doors of the state team.

Welcome so much. Thank you so much for having me. And thank you for all your time. So as parents of two girls in the sports, I have my first question to you. Are you goal driven, or do you set goals for your kids or do they set their own goals? I have my own goals in my head. but my girls set their own goals. And I'm just a driving force behind them. so you're providing all the support And everything. But you know what your children would expect from them to achieve or you're looking at something for them in your mind. I mean, yes, the end goal is to play for your country.

There are little steps that you take before you reach there. And even with Niharika, it was very, it was a tough journey. And Nilaya, my younger daughter, is also taking little baby steps to get there under their mentor and coach Jayavanti, who's an ex-Indian player. And so I have these small goals, which I tell them. And which they also strive to accomplish.

How do they receive it? When you tell them that,- you need to work towards this or you need to set a goal. I mean, you'll be guiding them, right? I will. I just put it across in a way saying,- I think you can do it like this. Which makes it better. Because you know how young children are,

teens with their mood swings and everything. So you have to be a very little careful about how you put it across to them.

You have two girls, playing at different levels. Like one is at the Indian team and the other one is just upcoming, looking at her younger, older sister to make it. How do you deal with it as a parent? the two different levels of accomplishments. So how do you deal with it? How difficult is it? I only actually feel bad for Nilaya because she has big shoes to fill with Niharika playing at such a level. You have an older sister who's accomplished many things. But you know, Nilaya is very driven in her own way. She does take cues from her older sister. But she knows what she wants.

It's also tough when both are in the same sport. Because I have two daughters and the older one followed suit like me and my husband and she played basketball. I think my younger one over a course of time, she, I think realized what it is to play for a team. And she went into an individual sport. Tennis. These kinds of things are also in play in young children.

Does your younger one have a passion for any other sport or is it just basketball? Right now it's only basketball, she loves it. And she's very happy playing at school level and club level. And for me as a mother, It gives me immense joy to watch them both play on the same team, On the same court

Once, both my older one and younger one played together and it was so nice. Both of them passing to each other. And they both play different positions. So there's no clash. There is no clash and there is no comparison. My younger one is fast and Niharika's fundamentals are very good. So in that way, it's okay. They're both sorted. It's like a balanced kind of person. She does look to her older sister for advice. She talks to her about a lot of things. That's good, which is nice. Because we only talk about camaraderie with friends, that is required even in siblings. It starts at home. Everything starts at home.

So what are the challenges you face as a sports parent? You're doing so many things.. I just explained now that you're trying to leave no stone unturned. So what are the challenges and problems? I feel bad for them because they have so much schoolwork to complete. They have assignments, projects. My younger one is in the 10th grade. So, there's a lot of workload. But she somehow manages it and goes for her club practice, school practice. And with Niharika, she's in college. She also has exams. She has projects. She has so much work to do. And then with the national games camp that she's going to right now, and she's got her club practice, college practice. She has to juggle. But as parents, I think we provide everything. Logistics support, nutrition, everything.

Logistics is the hardest. Especially with the commute from one end to the other. And that's kind of quite challenging. Where we live, the stadium is very far and school is very far.

I experienced that also as a player. I travel everywhere. Everything was far. But I also realized one thing. When you live far, you're always on time. Or you're way ahead of time.

So both my girls love being on time. So they leave well ahead. They're like- we'd rather be there 10 minutes earlier than late. I see you regularly at all the basketball matches and how is it to see your kids play? I mean, let's take both of them separately. I mean, you know, Niharika playing, how do you feel when you watch your child play? What goes on inside? I'm nervous. I do see that. Yeah. I'm pacing up and down. I enjoy watching their matches. I learned basketball over these five years because I had no clue. Now I'm very well versed and I know everything. But yeah, it's a moment of feeling nervous and feeling elated. And there was this one time when both of them played the same match together. And it's just, I can't even explain the feeling. you're just processing everything.

You're not looking at results or anything. You're just processing. You have both your girls and you know, Of course I want them to do well. I want our teams to win. But sometimes even when you lose, it's a learning curve. You learn from your failures.

How do you take it? Suppose you are there, you're a sports woman or a sports person, your performance fluctuates on a day to day basis. You have good days. You have bad days. How do you deal with it when it's a good day? and how do you deal with it when you don't have a very good day? I know that Niharika has got a very consistent performance, but there are some times where she doesn't play up to the level where she's, how do you deal with it?

Actually, I don't have to deal with it because she herself understands and she tells me -Today was not my best day. I could have done this better. So what I do is I get somebody to come and record the matches. And the girls watch them. So a replay after the match. Replay and they see where they've gone wrong. Even with Nilaya, she knows. She's like- I know I played very badly today. I'll do better next time. Yeah. This is very interesting that you're recording her matches. And then they can see what it is and improve and also do an analysis about what went wrong. Sometimes, the coach is telling you, you don't realize. So I watch the match too on replay. And I tell the girls, -you could have done this differently. You could have done this better And actually they know. So I don't have to push them too much. And they're very, very focused on their fitness.

