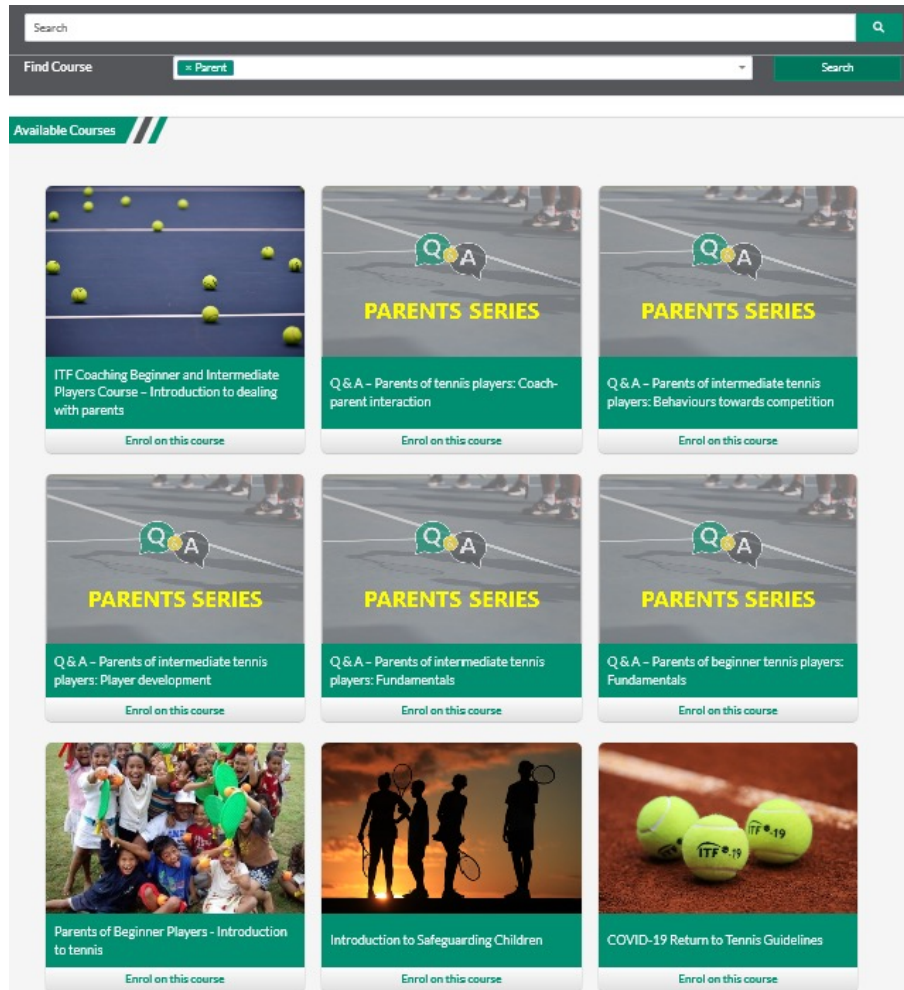




Optimal Competition Parenting Workshop

ITF's Parent Education & Support Strategy



- In 2018, the ITF launched their 'Parent Education and Support Strategy' in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association and Loughborough University (UK)
- The strategy aims to draw upon research which has examined the education and support tennis parents want and need at different stages of their child's development (i.e., Thrower et al., 2016)

