

A ball for all: the event

D2.4 – Project Output 7

Handbook for academy of parents with VI aged 5-18



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Introduction

Every child deserves the opportunity to play, learn, grow and belong.

For children with visual impairment, **sport can be much more than physical activity**. It can be a place where they discover their strengths, build confidence, make friends and experience the joy of being part of a team.

As parents and caregivers, we often want to protect our children from disappointment, frustration or failure. **We want them to be safe, accepted and successful**. At the same time, we want them to become independent, resilient and confident in their abilities.

Finding the right balance is not always easy.

This Parent Academy has been created to support families on this journey.

It is not about being a perfect parent. It is not about finding the one “right” way to support your child. Instead, it is an **opportunity to reflect on your role, explore new perspectives and discover ways to create positive sport experiences for your child and your family**.

Throughout this Academy, you will be invited to think about your own experiences, beliefs and expectations. You will explore how your words, actions and attitudes may influence your child's participation in sport and how you can help create an environment where your child feels supported, capable and valued.

You are not expected to have all the answers. Learning, growing and adapting are part of every family's journey.

Welcome to the Parent Academy.

Why Sport Matters

When we think about sport, it is easy to focus on physical activity, competition or performance. Yet for children, sport often offers much more than learning a game or improving physical fitness.

Sport provides opportunities to explore, learn, connect and grow.

Through sport, children learn how to cooperate with others, overcome challenges, cope with mistakes and celebrate achievements. They discover what they are capable of and develop skills that can support them throughout their lives.

For children with visual impairment, participation in sport can be especially meaningful. Environmental barriers, lack of accessibility or low expectations from others may sometimes limit opportunities for movement, exploration and participation. Inclusive sport environments help children experience success, independence and belonging.

Perhaps most importantly, sport allows children to experience something that every child needs: a sense of belonging.

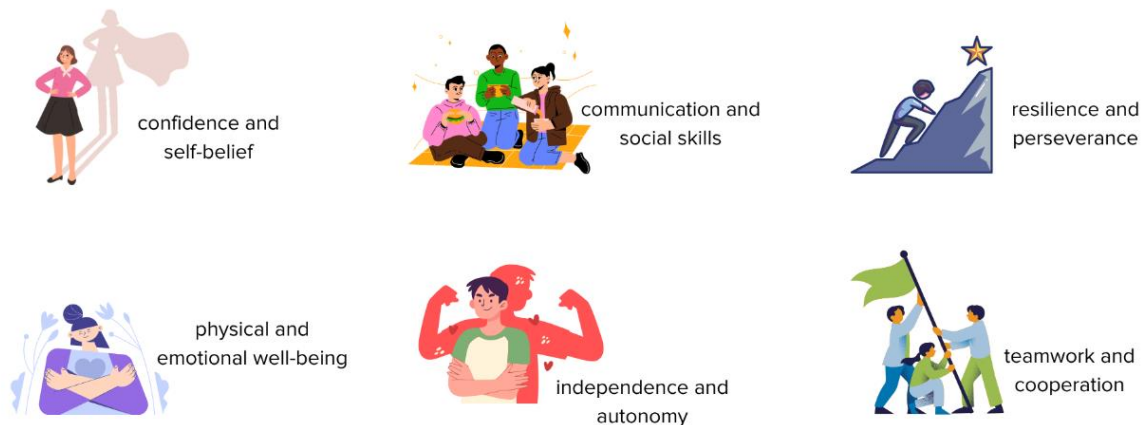
Being part of a team, sharing experiences with peers and contributing to a common goal helps children feel accepted and valued for who they are.



For many children, the most important memories from sport are not about winning or losing. They are about friendships, shared experiences, overcoming challenges and discovering their own strengths.

Parents often wonder whether their child will be accepted, whether they will be able to participate fully, or whether they will have the same opportunities as other children.

Sport can support the development of:



REFLECTION

Take a moment to think about your child.

What do you hope sport will give your child?
Is it confidence? Friendships? Independence? Joy? New experiences? A sense of belonging?

There are no right or wrong answers. Your hopes and expectations will help shape the way you support your child's sport journey.



Seeing Possibilities Instead of Limitations

Every parent carries hopes, dreams and concerns for their child.

When a child has a visual impairment, these hopes and concerns may sometimes become even stronger.

These concerns are natural and understandable.

At the same time, our beliefs and expectations can influence the opportunities we create for our children.

Sometimes we focus on what may be difficult.

Sometimes we focus on what might go wrong.

Sometimes we unintentionally underestimate what our children can achieve.

One of the most powerful shifts we can make is moving from asking:

"What can't my child do?"

to asking:

"What can my child learn, experience and achieve?"

This does not mean ignoring challenges. Children with visual impairment may face barriers that require support, adaptation and understanding. However, challenges do not define a child's potential.

Every child has strengths, interests and abilities waiting to be discovered and developed.

Sport can become a place where children explore these strengths. They may learn to trust themselves, solve problems, develop independence and discover that they are capable of more than they once believed.

As parents, we play an important role in shaping these experiences.

