

## Ouch! Dealing with Injuries

**Your soccer- playing daughter has joined the walking wounded. She has played soccer pretty much year-round for the past several years, alternating high school and club teams. She was injured again recently, and the doctor says it will be weeks before she can play again. As a Second- Goal Parent, what can you do to help your daughter?**

There are two tricky issues embedded in this situation. Let's unpack them.

- First, understand that Way too many young athletes are experiencing repetitive stress injury from overuse. The drive to improve, to be great, to please one or more coaches, or to attract attention from college scouts can result in an out of control situation with severe physical consequences for high school athletes at a time when they are already vulnerable because of rapid growth.

In the made for TV movie of Joan Ryan's important and traveling book, *Little Girls in Pretty Boxes*, and mom has approved it hurt gymnast's daughter and herself from the family to allow the daughter to train with the highly regarded professional coach. At the end of the film, mom confronts the coach about his pushing the daughter to resume practice before the mom feels her daughter has recovered from an injury. The mom tells the coach he has a responsibility to make sure her daughter is healthy. The Coach responds, "No. My job is to make her champion. Her health is your responsibility. "

It is not reasonable to expect a teenage athlete to have the long-term perspective of an adult. Most athletes will almost always say they want to play more rather than less. For athletes with a highly evolved since of competitiveness, it may seem a sign of weakness to admit they are hurting. That's where parents come in. May have to act as a governor on your athlete's desire to compete. And on your own conscious or subconscious dreams for her.

You may also have to deal with a coach who, though well intentioned, **encourage** your daughter to re-join the team before she is fully healed.

Gear up to resist the pressures and ensure that when she is healed you don't let your daughter ever again play so much soccer that her health and her ultimate future in the game maybe put in jeopardy.

- Next is helping your daughter cope with being out of competition for an extended period of time, which may be a challenge for her.

Let your daughter know that injuries are a part of being an only athlete and that she has a terrific opportunity to learn to manage her reaction to injuries starting with this one. Persistence, resilience, and a positive attitude are great helps and coming back from injury (as well as for so many things so want to accomplish in life).

Encourage her to focus her energy and working her rehabilitation routine just as she would in practice. You could help make it a positive experience, perhaps charting her progress and celebrating "small wins "each step of the way. You might point out that her rehab plan could serve as a model for accomplishing other things unrelated to injuries.

When I was sideline with a broken rib on my right side as a high school basketball player, I spent hours dribbling and shooting with my left hand. I Also learned to open my locker and brush my teeth with my left hand. If your daughter can work on an area where she could improve without compromising her recovery, it might be a big morale booster for her.

Ask her coach to find ways for her to feel part of a team during her injury. He might have her analyze videotape of future opponents, mentor younger players, chart statistics during games, or even help with fundraising. She might also serve as team journalist writing stories about the team for the school papers or the teams website. PCA has developed a terrific tool called positive charting (find it at [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)), which she could use to know the positive things her teammates are doing as a way to help them improve, per level 2 of the triple impact competitor model (making teammates better).

As she gets closer to healing, your daughter will likely want to begin playing. Resist the temptation to let her back on the field before she is ready. It helps to have a medical opinion from a qualified individual who has no

interest in her team success so you can rely on his or her advice.

Handled properly, your daughter may look back at her rehab as a positive step in her career as a soccer player.