Tennis Parents' Education & Support Needs

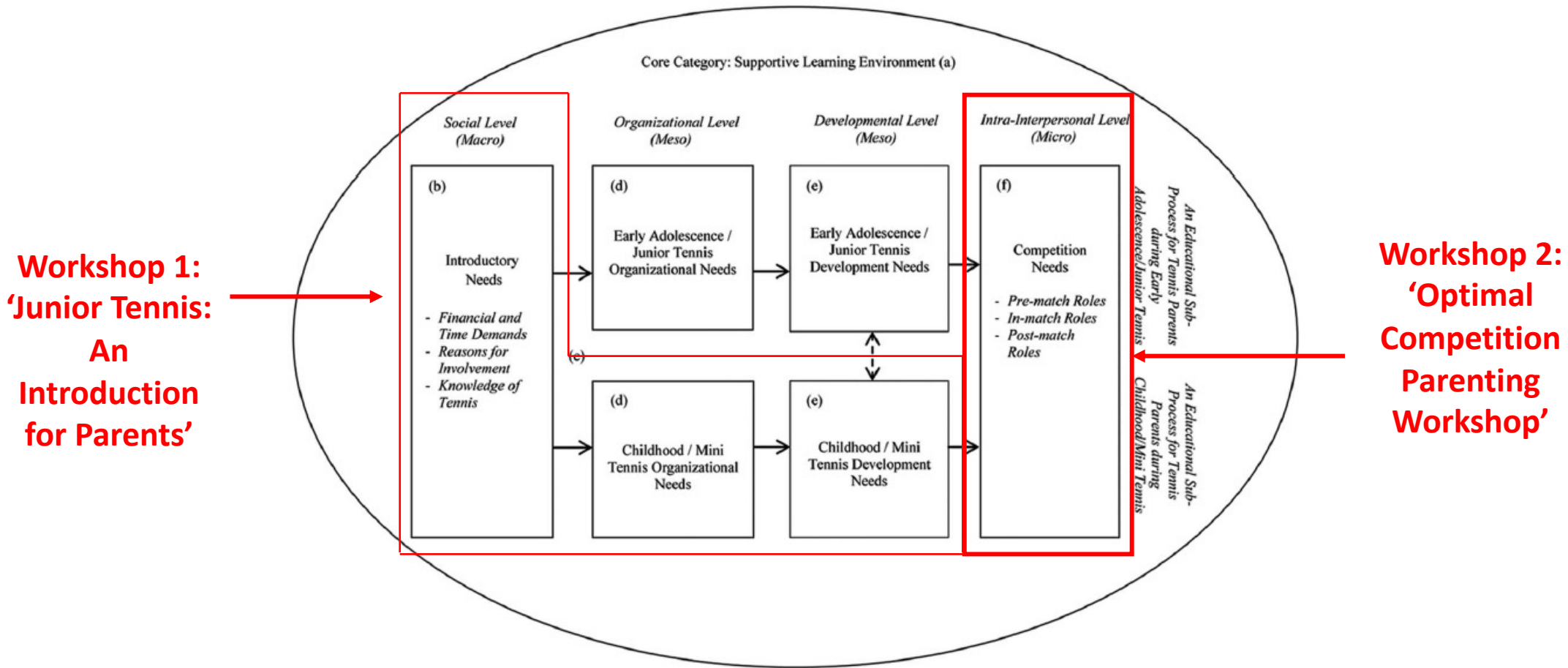


Figure 2. A grounded theory of tennis parents' education and support needs during childhood/mini tennis and early adolescence/junior tennis.

(Thrower et al., 2016)

Workshop Content

1. Pre-Match Communication

- Different examples of pre-match communication with your child
- Goal setting with your child - Outcome, Performance & Process Goals

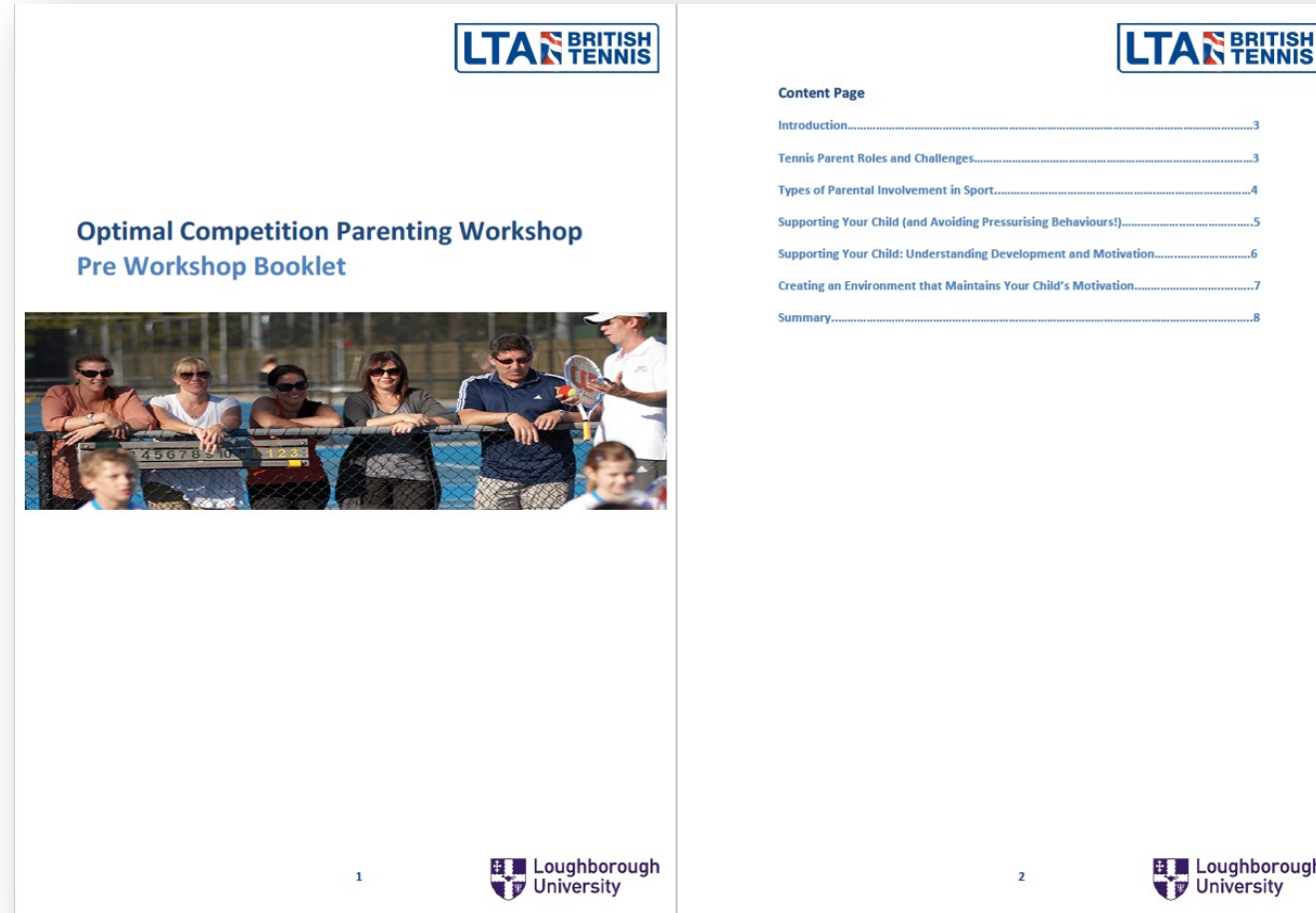
2. In-Match Communication

- The Competition Stress Process
- Stress management
- Body language and different scenarios to deal with