The messages children receive from the adults around them influence how they see themselves and what they believe is possible.

Throughout this Academy, we invite you to look beyond limitations and focus on possibilities.

Not because challenges do not exist, but because growth begins when we recognise potential.

REFLECTION

Complete the following sentence:

When I think about my child's participation in sport, my biggest hope is...

And my biggest concern is...

What do these answers tell you about the way you currently view your child's sport journey?



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Answer questions and find out your parenting type!

What Kind of Sport Parent Are You?

Your child comes home after a training session and says: "I don't think I played very well today."

- "What do you think went well despite that?"
- "Don't worry, you'll do better next time."
- "What exactly happened?"
- "Maybe you need to practice more."

Your child wants to quit a sport activity after a difficult experience.

- I explore their feelings and help them make a decision.
- I encourage them to continue and give it more time.
- I immediately respect their decision.
- I remind them about their commitment and responsibilities.

During a competition, your child makes a mistake.

- Mistakes are part of learning.
- I focus on helping them stay positive.
- I analyse what happened.
- I encourage them to avoid making the same mistake again.

After an event, the first thing you usually ask is:

- "Did you enjoy yourself?"
- "How do you feel?"

- "What did you learn today?"
- "How did you perform?"

When your child faces a challenge, you usually:

- Encourage them to find their own solution.
- Offer emotional support.
- Help them think through possible options.
- Step in quickly to help.

Based on the answers given, your parenting type can be:

The Growth Supporter

You focus on learning, confidence and long-term development. You help your child see challenges as opportunities to grow.

The Encourager

You provide emotional support and reassurance. Your child is likely to feel cared for and valued.

The Guide

You help your child reflect, analyse and learn from experiences. You encourage thoughtful decision-making.

The Protector

You are highly invested in helping your child succeed and avoid difficulties. Sometimes it may be worth considering when stepping back could help your child develop greater independence.



Understanding My Child's Sport Experience

Introduction

Every child experiences sport differently.

For some children, sport is about **movement and competition**. For others, it is about **friendship, belonging, fun or personal growth**.

For children with visual impairment, sport can also become an **opportunity to explore independence, build confidence and discover their own strengths**.

As parents, we often focus on practical questions:

- Will my child be safe?
- Will they be accepted?
- Will they be successful?
- Will they enjoy the experience?

These are important questions. Yet sometimes, while trying to support our children, we may overlook a different question:

How does my child experience sport?

This module invites you to pause and look at sport from your child's perspective. Understanding what your child feels, values and needs can help you provide support that strengthens confidence, motivation and enjoyment.

More than a game

When adults think about sport, they often think about results, performance or physical activity.

Children usually think about sport differently.

Think back to your own childhood. Chances are that you do not remember every score, ranking or result. What you may remember are the feelings: excitement before a game, laughter with teammates, encouragement from a coach or the pride of achieving something that once seemed difficult.

Children with visual impairment are no different. **They also want to feel accepted, capable and valued**. They want opportunities to participate, contribute and experience success.

Sport offers much more than physical development. It creates opportunities to develop confidence, independence, resilience and social connections. These experiences often remain with children long after the game itself has ended.

REFLECTION

Think about your child.

What do you believe is currently the most important part of sport for them?

- Having fun
- Making friends
- Learning skills
- Feeling included
- Competing
- Building confidence
- Being physically active

Why did you choose this answer?



For children, sport can be:



a place to make friends



a place to have fun



a place to feel included



a place to try new things



a place to discover what they can do

Seeing Sport Through My Child's Eyes

Parents and children often experience the same situation very differently.

Imagine that your child is about to attend a new sport activity for the first time.

Neither perspective is wrong. They are simply different.

Children often focus on immediate experiences and emotions, while parents naturally think about risks, safety and future outcomes.

Understanding your child's perspective allows you to provide support that responds not only to practical needs but also to emotional needs.

Sometimes children need advice.

Sometimes they simply need someone to listen.

As a parent, you might be thinking:

- Will the environment be safe?
- Will the coaches understand my child's needs?
- Will other children be welcoming?
- Will my child feel comfortable?



Your child may be thinking:

- Will I make friends?
- Will I know what to do?
- Will I fit in?
- What if I make a mistake?
- What if I enjoy it?



REFLECTION

Think of a recent sport experience your child had. Complete the following sentences:

As a parent, I was thinking...

My child may have been thinking...

What differences do you notice between these two perspectives?



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Challenges and Opportunities

Children with visual impairment may encounter challenges in sport participation.

Some children may feel nervous when entering a new environment. Others may worry about making mistakes, keeping up with teammates or navigating unfamiliar spaces.

Parents may also notice challenges related to:

- confidence;
- communication;
- independence;
- social interaction;
- access to opportunities.

These challenges are real.

At the same time, challenges often create opportunities for growth.

Through sport, children can learn to:

- trust themselves;
- solve problems;
- develop new skills;
- build resilience;
- become more independent;
- connect with others.

Growth does not happen because challenges disappear.

Growth happens because children are supported while learning to face them.

