VERMONT ALPINE RACING ASSOCIATION

Parenting Tips for VARA Families: Supporting Young Alpine Ski Racers

It's important to understand that alpine ski racing is more than just competition; it's a journey of growth, resilience, and lifelong passion. As a parent, your encouragement and presence on this journey are key. Below are a few core tips to help you support your young athlete in a way that promote confidence, love for the sport, and healthy development.

THE SHORT LIST

1. Focus on the Process, Not the Podium

Young athletes thrive when the emphasis is placed on **effort, learning, and progress**, not just results. Applaud their hard work in training, their focus at the start gate, or how they tackled a tough section of the course. This builds intrinsic motivation and teaches them that success comes from persistence and grit.

Try saying: "I loved how hard you worked today" or "You were really focused through that middle section!"

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2. Embrace Mistakes as Learning Opportunities

Every racer has off days or makes mistakes on course; it's part of the sport. Helping your child reflect without judgment builds resilience and teaches them how to learn, adapt, and grow stronger with each run.

Tip: Let your child lead the conversation after a race. Ask, "What did you feel good about?" or "What do you want to work on next time?"

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3. Let the Coaches Do Their Job

Your athlete's coaches are trained to guide your child's fundamental skill, technical, and tactical development. Your most powerful role is to be their **unconditional support system**, empowering them to embrace the journey, cheering for them the loudest, celebrating the little wins, and providing support and understanding regardless of the results.

Remember: One of the greatest things you can do for your child is give them the space to own their sport.

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4. Celebrate Effort Over Outcome at Home

Create a home culture that values the journey, early mornings, teamwork, courage on icy days, over times, and trophies. This keeps the experience fun and rewarding, even when they face challenges.

Bonus: Make a habit of noticing and naming effort: "You showed real grit today," or "That was a big improvement on your line!" These small moments of recognition reinforce a growth mindset and help your child take pride in their progress.

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5. Encourage Balance, Play, and Joy

While alpine racing can be demanding, it should always remain fun. Encourage your child to explore the mountain, ski with friends, and enjoy unstructured time on snow. The freedom to play builds creativity, confidence, and a lasting love of the sport, important traits for any athlete, at any level.

Tip: Remember that long-term success comes not just from hard work, but from loving the sport and journey enough to stick with it. Protect that love.

Thank You, VARA Parents

Your belief in your child and your support of the Alpine community help them grow not only as athletes but as individuals. Thank you for all the rides to the hill, the thermoses of hot cocoa, French fries, and the endless words of encouragement that make a difference every day.