3. Post-Match Communication

- The Feedback Grid
- Conclusion: The Competition Communication Cycle

Pre-Workshop Booklet



Learning Objectives

After this workshop you should be able to:

- **Appreciate why tennis is psychologically demanding yet offers natural opportunities for fundamental life skills**
- **Communicate effectively with your child before, during and after a match**
- **Manage the emotional demands of competition**
- **Role model appropriate behaviours and responses to events which happen on court**

The Warm-up



Group Discussion:

What makes tennis such a psychologically tough and challenging sport?

Constantly
winning and
losing
points/games



No teammates
or coaches on
court with you



700+ decisions
per match



Win or lose,
no draws or
PB's



Task 1: How to Support During Competition

Research has explored children's perceptions of optimal parental involvement before, during and after competition...

...In small groups classify the following behaviours as either 'desirable' or 'undesirable'...



Task 1: Desirable or Undesirable Behaviors?

1. If parents have appropriate knowledge, providing some technical or tactical advice

2. Supporting (through clapping) both teams/players

3. Singling out own child for support or encouragement

4. Coaching, including 'coaching like' comments from the balcony or during breaks in play

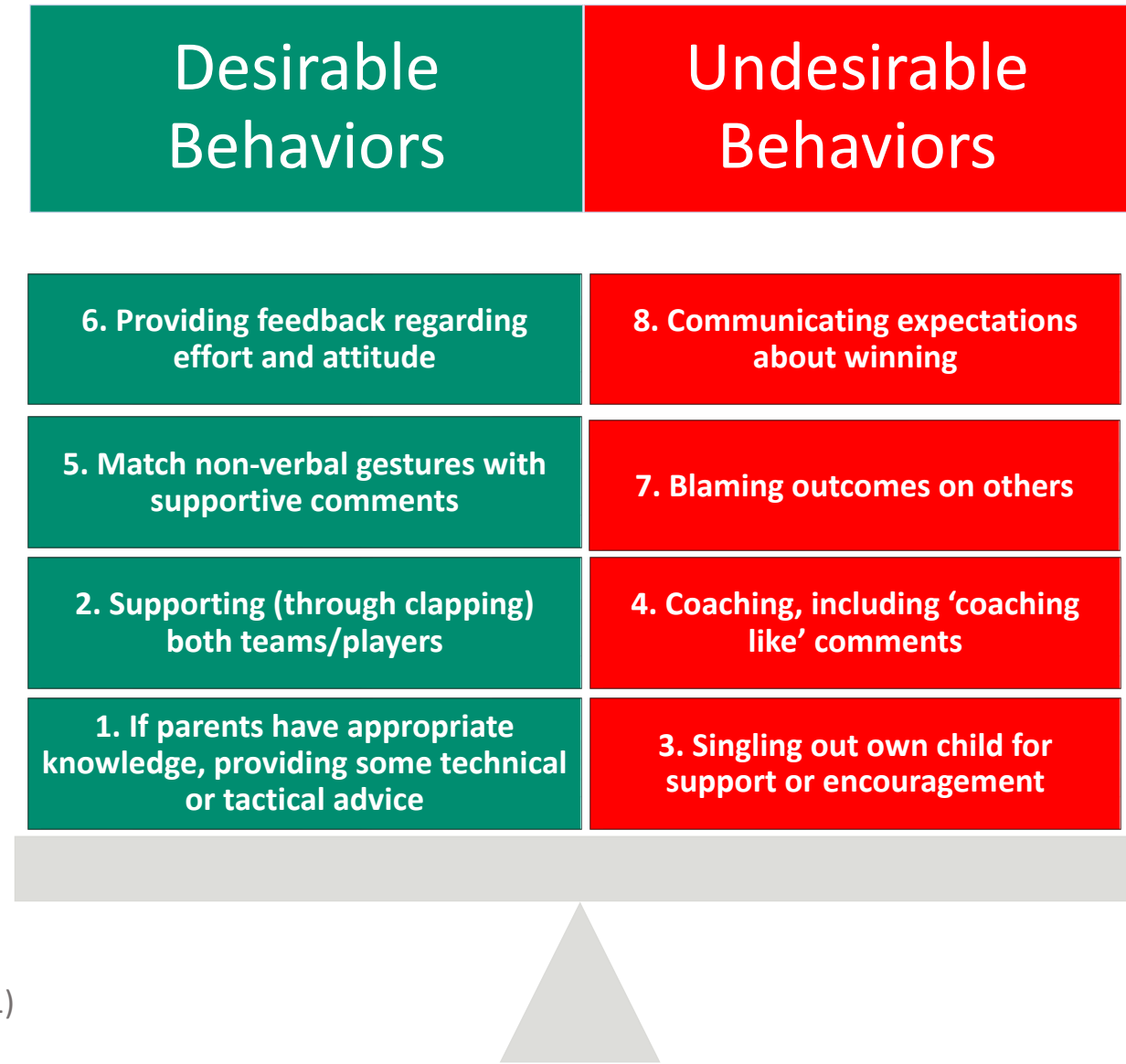
5. Match non-verbal gestures with supportive comments

6. Providing feedback regarding effort and attitude

7. Blaming outcomes on others (e.g., if a child had a bad game, blaming it on the referee or other external factors)

8. Communicating expectations about winning

Task 1: Review





Part 1:

Pre-Match Communication

Task 1: Pre-Match Communication



You are going to be provided with some examples of pre-match communication...