They don't want to become unfit. Right. I know when there is an off season. They work out with their trainer. I think there's no shortcut to success. And in today's sport, which is so competitive. It's more like basketball is more of a physical game than the days we played. The use of the body is more. So you want to take that down, then you need to be fit all the time.

Injury is a part and parcel of any game. But, as a parent, I'm so scared. I can understand. With basketball, it's your ankle, which Niharika had a ligament tear. The ACL. You have to be very careful and you have to be fit.

Injuries. I know what it is because my daughter had an ACL.. It's very challenging. It is mentally and emotionally very, very exhausting. You don't know how to deal with it because you don't know how to help the child. So anything as a matter of fact, injury is an injury. you miss out a lot.

So what kind of moral support or mental support do you give your girls? At today's age, parenting is a lot different where the parents are not involved. Kids look at you as a confidant. So how do you emotionally help them? I have to be very careful with my words. I can't say things like- you were so bad today. I have to say it like- you could have been better, You could have done this differently. And that's when they'll be receptive. Otherwise, they're going to shut down. But is it okay every time to put it like, say in a democratic way or a diplomatic way. No. There are other times when you are just like a carrot-and-stick approach to them. Sometimes when Niharika's baskets don't go in. I'm like, no, you should have done this better. You should have made your points.

You can't always win. But you have to strive to win. Because it's always right on our part to give the right kind of reinforcement. You can't always say it's okay. There are times when you have to be stern and you have to give your point across to them.

How do you motivate them? When they do well, how do you motivate them? When they don't do well, how do you motivate them? Do you use any kind of rewards, external like, gifts or anything like that? No, I never bribe. I never bribe. We just talk. Now we laugh about it. When they lose matches, I let them be for a little while by themselves. So they can absorb, understand and introspect. They should reflect - Where they went wrong? What happened?

And of course, when they win, we're all happy, we go out for a meal. The whole team always goes to celebrate. Luckily for them, their coach is very supportive. And she's always encouraging. That's very good. Because when you're dealing with young players and especially in the women's category, the kind of coaching style also differs to a large extent. How about your family? Do you live, eat, breathe basketball or is it like you don't talk about it at the dining table, you don't talk about it at dinner? Actually, the girls and I are always talking about something related to basketball.

We had recently gone to watch the FIBA World Cup. So after that, my husband, he's not a big basketball buff. But he's now interested in it. Because we talk about it all the time. We talk about different tournaments, We talk about the NBA. I myself watch all the NBA games. So I'm very interested. And for my kids to be interested, I have to be interested. Certain amount of involvement from the parent is needed at least, I think even the child respects you and the sport.

I used to take my younger one for tennis and some of the mothers came from non-sporting backgrounds. And then the kids, I would hear them say, what do you know about sport? So I've heard that in basketball.

So, I mean, I learned. I asked my children to teach me. I'm like, what is this? What is a three pointer? What foul has he called right now? You have to learn. Educating yourself. So how do you help them to be grounded? I know Niharika is moving from strength to strength, with her hard work and effort, we are seeing so much progress. How do you help her to be grounded? I always remind her and tell her never to forget where she came from.

That's important. I'm like, don't only think of your successes. Think of all the failures that got you here. She's also seen a few tough times. of course. And I think every player should see that and so has Nilaya. But I just tell them to work so much harder that your state team should never think of a team without you. You should make your mark. You should be fit. You should practice your shooting. Well, there's no gain without hard work. Nothing is without hard work.

In conclusion, I would like to ask you this question. What would you tell other parents who are having budding players or who are having upcoming players? I wouldn't say an advice, but any kind of your perception or what would you like to tell other parents? Never put yourself out there. But always be behind your children. Whatever sport it may be, tennis, swimming, basketball, etc. Be their driving force. But silently. Don't make the noise. Let them do it. Because they should never think that, oh, it's because of my parents. They should believe it's their own hard work that got them where they are. Because everything is about them.

After a certain point of time, even the parents are out of the background. So for young athletes, it's always important. That they know that they have to do it for themselves. And not for the parents, but take the support of parents for everything. Parents are always there to support them. But it's their hard work, their drive, their interest that will propel them forward. And in this age where children are so sensitive and they can get affected by many issues.

The parent is always there to talk to them, to guide them and be like a sounding board to help them out, like these days, mental illness is so rampant. So you have to talk to them in a way that they understand. So I think we've got a very good view and understanding of how it is to be a parent to young budding players and what is behind the scenes that happen.

Thank you so much, Vaishnavi for having me here and having you and sharing all your talks. Thank you for having me. Thank you.