As parents, it can be difficult to watch our children struggle. We naturally want to protect them from discomfort.

Yet many important life skills are developed when children are allowed to try, make mistakes, learn and try again.

REFLECTION

Think about a challenge your child has faced.

- What strengths helped them overcome it?
- What did they learn from that experience?



Belonging Matters

Every child wants to feel that they belong.

Belonging means more than simply being present.

A child can attend an activity and still feel excluded.

True belonging means feeling:

- welcomed;
- accepted;
- respected;
- included;
- valued.

For children with visual impairment, opportunities for belonging can be especially important.

When children feel accepted by teammates, coaches and peers, they are more likely to:

- participate actively;
- develop confidence;
- continue participating in sport;
- take on new challenges;
- enjoy the experience.

Belonging does not happen automatically. It is created through relationships, communication and shared experiences.

Parents, coaches, volunteers and teammates all contribute to creating an environment where children feel that they are an important part of the group.

REFLECTION

Think about a time when your child seemed especially happy or confident during a sport activity.

- What helped create that positive experience?
- Who contributed to it?



What Does Success Mean?

When we hear the word "success", we often think about achievements.

Winning a game.

Scoring a goal.

Receiving a medal.

These achievements can certainly be meaningful.

However, success can also take many other forms.

For one child, success may mean:

- attending an activity despite feeling nervous;
- trying something new;
- making a friend;
- asking for help when needed;
- becoming more independent;
- continuing after making a mistake.

Success looks different for every child.

When parents define success only through performance, children may feel pressure to achieve specific outcomes.

When parents recognise effort, learning, courage and growth, children are more likely to develop a healthy relationship with sport and with themselves.

One of the most valuable gifts parents can offer is helping children see success as progress rather than perfection.

REFLECTION

Complete the sentence:

Before this module, success in sport meant...

After reflecting on my child's experience, I realise success can also mean...



Summary

Sport is about much more than physical activity.

For children with visual impairment, sport can become a place where they build confidence, develop independence, create friendships and discover their strengths.

Children and parents often experience sport differently. By taking time to understand your child's perspective, you can provide support that responds to their needs, emotions and aspirations.

As you continue through this Academy, keep one question in mind:

What kind of sport experience do I want my child to remember?

In the next module, we will explore an important part of that experience: the influence of parents and the many ways our behaviours, expectations and actions shape children's sport journeys.



My influence as a parent

Introduction

Most parents want the same thing: **they want their child to be happy, confident and successful.**

When children participate in sport, parents often invest a great deal of time, energy and emotion. They organise transportation, encourage participation, celebrate achievements and support their children through challenges.

Because parents care deeply, they have a powerful influence on how children experience sport.

Sometimes this influence is obvious. A parent's encouragement can help a child try something new or continue after a difficult experience.

Sometimes the influence is less visible. A parent's expectations, reactions and comments can shape how a child feels about success, mistakes, effort and belonging.

This influence is neither good nor bad. It is simply part of the relationship between parent and child.

The purpose of this module is not to identify "good" or "bad" parents. Instead, it invites you to reflect on your own role and to consider how your actions, words and attitudes may affect your child's sport experience.

Support, Pressure and Involvement

Parents often want to motivate their children.

The challenge is that support and pressure can sometimes look very similar.

For example, a **parent might say:**

"I know you can do better."

The intention may be encouragement.

However, a **child may hear:**

"What I did was not good enough."

Likewise, asking questions after every training session or competition may come from genuine interest and care. Yet some **children may experience constant questioning as pressure to perform.**

This does not mean that parents should stop encouraging, guiding or supporting their children. Rather, it highlights the importance of understanding how children experience parental involvement.

Research consistently shows that **children benefit most when parents focus on effort, learning and enjoyment rather than outcomes alone.** Children are more likely to remain engaged in sport when they feel supported regardless of results.

A useful question to ask yourself is:

If my child had a difficult day in sport, would they still feel valued and supported by me?

When the answer is yes, children are more likely to develop confidence, resilience and a positive relationship with sport.

REFLECTION

Think about the last time your child participated in a training session, game or event.

- What was the first thing you talked about afterwards?
- What message might that conversation have communicated to your child?



For example:

- Do I celebrate effort as much as success?
- How do I react when my child makes a mistake?
- Do I allow my child to solve problems independently?
- Do I speak more about results or experiences?

These questions help us better understand the kind of environment we are creating for our children.

What Kind of Sport Parent Am I?

There is no single right way to be a sport parent.

Every family is different, every child is different and every situation is different.

Some parents are highly involved and enjoy being present at every activity. Others prefer to give their child more space and independence.

Some parents focus on enjoyment and participation. Others place greater emphasis on achievement and progress.

Most parents move between different approaches depending on circumstances.

The important thing is not to fit into a specific category. The important thing is to become aware of the messages we send through our behaviour.

REFLECTION

Complete the sentence:

- When my child succeeds in sport, I usually...
- When my child struggles in sport, I usually...
- What do these responses tell you about your role as a parent?



The Power of My Words

Introduction

Words matter.