Score them between 1 Star (Very Bad) and 5 Stars (Excellent)

Example 1:

“C'mon, you can beat him! You can win this - You are the better player! You've got a great draw, he is only a 7.1 so you shouldn't have any problem winning this one!”

Example 1:

Winning is more important than progress and development

Pressure to win (via diminishing the ability of others!)

“C'mon, you can **beat him! You can win this** - You are the **better player! You've got a great draw**, he is only a **7.1** so you shouldn't have any problem **winning this one!**”

Create an ego involved environment (via Social comparisons)

Outcome Expectation

Example 2:



“Just go out there and enjoy it...If you work hard, play as well as you can and do your best there is no reason why you can’t win this one! 😊”

Example 2:

Creates an environment to develop Intrinsic Motivation

Values you are trying to install / reinforce

“Just go out there and **enjoy it**...If you **work hard**, play as well as you can and **do your best** there is **no reason** why you can't **win** this one! 😊”

Psychic Insight into opponent's standard of play?

Expectation / Emphasis on Outcome Goal

Emphasising Personal progress and effort **but** general / non – specific?

Example 3:

**“Okay, go out there and work hard,
remember what your coach said about
being more aggressive with your forehand,
and most importantly enjoy it!! 😊**

Example 3:

Emphasising Values



“Okay, go out there and **work hard, remember what your coach said about being more aggressive with your forehand, and most importantly enjoy it!! 😊**”

Reinforcing Process Goal(s)



Lack of Autonomy / Ownership?



Creates an environment to promote Intrinsic Motivation



Example 4:

Parent: “Okay, which area of your game are you focusing on today?”

Child: “Errrm...Oh yeah! being more aggressive on my backhand!”

Parent: ‘Okay great, well work hard and enjoy the challenge! 😊 ’

Example 4:

Reinforcing
Process
Goal(s)

Parent: “Okay, which **area of your game** are **you** focusing on today?”

Promoting
Autonomy /
Ownership

Child: “Errrm...Oh yeah! being more **aggressive on my backhand!**”

Player able to
identify
process goal(s)

Parent: ‘Okay great, well **work hard and enjoy the challenge!** 😊 ”

Emphasising
Values

Creates an environment to
promote Intrinsic Motivation

Task 1: Review

Effective pre-match communication requires you to:

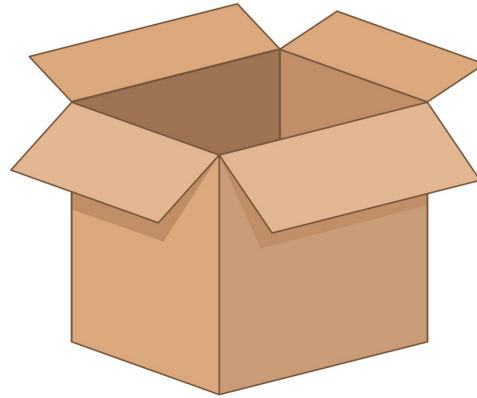
1. Stay relaxed (talk slowly and calmly!)
2. Set moral expectations and/or communicate values
3. Emphasise enjoyment & fun related to the challenge (intrinsic motivation) and experience of the match
4. Help remind your child to (re) focus on 1 or 2 simple process goals that reflect the skills they are learning (To develop an 'improve' as opposed to 'prove' mind-set!)

Task 1: Review

“Work Hard”

“Respect Officials”

“Respect the Equipment”



“Be a good sportsperson”

‘Setting Expectations and/or Communicating Values’

“Be patient”

“Be Honest”

“Give 100% Effort”

“Respect your Opponent”

Goal Setting

1) Outcome Goals

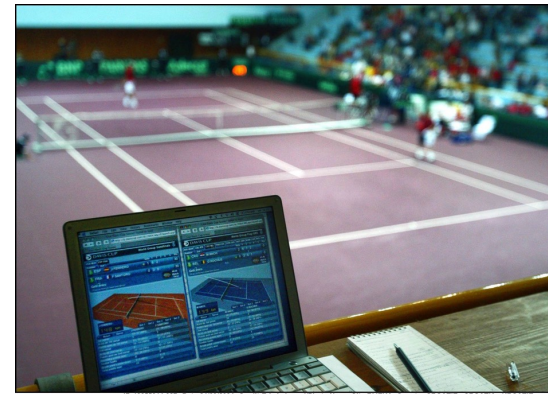
Focus on competitive result of an event

2) Performance Goals

Focus on achieving a standard or performance objective irrespective of others

3) Process Goals

Focus on the behaviours an individual must engage in during performance to perform well



