Most of the time I am the easy parent. Thank goodness Heather makes sure the rooms get cleaned and the laundry is put away.

I check the homework, but they know they can probably get away with a little more with me than with Mom.

Basketball practice, however, is different.

There is no slack, especially for the coach's kids. They have to go as hard as everyone else at the least, and we do go hard. I may not be the best at Xs and Os on the basketball court, but we will be athletic.

First off, I am not one of those coaches trying to relive past glories through my children.

But I do push for excellence.

The people who pushed me the hardest are those that taught me what it took to succeed, and it's not easy. If it were, anyone could do it.

We are relatively young to competitive basketball, and so we are having to pay our dues.

The bad news for the girls is I spent years coaching my son when he was in youth sports, and so I have a boys coach mentality.

What's the difference? It has something to do with Mars and Venus.

Boys don't have to be buddies to be teammates.

Boys don't have to "talk it out" when a play doesn't go quite right. They simply point out the flaw, the player who made the wrong move acknowledges the mistake, and they move on.

Boys take the coaches comments as constructive criticism designed to improve their play.

Girls, on the other hand, have to like each other. Team chemistry is not simply helpful, it is required.

Girls have to review the play and discuss how "they know what you were trying to do" even though it is not what she was supposed to do.

And girls take correction as a sign of how much the coach doesn't like them.

My group is learning how to work around these issues, and I am learning how to relate with them as well.

It doesn't mean easier, just different.

Pushing boys to go harder simply requires a little verbal motivation. Getting girls to go harder requires a discussion.

Barking instructions to boys gets an immediate response and a nod of understanding. Barking to a girl gets a deer-in-the-headlights look wondering why I hate her.

And yet, they come back (most of them, anyway). That tells me something about them. They want to get better. They don't want to do the stairs, but they run them, anyway.

It's not easy. Nothing worthwhile ever is.

They are learning what it takes to be successful.

How many games will we win? Who knows.

The key is we are gaining valuable experience and developing athletically.

They may not show it like boys, but girls have a desire to win just the same. Girls are competitive.

I've learned a lot coaching girls sports over the years, and I have been frustrated beyond compare at the same time.

I am sure those I coach would say the same.

But they are learning that I am pushing them because I care about them. I want them to succeed.

And I am learning how to reach each one of them.

As their Dad, my daughters get to see a more pushy side at practice, and they have taken it in stride. Getting to see them push beyond what they thought they could do certainly gives me a sense of pride.

Now we have a team of sisters, and with girls, that is how it has to be. I'm not Dad to all of them, but during practice, I have to be the guy that cares about them the most right then. The more they believe that, the better they respond.