As parents, we communicate with our children every day. We encourage, guide, comfort and advise them. Most of the time, we do so with the best intentions.

Yet children do not always hear our words in the same way we intend them.

A comment that feels motivating to a parent may feel discouraging to a child. A question asked out of curiosity may be experienced as pressure. Even silence can send a message.

Sport provides many opportunities for communication. Before training sessions, during competitions and after activities, children look to the adults around them for support and reassurance.

The words they hear repeatedly can shape how they see themselves, their abilities and their relationship with sport.

This module invites you to reflect on the messages your child may receive through everyday conversations and interactions.

What Messages Do Children Hear?

Children do not only listen to what parents say. They also try to understand what parents value.

Imagine a child returning home after a training session.

None of these questions are necessarily right or wrong. However, they communicate different priorities and values.

Over time, children begin to understand what their parents pay attention to and what they consider important.

A parent asks



Did you win?

Did you enjoy yourself?

What did you learn today?

The child may hear

Winning is important.

My experience matters.

Learning is important.



REFLECTION

Think about the questions you most often ask your child after sport activities.

What values might these questions communicate?



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Positive, Neutral and Negative Comments

One of the goals of this Academy is to help parents recognise different types of comments and their possible impact.

Positive comments

Positive comments encourage effort, learning and confidence.

Examples:

- "I am proud of how hard you worked today."
- "You kept trying even when it was difficult."
- "It looked like you enjoyed yourself."
- "You showed a lot of courage today."

These comments help children focus on growth and effort.

Neutral comments

Neutral comments describe what happened without judging or evaluating.

Examples:

- "You had training today."
- "Your team played two matches."
- "The weather was difficult."

Neutral comments are not harmful. However, on their own they may not provide emotional support or encouragement.

Negative comments

Negative comments focus primarily on mistakes, shortcomings or disappointment.

Examples:

- "You should have done better."
- "Why didn't you try harder?"
- "You made too many mistakes."
- "You let the team down."

Although these comments may be intended as motivation, they can reduce confidence and enjoyment.

The goal is not to become a perfect communicator. The goal is to become more aware of the messages our words may send.

Participant Modelling Exercise

Your child returns home after a competition and says:

"I didn't play very well today."

How would you respond?

1. "Everyone has difficult days. What do you think you learned today?"
2. "Don't worry. Next time you'll do better."

3. "I noticed you seemed disappointed. Would you like to talk about it?"
4. "You need to focus more if you want to improve."

Take a moment to consider:

- Which response feels most natural to you?
- How might your child feel after hearing each response?
- Which response is most likely to encourage reflection and growth?

There is rarely one perfect answer. What matters most is understanding how different responses can influence children's emotions and motivation.

Creating Conversations That Support Growth

Parents do not need to have all the answers.

Often, the most supportive conversations begin with curiosity rather than evaluation.

Instead of focusing only on performance, you can help children reflect on effort, learning, enjoyment and relationships.

These conversations encourage children to become active participants in their own development rather than passive recipients of feedback.

Instead of saying

Did you win?

You should have done better.



You might say

What was the best part of today?

What would you like to do differently next time?



REFLECTION

Choose one conversation you had recently with your child about sport.

If you could have that conversation again, would you ask a different question or respond differently?

Why?



Summary

The words children hear from parents help shape their experiences in sport.

Through our questions, comments and reactions, we communicate what we value and what we believe is important.

By becoming more aware of our communication, we can create conversations that support confidence, learning, resilience and enjoyment.

Sometimes small changes in the way we speak can have a lasting impact on the way children experience sport.



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Growing Through Sport

Introduction

Every parent hopes their child will grow into a confident, capable and resilient person.

While sport can help develop physical skills, its impact often reaches much further. **Through sport, children learn how to face challenges, manage emotions, work with others and believe in their own abilities.**

For children with visual impairment, these experiences can be particularly valuable. **Sport provides opportunities to explore independence, build confidence and discover strengths that extend far beyond the playing field.**

As parents, we cannot create growth for our children. However, we can create the conditions that allow growth to happen.

This module explores four important outcomes that sport can support: confidence, independence, resilience and belonging.

Building Confidence

Confidence develops when children **experience themselves as capable.**

This does not happen because someone constantly tells them they are good. It happens when children **face challenges, try new things and discover that they can succeed.**

Sometimes parents unintentionally protect children from situations that feel difficult or uncertain. While this often comes from love and concern, it can also limit opportunities for children to discover what they are capable of.

As parents, one of the most powerful things we can do is communicate our belief in our child's abilities.

This does not mean pretending that everything is easy. It means helping children see that challenges are a normal part of learning and growth.

Children build confidence when they:



REFLECTION

Think about a time when your child achieved something they initially believed would be difficult.

- What helped them succeed?
- How did you support them during that process?



Supporting Independence

One of the **greatest gifts** we can give our children is the opportunity to **become independent.**



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For parents of children with visual impairment, this can sometimes feel complicated. We want our children to be safe, supported and protected. Yet we also want them to become confident in their ability to navigate the world.