Task 2: Pre-Match Communication



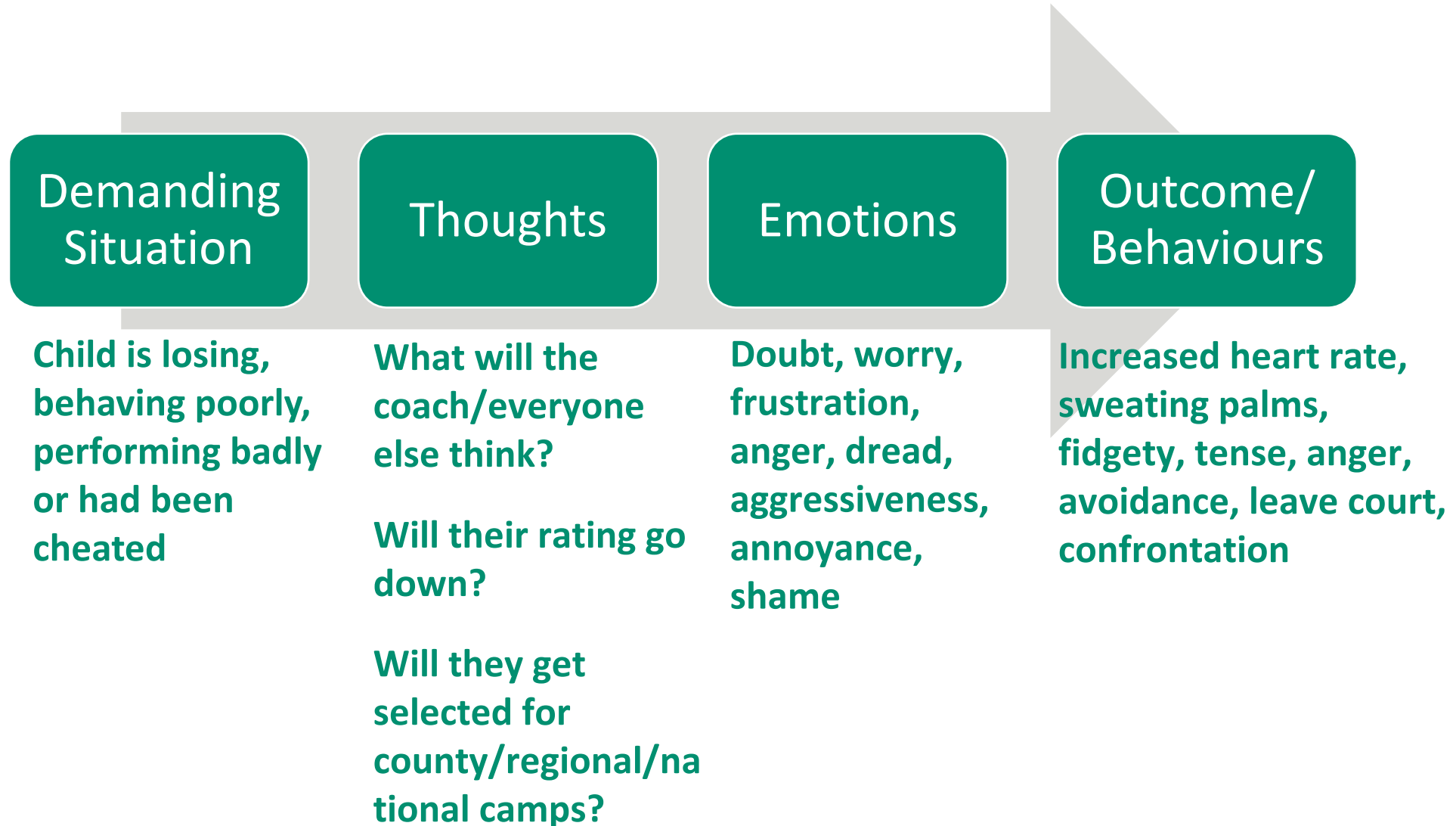
Using these guidelines, plan what you will say to your child just before they go onto court in their next match...

Use the examples to help you!



Part 2: In-Match Communication

The Competition Stress Process



Stress Management (Part 1)

Studies have shown that the most effective coping strategies used by tennis parents during matches are:

- Emotional support (i.e., talking to other parents)
- Emotional regulation (i.e., breathing techniques)
- Distraction (i.e., reading, charting, answering emails!)
- Behavioural Avoidance (i.e., walking off, watching from further away!)
- Cognitive Reappraisal (i.e., focusing on the benefits of tennis participation / on the process not outcome)



Key Point: Consider how each strategy would be perceived by your child!

Stress Management (Part 2)

Demanding Situation	Thought	Replacement Thought
Child is losing / playing badly	“if she carries on like this she will lose this match she is going to drop in the rankings”	“development is more important at this age than winning at this stage and she can learn a lot from this to help her improve” (If you have a good post match routine – see part 3!)
Child has been cheated	“she is going to lose because she was cheated, that’s not fair”	“this is a unique opportunity for her to learn how to handle difficult situations at this age” (Can she put into practice what myself and the coach have said?)

