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toolkit

let's chat.

Suncorp #TeamGirls Ambassador,
Rebecca Sparrow's guide to the
tough conversations around keeping
your girl playing sport.



Hello, I'm Bec.

As a parent, your daughter is going to come to you with lots of questions, concerns, complaints (!!!) and requests – one of these is probably going to be about quitting sport. These conversations can feel tricky and it may seem easier to just let her throw in the towel, but there are other options and ways to approach this. To help you with these tough talks, I've written some suggestions and responses to the common problems you may hear, to help encourage your daughter to keep playing.



*This content includes the views and options of a third-party, and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Suncorp Network. Information is intended to be of a general nature only.

Before you go straight to the nitty-gritty, it's a good idea to set the scene. It's about asking the right questions to find out what is really going on. You may discover quitting sport has to do with body image issues, friendship dramas or other insecurities. Before you start the conversation, keep these tips in mind:

- **Make sure they know you won't judge.**
- **You won't try and convince them otherwise.**
- **You are just there to listen.**
- **Leave space in the conversation for them to think and elaborate – don't fill in the silences.**
- **"Is everything OK at xyz, I noticed you haven't been enjoying it ..."**
- **Be empathetic.**

And try following this strategy:

- 1) Ask a question.
- 2) Try to understand the context.
- 3) Explore options and test these out.

Visit [ReachOut Australia](#) to find more advice about how to have a great conversation with your teen.

Bec



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1. “I’m too busy now with school/work/friends. I don’t have time for sport anymore.”

I get it. Even from where I’m sitting, your life is really busy. You’ve got school and all those assignments and exams and homework. You’ve got your friends to see and I expect you to participate in family activities too. It’s a lot, I know. The thing is – this is why I want you to keep playing! Your life is so full on that sport is one of the few areas when you get to switch off from everything else! When you’re on the court (or field), you don’t have to be thinking about English essays or the fight you had with your friend or the chores you have to do at home. For sixty minutes you get a bit of a mental health break and you just get to move.

Why don’t we look at your schedule and see if we can work smarter not harder? What I mean by that is, let’s see if we can clear some more space so that you’ve still got time for training and your weekly game without you feeling stressed or overwhelmed. And then we can reassess at the end of the season and see how you feel.

Key points:

- Sport and being active gives you a mental health break away from the other stresses of life.
- It’s important to have a balance between school work, friends, family and sport.
- Let’s look at your schedule together to come up with a solution, so you still have time for sport without feeling overwhelmed.



2. “I’m not good enough! I just know I’ll be the only one of my friends who doesn’t make the A team. Why can’t I just quit?”

I hear you. And that’s tough when you love a sport but you feel like everyone else has sort of surpassed you. The first thing I want you to remember is this: being a valued member of a team isn’t simply about being physically the best player. It’s really the last reason I want you to play!

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There's the person who keeps the team motivated, who is reliable and always makes sure everyone knows the schedule. A team captain isn't always the strongest or fastest player – they're the person who has the ability to lead the team by inspiring them and helping each team member see their value. So, don't sell yourself short just yet!

Secondly, playing a sport is helping you in so many ways you might not even realise. It's teaching you about teamwork and showing up even when you don't feel like it; how to cope with disappointments and how a victory shared is so much sweeter. And I love that being on a sporting team gives you that sense of belonging, of being a part of something bigger than yourself.

If you're really feeling like you're out of your depth then we could drop you down a level/grade. If you love the sport but just aren't having fun – why don't we move you down a division or find a social team? Or if your abilities are holding you back, we could put in more practice together and do extra training on the weekend. Or lastly, maybe we could try a new sport?

Key points:

- Remember that being the fastest or best player isn't the only thing valued in a team, every team member and position brings something unique to the court.
- Sport teaches you life skills – winning and losing, how to be a team player and the importance of showing up.
- The answer may be dropping down a division or changing clubs so that you're still having fun.
- Or we can make a plan together to put the practise in to improve your skills so you're not quite so rusty.