Finding the balance between helping and allowing independence is not always easy.

Before stepping in, it can be useful to ask:

Does my child need my help, or do they need my confidence?

Sometimes children need practical support.

Sometimes they simply need time, encouragement and trust.

Sport provides many opportunities for children to make decisions, solve problems and take responsibility. These experiences help children develop autonomy and self-belief.

When children are trusted to do things for themselves, they begin to trust themselves too.

REFLECTION

Think about a recent situation where your child faced a challenge.

Did you immediately step in to help?

Looking back, was there an opportunity to allow your child to take a greater role in solving the situation?



Learning Through Mistakes

Many children worry about making mistakes.

Many parents worry about watching their children make them.

Yet mistakes are a natural and important part of learning.

Every athlete, regardless of age or ability, experiences setbacks, disappointments and moments of frustration. **Children who learn to cope with these experiences develop resilience** — the ability to recover, adapt and keep moving forward.

When children make mistakes, they often learn more from our reactions than from the mistake itself.

For example, a child who misses a goal may be disappointed.

A parent's response can either reinforce that disappointment or help the child view the experience as part of learning.

Instead of focusing on what went wrong, we can encourage reflection:

- What did you learn?
- What would you like to try next time?
- What are you proud of today?

These questions help children develop a growth mindset and understand that progress often comes through practice and persistence.

REFLECTION

How do you usually respond when your child experiences disappointment in sport?

What message might your response communicate about mistakes and learning?



When children feel that they belong, they are more willing to participate, take risks, try new things and remain engaged over time.

REFLECTION

Think about the people who make your child feel welcome and included in sport.

What do these people do that helps your child feel that they belong?



The Importance of Belonging

Children thrive when they feel accepted, valued and connected to others.

Belonging is one of the most important reasons children continue participating in sport.

While learning skills and achieving goals matter, feeling part of a group often matters even more.

For children with visual impairment, **opportunities for meaningful inclusion can have a powerful impact on well-being and self-esteem.**

Belonging develops when children feel:

- welcomed by teammates;
- respected by coaches;
- included in activities;
- valued for who they are.

Parents play an important role in supporting these experiences. By encouraging participation, fostering positive relationships and celebrating social connections, parents help create conditions where children can develop a strong sense of belonging.

Summary

Sport can support children's development in many ways.

Through sport, children can build confidence, develop independence, learn resilience and experience belonging.

These outcomes do not happen automatically. They grow through experiences, relationships and opportunities to participate, learn and contribute.

As parents, we may not be able to remove every challenge from our children's path. What we can do is provide encouragement, trust and support as they discover their own strengths.

In the next module, we will explore how sport can become a shared family journey and how families, coaches and communities can work together to create positive and inclusive sport experiences.



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Sport as a Family Journey

Introduction

When a child participates in sport, the experience rarely belongs only to the child.

Parents organise schedules, provide encouragement, celebrate successes and offer support during difficult moments. Siblings may attend events, cheer from the sidelines or become involved in activities themselves. Coaches, volunteers and other families also become part of the experience.

Over time, sport can become more than an activity. It can become a shared family journey.

Like any journey, there may be moments of excitement, pride and joy, but also moments of uncertainty, frustration and concern. Families often learn and grow alongside their children.

This final module invites you to look beyond individual sport experiences and reflect on the role sport plays in the life of your family.

Navigating Worries and Uncertainty

Every parent worries.

Parents of children with visual impairment may have concerns about safety, inclusion, independence or their child's future opportunities. These concerns come from a place of care and love.

At times, worries can encourage us to prepare, plan and advocate for our children. However, worries can also become overwhelming if they prevent us from seeing opportunities and possibilities.

It can be helpful to remember that uncertainty is a normal part of parenting. No parent can predict every challenge or guarantee every outcome.

Rather than trying to eliminate uncertainty, we can focus on what is within our control:

Children often take emotional cues from the adults around them. When parents demonstrate trust, optimism and resilience, children are more likely to develop these qualities themselves.



providing
encouragement



building supportive
relationships



communicating
openly



helping children
develop confidence
and independence

REFLECTION

What is one concern you have about your child's participation in sport?

What is one opportunity that may exist alongside that concern?



Working Together

Positive sport experiences are rarely created by one person alone.

Parents, coaches, volunteers and peers all contribute to the environment in which children participate and grow.

Strong partnerships are built through communication, respect and a shared commitment to supporting children.

Parents know their children better than anyone else.

Coaches bring expertise, structure and opportunities for learning.

When parents and coaches work together, children benefit from consistent support and understanding.

Helpful partnerships are built when parents:

- share relevant information about their child's needs;
- communicate openly and respectfully;
- focus on long-term development rather than short-term results;
- trust coaches to guide the sporting experience.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is collaboration.

REFLECTION

Think about a coach, teacher or volunteer who has had a positive influence on your child:

What made that relationship successful?



Finding Strength in Community

Many families discover that sport provides something they did not expect: **a sense of community.**

Connecting with other families can **reduce feelings of isolation, provide emotional support and create opportunities for shared learning.**

Sometimes the most valuable advice comes from people who have faced similar experiences.