Body Language

- **Nonverbal behaviours (such as facial expressions and body position) should match the verbal pre match messages**
- **Nonverbal behaviours should be kept consistent throughout the match**
- **Avoid coaching or instructing players verbally during matches as children do not learn how to problem solve and become reliant on their parents**



Body Language: Examples

Example 1



Example 2



...Spot the Difference(s)?

Task 3: Body Language



- You are about to be provided with a number of different scenarios which happen during matches...
- ...React how you would react during a match!



Scenario 1:

**Your child hits a
forehand
winner...**



Scenario 2:

**Your child hits
an easy volley
into the net...**



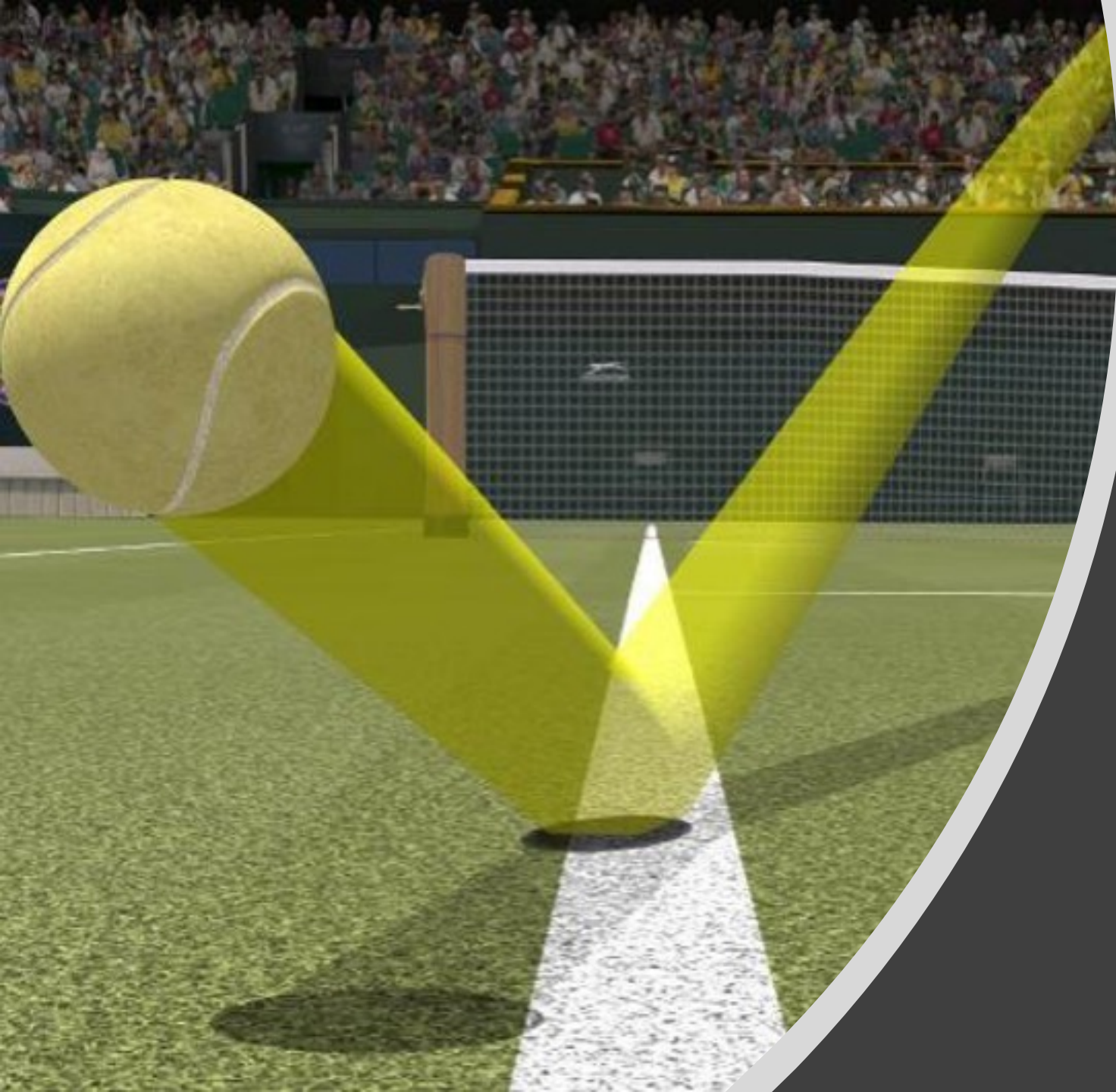
Scenario 3:

**Your child gets
cheated...**



Scenario 4:

Your child has set point in the final and their opponent double faults...



Scenario 5:

**Your child makes
a clear bad line
call...**

Scenario 6:

**Your child's
opponent hits a
backhand cross
court winner...**





Scenario 7:

Your child and their opponent have a brilliant long rally and chase every ball, but your child makes a mistake at the end ...



