LESSON 1 OF 30 · TOPIC 1 · A RELATIONSHIP YOUR CHILD CAN RELY ON

What do you say on the way home after a loss?

You'll let your child know you're there and leave it to them to choose when to talk.

The car door clicks shut. Your daughter puts her racket down and looks out of the window. You're still thinking about that easy volley at forty-fifteen. She had two match points and still lost. What will you offer her before you start the car?

A TENNIS STORY

Roger Federer

In the 2019 Wimbledon final, Roger Federer had two match points on his own serve against Novak Djokovic. Let’s pause the match before the next point.

YOUR CHOICE

Your child lost from a strong position. When would you bring up the last two points?

What can we tell from the story?

What the source says happened next. Djokovic saved both match points and won the title. Afterwards, Federer spoke publicly about the chances he'd missed.

The match report doesn't tell us what his family said to him first. The car journey in our example is fictional.

WHAT WE CAN OBSERVE	ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION	WHAT WE DON'T KNOW
Your child is quiet after the loss.	They might be cross with themselves. They might just be tired.	Would they like company, some quiet or a chat right now?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Your child lost from a strong position. When would you bring up the last two points?

Talk through the volley straight away

If your child asks to talk it through, it can help while the point is still fresh. Once the car doors are shut, it's hard for them to turn down advice they didn't ask for.

Offer a choice

One question lets your child decide how much they feel up to saying. Silence is an answer too.

Say nothing at all about the loss

Silence can feel good. A few words now can let your child know you're willing to talk about it later.

Try your response twice

YOUR CHILD SAYS:

‘I bet you thought I’d finally win.’

EXAMPLE RESPONSE

‘You haven’t let me down. I’m glad I’m here with you. Do you want to talk about it, or shall we put some music on?’

HOW I KNOW MY LINE WORKS

- [ ] I made it clear our relationship doesn’t depend on the result.
- [ ] I offered a genuine choice.
- [ ] I waited after asking the question.

The first minute in the car

Looks out of the window

Sit beside them and give them a moment of quiet. Make an offer they're free to turn down.

Brings up a point

Listen to what they noticed about the shot. Ask before giving advice.

Asks for help

Check whether they want your view or help with a question for their coach.

It's often the words that came out wrong that we notice afterwards. Today, listen for the pause after your question too. If you fill it after two seconds with an answer of your own, your offer has turned into another piece of advice. Sit beside your child for a moment without trying to do anything. That can be part of the journey home together too.

A NEW SITUATION WITHOUT HINTS

Your son won, but in the car he's crying over one shot he missed. What do you say?

'You won. Enjoy it!'
Reminding him of the score can drown out what he came to tell you.

'Let's go through all your winning shots.'
Even going over the good shots only helps if he wants to do it.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

'That shot's still bothering you. Do you want to tell me about it?'
Winning hasn't taken away his disappointment. You're checking what he needs right now.

By age and type of play

AGES 6–8

Offer two simple choices, such as some quiet or a song.

AGES 9–10

Let your child choose whether to talk about the match after dinner.

AGES 11–13

Respect their wish if they'd like to talk it through with their coach first.

RECREATIONAL PLAY

Give them the same choice after a family game of doubles as you would after a tournament.

COMPETITIVE PLAY

Agree a quiet time with the coach to talk through the match point.

My courtside plan

> **When we close the car doors, I'll offer a choice and wait.**

When will I next get a chance to try this? The next time we're about to leave the court.

COURTSIDE CARD

1. **A warm welcome**
2. **A choice**
3. **Time to answer**

Try saying your opening line with the car keys in your hand. Next time, even if you're disappointed, you'll have the words ready.

Sources for this lesson

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