Community can offer:

- encouragement;
- practical support;
- friendship;
- inspiration;
- understanding.

No family needs to navigate challenges alone.

By building relationships with other families, organisations and support networks, parents can access valuable resources while also contributing their own experiences and strengths.

REFLECTION

Who are the people or communities that support your family today?

Who could become part of your support network in the future?



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Looking Forward

As children grow, their needs, interests and goals may change.

Some children may continue participating in sport for many years. Others may explore different activities or discover new passions.

What remains important is not a particular result or achievement, but the **experiences, relationships and skills developed along the way.**

As parents, we cannot walk every step for our children.

What we can do is **provide encouragement, create opportunities and believe in their potential.**

By doing so, we help children build the confidence to follow their own path.

Summary

Sport is not only a journey for children. It is also a journey for families.

Along the way, families experience challenges, successes, learning opportunities and moments of growth.

Through communication, collaboration and support, parents can help create positive and meaningful sport experiences that extend far beyond the playing field.

Thank you for taking part in this Parent Academy.

Your willingness to reflect, learn and grow is already a powerful step in supporting your child's development, confidence and well-being.

REFLECTION

Think back to the beginning of this Academy.

Has anything changed in the way you think about:

- your role as a parent?
- your child's sport experience?
- the meaning of success?
- support and encouragement?

What is one thing you would like to do differently moving forward?

Write down one action you will take in the coming weeks to support your child's sport journey.



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Support or Pressure?

Parents want the best for their children. We encourage, guide and motivate because we care. Yet children do not always experience our words and actions in the way we intend.

Sometimes support feels encouraging and empowering. At other times, similar words or behaviours may unintentionally create pressure.

This tool can help you recognise the difference and reflect on the messages your child may receive during their sport journey.

Take Action



During the next week, notice one situation where you encourage your child during sport.

Ask yourself



Did my words feel supportive, neutral or pressuring?

Situation	Supportive	Potentially Pressuring
Before training	"Enjoy yourself."	"You need to do well today."
After a mistake	"Keep trying."	"You should know better."
After competition	"What did you enjoy?"	"Why didn't you win?"
Child feels nervous	"It's okay to be nervous."	"There's nothing to be nervous about."

Questions That Build Confidence

The questions we ask communicate what we value.

When conversations focus only on performance and results, children may begin to believe that success is the most important outcome. When conversations also explore effort, enjoyment and learning, children develop a broader and healthier understanding of success.

The following questions can help create meaningful conversations and encourage reflection, confidence and growth.

After training

- What was the best part of today?
- What did you enjoy most?
- What challenged you?
- What are you proud of?

After competition

- What went well?
- What did you learn?
- What would you like to try differently next time?

Try This



After your child's next sport activity, choose one question from this toolkit instead of your usual first question.

Notice how the conversation changes.



Supporting Independence

One of the most important goals of parenting is helping children become confident and independent.

For parents of children with visual impairment, finding the balance between supporting and protecting can sometimes be challenging. While support is essential, children also need opportunities to make decisions, solve problems and develop trust in their own abilities.

Small everyday experiences can help children build independence over time.

Small Step Challenge



This week, identify one situation where you can give your child a little more responsibility or decision-making power.

Start small and observe what happens.

Try to	Avoid
Encourage decision-making	Solving every problem immediately
Let your child solve age-appropriate problems	Speaking for your child in every situation
Give time before stepping in	Assuming your child cannot do something before trying
Trust your child's abilities	



Difficult Moments

Every child experiences setbacks, mistakes and moments of frustration. These situations are not signs of failure; they are a natural part of learning and development.

Children often remember less about the challenge itself and more about how the important adults around them responded.

The following examples can help you navigate difficult moments in ways that support confidence, resilience and learning.

Pause Before Responding



The next time your child experiences disappointment, frustration or makes a mistake, take a moment before responding.

Ask yourself:



What does my child need most right now: advice, solutions or understanding?

When my child wants to quit	
Helpful	Less helpful
Listen first	Immediate pressure to continue
Explore the reasons	Immediate permission to quit without discussion
Give time to reflect	Assuming your child cannot do something before trying

When my child makes a mistake	
Helpful	Less helpful
Focus on learning	Criticism
Normalise mistakes	Comparison
Encourage another attempt	Blame



Parent Reminder Card

It is easy to become focused on schedules, performance, competitions and daily challenges. During busy periods, parents may lose sight of the bigger picture.

This reminder card brings together the key messages of the Parent Academy and can serve as a quick reference whenever you need it.

Children benefit most from sport when they feel:

- ✓ Supported
- ✓ Valued
- ✓ Included
- ✓ Capable
- ✓ Safe to make mistakes
- ✓ Free to enjoy the experience

Your role is not to create a perfect sport experience. Your role is to help create an environment where your child can learn, grow and thrive.

Looking Ahead



Choose one idea from this Handbook that you would like to focus on during the next month.

Write it down and revisit it from time to time.