Scenario 8:

**Your child
smashes their
racket on the
floor...**



Take Home Task:

Do this task with your child at home and discuss what they feel are the best and most supportive responses in typical match situations



Part 3:

Post-Match Communication



Take Home Task

The Feedback Grid

Step	Aim	Open Questions (examples)
1	Get the child talking!	How was it out there? How did you find that? How was that?
2	Keep them talking! (Probe)	What do you mean by that? What makes you think that? What makes you feel like that? Talk me through it from your point of view?
3	Learn from their experience, problem solve & action plan	What did you do well? (Strengths- focused) What did you find difficult? What do you think you could have done differently? What did you learn from the match? What did you learn from/about the opponent? What could you try to do next time? (2 take forward points)
4	Your Feedback	Feedback based on the pre match expectations and goals.

Feedback: Having Your Say

No parental pressure to win in the future

Reinforcing values (i.e., sportsmanship)

“I really enjoyed watching you play today, you should be proud of the way you conducted yourself on court and gave everything you had. The depth you were getting on your backhand has really improved – your hard work is paying off 😊”

Reinforcing Effort & Linking it to Successful Outcomes

Emphasising personal development

Summary: Part 1, 2 & 3

- Pre Match

Emphasise appropriate values, enjoyment & process goals (i.e., be proactive and also responsive)

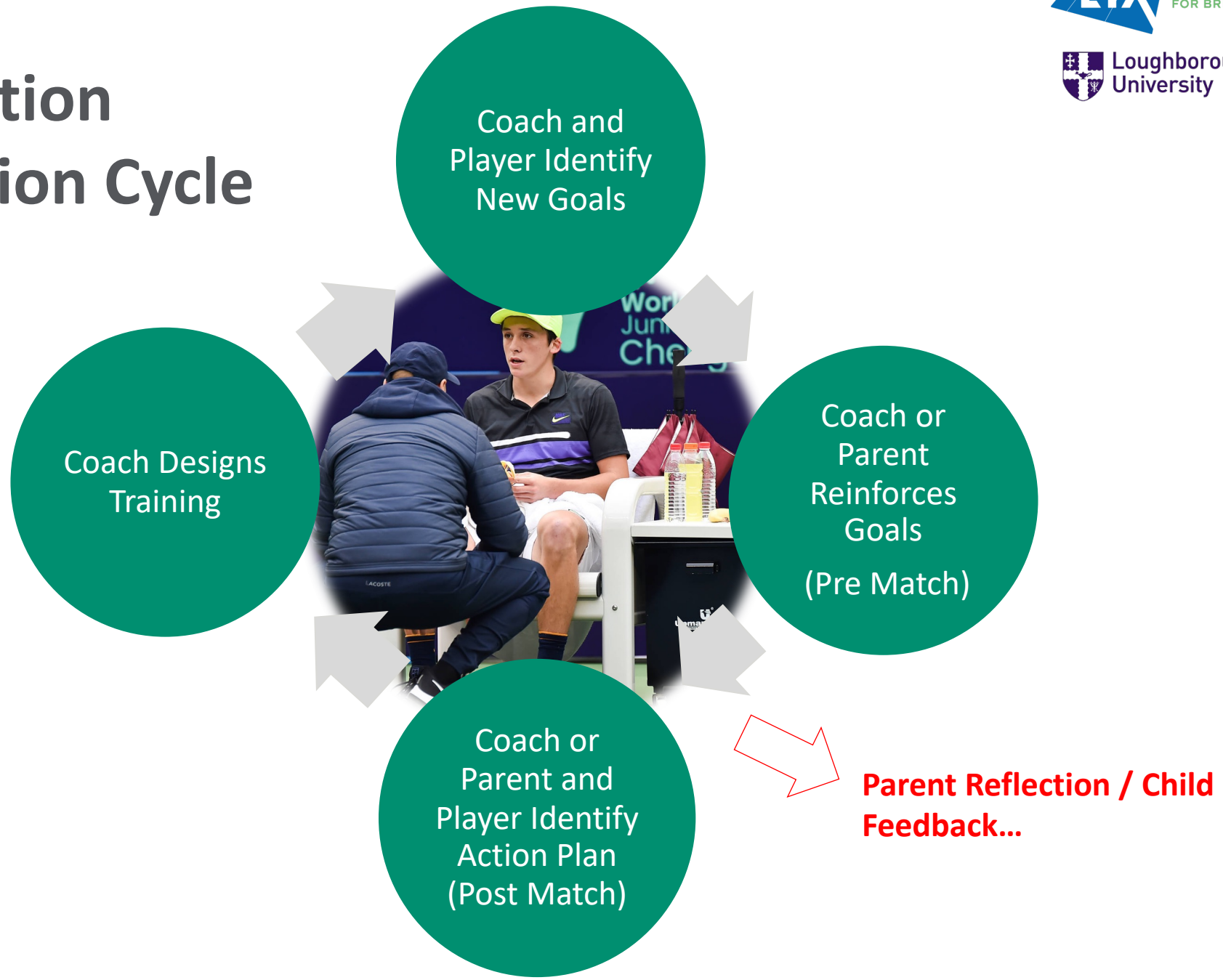
- During the Match

Keep your body language consistent with your supportive pre-match messages and re-appraise 'difficult' situations

