

Supporting Your Skater in a High-Performance Sport

A simple guide to confidence, pressure, and emotional recovery in figure skating

INTRODUCTION

Skating is a beautiful sport.

It is also a high-pressure performance environment where children and adults are asked to:

- perform alone
- be judged on execution
- repeat skills under pressure
- recover quickly from mistakes
- perform in front of audiences and expectations

Most parents quickly learn something important:

What happens after skating can be just as important as what happens on the ice.

This guide is designed to help you support your skater in a way that builds confidence, emotional stability, and long-term performance growth.

1. UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOUR SKATER IS EXPERIENCING

Many skaters appear confident in practice but become anxious in competition.

This is not a lack of ability.

It is a shift in internal state.

Inside every skater are two natural mental systems:

The Survival System

This system activates when something feels important or uncertain.

It may show up as:

- nerves before skating
- fear of falling
- fear of disappointing others
- overthinking before performance
- emotional reactions after skating

Its purpose is simple: To protect the skater.

The Training System

This system reflects what the skater has actually trained.

It shows up as:

- muscle memory
- technical execution
- coaching cues
- repetition and habit
- learned corrections

Its purpose is simple: To perform what has been trained.

KEY IDEA

When pressure increases, attention often shifts away from training and toward protection.

This is why performance can feel different from practice.

2. WHY SKATERS CHANGE AFTER THEY SKATE

After a performance, many skaters are emotionally activated.

They may be:

- quiet
- frustrated
- upset
- overly critical
- overly emotional
- or unable to talk immediately

This is not the time for analysis.

At this moment, the skater is still processing emotion, not learning.

A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE

Connection creates access to learning.

When a skater feels emotionally safe again, they become open to reflection, coaching, and feedback.

3. WHAT HELPS VS WHAT HURTS

What helps most after skating:

- “I saw you out there.”
 - “I’m glad you’re okay.”
 - “I love watching you skate.”
 - “Do you want to talk or just relax for a bit?”
 - quiet presence without pressure
-

What can unintentionally increase pressure:

- immediate technical feedback
- analysis right after performance
- questioning mistakes too quickly
- comparing to expectations or outcomes

This does not help learning in the moment it is delivered.

4. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPORT

Parents are not expected to be coaches.

Parents are not expected to be mental performance specialists.

Your role is something equally important: To provide emotional stability around performance.

This stability allows coaches and training systems to do their job effectively.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY:

A skater's support system includes:

- technical coach
- choreography
- off-ice training
- physiotherapy
- nutrition
- mental performance support

Parents are the **emotional foundation** of that system.

5. MENTAL TRAINING IS LIFE TRAINING

The mental skills developed in skating are not limited to sport.

They transfer into many areas of life, including:

- exams and school performance
 - public speaking
 - auditions and presentations
 - job interviews
 - future workplace pressure situations
-

KEY IDEA

Skating becomes a training ground for learning how to:

- manage pressure
 - recover from mistakes
 - stay focused under stress
 - regulate emotion
 - perform when it matters
-

SIMPLE TRUTH

Skating is the practice environment. Life is the transfer environment.

6. WHAT CONFIDENCE REALLY IS

Confidence is often misunderstood as:

- feeling good
- feeling calm
- feeling ready

In reality, confidence is more practical:

Confidence is built through evidence.

Evidence comes from:

- repetition
 - correction
 - recovery after mistakes
 - returning to training after setbacks
-

IMPORTANT SHIFT

Confidence is not created by perfect performances.

It is created by learning how to respond when performances are not perfect.

7. YOUR SIMPLE PARENT STRATEGY

You do not need complicated language or techniques.

You only need a simple sequence:

A. CONNECT FIRST

Before talking about skating, create emotional safety.

B. ALLOW EMOTIONAL RESET

Give space before analysis.

C. TALK ABOUT SKATING LATER (IF NEEDED)

When the skater is regulated, learning becomes possible.

8. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER

Your skater does not need perfection from you.

They do not need analysis immediately after skating.

They do not need pressure to process faster.

They need something simpler: A stable place to return to after performance.

FINAL MESSAGE

Every skater will experience pressure.

Every skater will have difficult performances.

Every skater will have moments of doubt.

This is normal.

What matters most is not whether those moments happen. It is what happens **after** they happen.

CLOSING THOUGHT

The way you respond after skating can influence your child's confidence more than the skate itself.

If you found this guide helpful and would like to better understand how to support your skater's confidence, focus, and performance consistency, additional resources are available through my coaching and seminars.

“The most powerful support often happens after the performance, not during it.”