Small changes in everyday interactions can have a lasting impact on your child's sport experience.



Stories of good practises

Story 1: Learning to Let Go

When Sofia joined her first sports programme, her mother was both excited and nervous.

Like many parents of children with visual impairment, she had spent years helping her daughter navigate new situations. She explained unfamiliar environments, anticipated potential difficulties and often stepped in before problems could arise.

"I wanted to make things easier for her," she recalls. "I thought that was my job as a parent."

At the sports sessions, Sofia's mother stayed close. If Sofia hesitated, she offered instructions. If a coach asked a question, she often answered first. If Sofia encountered a challenge, her mother was ready with a solution.

At first, this felt natural and helpful.

One day, however, Sofia's coach shared an observation.

"Sofia is doing really well," he said. "I wonder if she might benefit from having a little more space to figure things out on her own."

The comment stayed with her mother.

"I realised that I wasn't only helping Sofia. Sometimes I was preventing her from discovering what she could do independently."

The change did not happen overnight.

At the next session, when Sofia asked where to go, her mother resisted the

urge to immediately guide her. Instead, she encouraged Sofia to ask the coach.

When Sofia struggled with an activity, her mother waited a little longer before stepping in.

"It felt uncomfortable at first," she says. "I worried that she would become frustrated or make mistakes."

But something unexpected happened.

Sofia became more confident.

She started speaking more often to coaches and teammates. She became more willing to try new activities. She seemed proud when she solved small problems independently.

One afternoon, after a training session, Sofia said:

"I like doing things by myself."

For her mother, this was a powerful moment.

"It reminded me that confidence grows through experience. My role wasn't to remove every challenge. My role was to help Sofia believe she could face them."

What can we learn from this story?

- Support and independence can exist together.
- Children develop confidence when they have opportunities to solve problems.
- Sometimes the most supportive thing a parent can do is step back and allow a child to try.



Story 2: When Encouragement Became Pressure

Lucas loved sport.

His father loved watching him play.

After every training session, they talked about the activity in detail. His father asked what had gone well, what could have gone better and what Lucas planned to improve next time.

"I thought I was showing interest," his father explains. "I wanted him to know that I believed in his potential."

Over time, however, Lucas became quieter after activities. He stopped sharing stories about teammates and funny moments. Conversations increasingly focused on performance.

One evening, after a competition, Lucas looked at his father and said:

"Can we talk about something other than sport?"

His father was surprised.

Later, he realised that although he intended to motivate his son, Lucas had started feeling evaluated.

"I was focusing so much on improvement that I forgot to enjoy the experience with him."

The next week, his father tried something different.

Instead of asking:

"What could you have done better?"

he asked:

"What was the most enjoyable part of today?"

The conversation lasted almost an hour.

They talked about teammates, funny moments, challenges and things Lucas wanted to learn. Performance was still discussed, but it was no longer the only focus.

What can we learn from this story?

- Interest and pressure can sometimes feel similar to children.
- Conversations about enjoyment, friendships and learning are just as important as discussions about performance.
- Children benefit when they feel valued regardless of results.



Story 3: Finding the Right Balance

Emma's parents had very different approaches to sport.

Her mother focused on enjoyment and participation.

Her father focused on commitment and perseverance.

When Emma wanted to skip training because she felt tired or discouraged, her parents often disagreed about how to respond.

One would say:

"If you're not enjoying it, maybe you should stop."

The other would say:

"You can't quit every time something becomes difficult."

Emma often felt confused.

Eventually, her parents realised that neither extreme was helping.

Together, they agreed to spend more time listening before offering advice. Instead of immediately deciding whether Emma should continue or stop, they began exploring what she was experiencing.

Sometimes she needed encouragement to persist.

Sometimes she needed support to address a problem.

Sometimes she simply needed someone to listen.

Over time, family conversations became less about finding the "right answer" and more about understanding Emma's perspective.

What can we learn from this story?

- Different parenting approaches can both offer valuable perspectives.
- Listening often comes before problem-solving.
- Children benefit when parents balance support, challenge and understanding.



Background

The frame of the academy was based on the academic publication www.preprints.org/manuscript/202502.1330/v1 February 18th, 2025 (Authors Mastoras Elias, who is the legal representative, Charmpis Alexandros, who is the project manager).

The title is “Breaking Down Stigma Against Disability: Genesis, Objectives, Implementation and Evaluation of the A ball for all Project”.

The academy for parents of visually impaired children aged 5–18 was established as part of the "A ball for all" European wide Event, as there is a need for education, awareness, support and guidance for these families as well — a fact that is, unfortunately, often neglected in contemporary society.