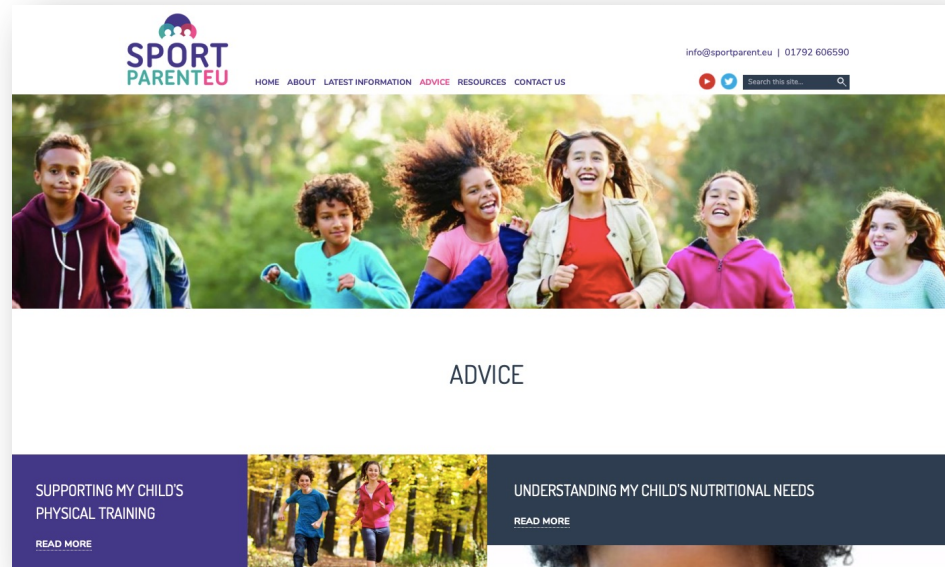
- Post Match

Encourage reflection, problem solving and action planning. Ensure that you address/reinforce pre-match goals (to help their learning and motivation (Complete the agreed 'Routine')

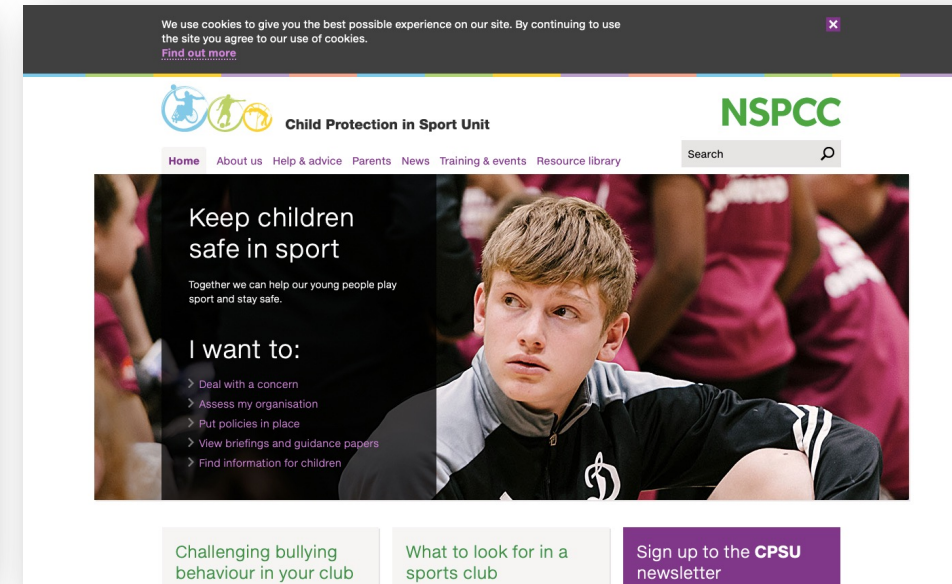
Conclusion: The Competition Communication Cycle



Additional Sport Parent Resources



www.sportparent.eu



www.thecpsu.org.uk

Reference List:

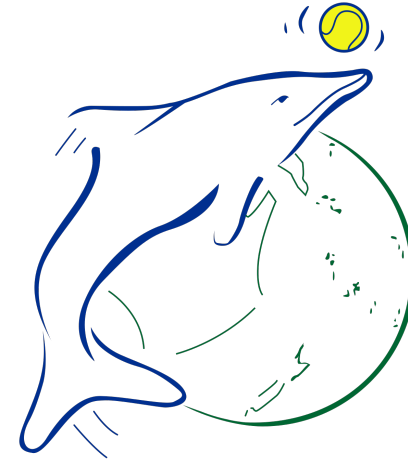
- Harwood, C.G., Thrower, S.N., Slater, M. J., Didymus, F., & Frearson, L. (2019). Advancing Our Understanding of Psychological Stress and Coping Among Parents in Organized Youth Sport. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1600.
- Knight, C. J., Boden, C. M., & Holt, N. L. (2010). Junior tennis players' preferences for parental behaviors. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 22*(4), 377-391.
- Knight, C. J., Neely, K. C., & Holt, N. L. (2011). Parental behaviors in team sports: How do female athletes want parents to behave? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 23*(1), 76-92.
- Thrower, S. N., Harwood, C. G., & Spray, C. M. (2016). Educating and supporting tennis parents: A grounded theory of parents' needs during childhood and early adolescence. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology, 5*(2), 107.
- Thrower, S. N., Harwood, C. G., & Spray, C. M. (2017). Educating and supporting tennis parents: An action research study. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 9*(5), 600-618.

Questions?

THANK YOU



Loughborough
University



TENNIS
FOR BRITAIN

