



**THE
CAMOGIE
ASSOCIATION**
An Cumann Camógaíochta

Camogie Coaching Corner

By Peter Casey

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The future is now

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's
longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they
belong not to you.

Kahill Gibrain – On Children

As parents and coaches the future is always in our minds. We spend a lot of time worrying and wondering about life down the road. We fill our minds with questions and concerns like, how will our children turn out? Will they be ok? What school will we send them to? Where will they go to College? As coaches many of our thoughts are filled with hoping our players will be good at hurling and Camogie that we'll win championships and that our players will play for the county.

Thinking about the future is important but sometimes it causes us to lose sight of what's happening in front our eyes at the moment. We are blessed to have children and it is so easy to take them for granted but it would be hard to envisage any vibrancy in a community without children. Some of the most committed GAA parents often find it very difficult to encourage their children to play hurling and Camogie. Even with all their persuasive skills and bribery ideas their children refuse point blank to play. It must be very distressing for a parent who has dreamed of big days in Croke Park and Thurles cheering on their sons and daughters to have to cope with a 6 or 7 year old child who won't even join the local club.

In the past children were owned by adults. Parents, teachers, priests and coaches often felt that they were superior to children and children had to do as they were told. Old sayings like "children should be seen and not heard" and "an empty vessel makes the most sound" come to mind. It's easy to judge other parents and say that they should make their children play sport. If that doesn't work then a clip around the ear or a kick in the backside would sort it all out. All that kind of advice was commonplace in many parishes in a different time.



However this type of talk also led to abuse where children were frightened to speak out. Thankfully children are seen and also heard in most places now. It is very healthy that children can now tell their parents "yes I'd like to go there" and "no I don't feel like doing that".

There is a great book that I sometimes use called *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk*. It deals with the fundamental connection between how children feel and how they behave. It states "When children feel right, they'll behave right. How do we help them to feel right? By accepting their feelings?" The book deals with the problem that parents don't usually accept their children's feelings. For example "You don't really feel that way" "You're only saying that because you're tired", "There's no reason to be upset". In a GAA coaching context we could sometimes say "you couldn't be bored this is exciting" "you're not cold it's very hot" and "you don't hate Camogie, you love it". The big lesson is that we should never deny children's rights to express their feelings even if it means they disagree with us or tell us what we don't wish to hear.

Giving children a voice and allowing them to be part of the decision making process in a house or a team is really good for their development. It also causes us to see things from their point of view and it helps us develop good communication skills where we can get our point of view across. Instead of telling our children



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that they have to go training and they don't have a choice it is better to reason with them. "I'd really like if you joined the GAA club because Gaelic games are such a healthy pastime where you get to play with your friends. I can tell that you're worried that you mightn't be good enough but I'm sure you'll be fine and I'll have a word with your coach so he won't do stuff that's too hard. I'll also stay close by so if you need a break you can come over to me". If after saying all that they are still adamant they don't want to play we should respect that right. When they go of their own free will they develop a greater love of the game.

Children provide adults with fantastic entertainment when they play sports. Some of the best sporting memories I have were of small matches I played as a child and underage games where I was a coach. These games may seem really insignificant in the greater scheme of things but there was nothing small or insignificant about the effort the children gave or the satisfaction that the parents derived from these games. Sometimes we get so caught up in the future that we fail to see the brilliance or beauty of our children as they are at the moment. We keep thinking it'll be great next year when he's bigger and stronger. A parent once said "when my child was 3 I couldn't wait for him to be six and when he was 6 I wished he was 12. When he was 12 I wished he was 16 and now that he's 16 I wish he was three"

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Sometimes we dream about reaching the Holy Grail but there is no Holy Grail. The players who win the All-Ireland final have to play with their clubs a couple of weeks later and the following year they are back training and preparing as though they never won anything. There is great vibrancy in many club and county underage structures at present and we have never had as many people playing our games or seen the games at such a high standard. The work of a GAA or camogie club never stops though. In 10 years' time these clubs will still need people to start off their under 6's and 8's. Even if clubs are struggling there is always a chance of a fresh start with the 6's. The key is to try to stay in the moment.