3. **“This year I’m the only one of my friends still playing sport. I can’t decide whether or not I should quit ...”**

I understand. It’s tough when you feel like you’re the only one left who’s still playing sport. I don’t think the answer is quitting to join the crowd. Not when it still brings you so much joy. One of the things I love about your sport is that it’s given you a second tribe – another group of friends who have your back. It’s also something you get to do **AWAY** from all your school friends. If things go pear-shaped at school, it’s important to have that group of friends who remind you how likeable you are and help you feel like you still belong.

While you might not be surrounded by familiar faces anymore, it’ll give you the opportunity to make new friendships. Remember when you joined your old team and you didn’t know everyone then, but you all became so close and now you’re sad they’ve left? You’ll get to do that all over again; more girls who’ve got your back! And your old teammates and friends should still support you, no matter what sport you play.

Let’s remind you of why you love [current sport] and get you motivated again to play. Look at all the amazing female athletes in the sporting world. There are so many role models across all different sports, I’m thinking Laura Geitz, Sally Pearson, Turia Pitt.

Key points:

- Having those two groups of friends (one at school and one outside of school) is always beneficial both on and off the court.
- Being in a new team will open you up to some unexpected friendships.
- It's okay to do things your school friends aren't into. True friends will still support you as you follow your individual interests and passions. Maybe we can invite them to watch you play one week?
- Start following female athletes such as Laura Geitz, Daisy Pearce, Ellyse Perry, Turia Pitt, Meg Lanning, Sally Pearson and Stephanie Gilmore online and draw some inspiration from them!



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4. “I’ve never been sporty. Why do I have to start now?”

You know what? It’s not about someone being ‘sporty’ or ‘unsporty’ – it’s about finding an activity that you enjoy and gets you moving. That’s it. You don’t have to be the best at it. You don’t have to play every day. I want you to play sport because it’s just so important for you to have that balance in your life between school work, family responsibilities and your friends. I think it’s important for us to include you doing an activity that gets you away from books and study and assignments and has you running around and getting red in the face!

Playing sport and doing physical activity is one of those things in life which boosts our endorphins and helps us feel great. And by playing sport, you’re more likely to have more friendships, it’ll improve your self-confidence and it’ll give you a sense of belonging. Let’s make a list of three sports you’d be interested in trying, and go from there.

Key points:

- Sport has huge benefits for our physical and mental health.
- Girls who play sports have higher self-esteem and confidence and do better academically.
- Sport teaches you life skills – winning and losing, how to be a team player and the importance of showing up.
- Sport broadens our friendship circle and gives us a sense of belonging.
- Refer to the #TeamGirls Sports Guide to look at some options for team sports.

5. **“If I can’t be in a team with my friends, I don’t want to play anymore.”**

It hurts, right? You’ve been playing with those girls for a while and all of a sudden now you’re in different teams. Maybe what hurts the most is that you’ve trained so hard and not made it into the team you wanted. So you’re thinking, ‘What’s the point?’

For what it’s worth, here’s one thing I know. Having a great year playing sport has little to do with which ‘grade’ or ‘rep side’ you’re in and more to do with your own attitude and the spirit of the team. Life is full of unexpected friendships. When you least expect it, a great new friend walks into your life. So, while I know that being in a new team without your friends feels awkward and difficult – it could actually be AMAZING. And you won’t know unless you give the new team a chance. Plus since when has it ever been a bad idea to have more buddies? More girls who’ve got your back!

I know you want to be in your old team but right now that’s not a possibility. So I think it would be really worth giving this new team a go. Let’s take the focus off the ranking of the team and more focus on the team’s vibe so that every week you are out there having a ball with a great group of girls.

Key points:

- Being in a new team will open you up to some unexpected friendships.
- Let's focus less on the grade of the team and more on their attitude and vibe!
- Let's research some information about Laura Geitz and other athletes we admire to hear their stories of missing out on teams and how they kept motivated to keep going!





Start playing. Keep playing.
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