Breaking Down Stigma Against Disability: Genesis, Objectives, Implementation and Evaluation of the ABall4All Project

Eliás Mastoras , Alexandros Charmpis , Francisco Xavier Ponserti , Elisa Isabel Sánchez-Romero , Alejandro García-Mas

Abstract

Background: Throughout human history, stigma has persistently affected individuals with different conditions (e.g. epilepsy, mental disorders, and physical or cognitive disabilities). Specifically, visually impairments restrict environmental perception and psychomotor skills, often leading to sedentary behavior, which adversely affect physical and mental health. This paper describes the general lines and the first results of the Erasmus+ “ABall4All NPE unified” social transfer project, funded by the European Union and developed in Greece, Turkey and Spain between 2023 and 2024. **Objectives:** To study whether the design and implementation of inclusive sports activities for children with visual impairments produces an enigmatizing impact and a change in attitudes in participating children without visual impairments. **Methods:** It was developed through inclusive activities in schools and sports clubs, using football as a sport that brings together children and young people with and without visual impairments, families and educational centers. Zarit Burden Inventory and Questionnaire of Eudaimonic Well-being were used for family members with visually impaired children. In addition, an ad hoc questionnaire was used to assess the volunteers and mentors’ satisfaction with the realization of the events. **Results:** both volunteers and mentors showed high rates of satisfaction with the training received and the events held. Caregivers showed moderate perceived well-being. Regarding family burden, age was a significant predictor variable in the perceived burden with an explanatory capacity of 36% of the variance. **Conclusions:** These findings have implications for interventions aimed at reducing caregiver burden.

Keywords: Visual impairment; Sport; Football; Sound balls; Attitudes; Stigma; Values

Subject: Social Sciences - Tourism, Leisure, Sport and Hospitality



Academy of Parents on the Online Educational Moodle Platform

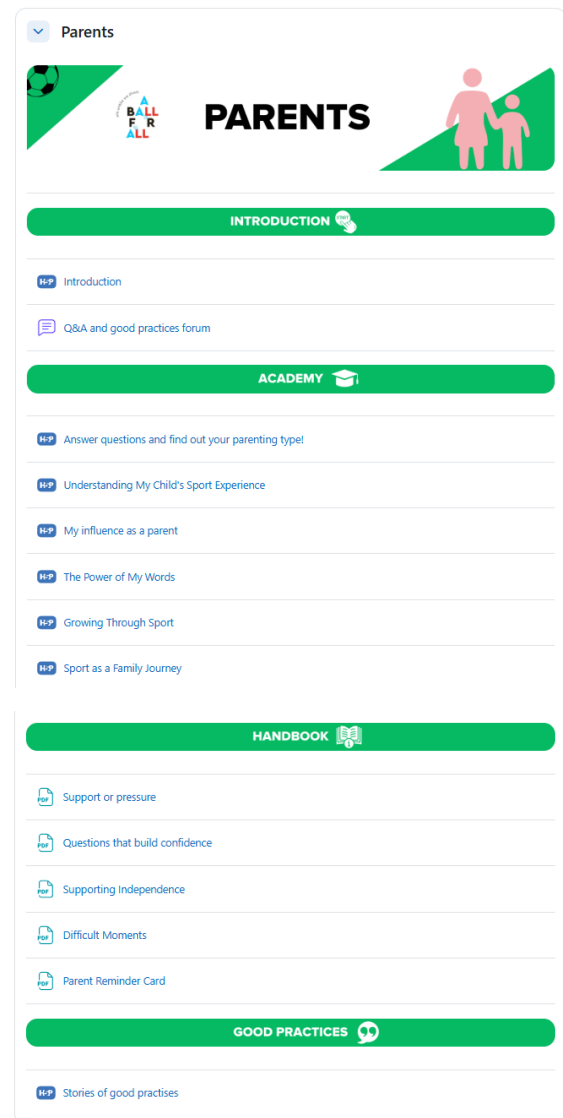
The content of the academy for parents of visually impaired children aged 5–18 is also available on the online educational Moodle Platform, which was created for the "A ball for all" European wide Event.

Everyone can register on the platform by clicking on the link:

<https://aballforall.moodlecloud.com/login/index.php> ,

and the content can be found here:

<https://aballforall.moodlecloud.com/course/section.php?id=38>



Parents

INTRODUCTION

- Introduction
- Q&A and good practices forum

ACADEMY

- Answer questions and find out your parenting type!
- Understanding My Child's Sport Experience
- My influence as a parent
- The Power of My Words
- Growing Through Sport
- Sport as a Family Journey

HANDBOOK

- Support or pressure
- Questions that build confidence
- Supporting Independence
- Difficult Moments
- Parent Reminder Card

GOOD PRACTICES

- Stories of good practises



Conclusion

The objectives of the academy of parents with VI children were to analyze the influence and performance of the parents of pupils aged 5-18 years old and their classmates, focusing on the management behaviors, pressure, support, understanding and active involvement of parents in their children's sport unified activities such as the "A ball for all" European wide Event, as well as to analyze the effects of the socio-educational intervention carried out with parents, identifying their own comments on their children's participation; positive, neutral and negative comments.

During the "A ball for all" European wide Event, we honoured the Academy of Parents with Visual Impairment children and their classmates for breaking down any barriers of participation of VI in unified sport events!

Related links are as follows:

 <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1955855585064800>

 https://www.instagram.com/a_ballforall.eu/reel/DY7C4bRtWva/



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