

**“Sports Are Away Of Life”**

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Sports have grown over the years and have become very popular within the youth. Sports give children a balance between physical fitness and psychological well being; along with many lifelong lessons for an active lifestyle as they grow. The start of their foundation is the most important aspect. Just like a house being built, the foundation is the main contribution to the masterpiece of a successful house. An athlete being successful starts with a strong foundation in sports, starting with a great experience without discouragement. Sports are a fundamental aspect of young children learning the ways of living a healthy lifestyle. There are a lot of positive aspects a child gets out of being involved in sports. Sadly, the parents' knowledge of about their child isn't always enough background to give them a strong foundation to participate in sports. Parents often do not take into consideration that understanding their child's abilities is the first important aspect they have to understand before involving their child in sports. All children grow and mature at different ages. When parents are put children in competitive sports too young, the result can cause a lot of injuries, discourage them and reduce their self-esteem. Parents need to be better informed about their children in youth sports, in order to ensure that their child can have access to a lifelong healthy lifestyle, along with many important life lessons. “ Sport[s] is identified as a key ingredient in a cultivational approach to parenting, meaning a form of parenting where parents routinely scan the horizon for opportunities to activate their cultural and social capital on behalf of their children” (Strandbu 68). Therefore since sports are a key ingredient, parents should make sure children play sports so they may receive a lifelong healthy lifestyle.

Youth sports play an important role in children's lives by teaching them about being part of a team. Being part of a team shows you have a shared goal. A shared goal

is everyone wanting to achieve the same goal and you only achieve that goal by working together. These are life lessons that sports teach young children. Having shared goals and being part of a team helps children learn the meaning that there is no “I” in team.

Learning that there is no “I” in team transfers outside of sports by showing children, at a young age, there are always people around you that you have to work together with. They learn to develop leadership roles, to be confident, not only in themselves but also in their teammates, to be optimistic, to be dedicated and to be committed. These are all positive aspects of sports molded in young athletes. According to Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital, Donna L Merkel shares that; “Youth sports provide a venue for learning, practicing and developing gross motor skills. Successful acquisition of a motor skill at a young age improves the likelihood of future participation in that activity in adulthood”(153). Showing that the beginning years of a child being introduced to sports is a stepping-stone to being active when you are an adult. As children move on in their athletic careers, sports tend to become more competitive as the years go on. As they get older this is when children start to fully understand all the benefits they receive in playing sports. This contributes to overall health, happiness, and well being which is a good thing.

According to the Aspen Institute, which is an international non-profit organization founded in 1949 for Humanistic Studies, children in sports receive many benefits. The Aspen Institute shows the following benefits of physically active children, as approved by the American College of Sports Medicine: 1/10 are less likely to be obese, up to 40% higher test scores, less smoking, drug use, pregnancy and risky sex, 15% most likely to go to college, 7-8% higher annual earnings, lower health costs, more productive at work

and a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. As sports hold such a foundation in young children's life it's important to set them up for success and be educated on all the good sports bring to the youth of generations. The youth generation in sports is just the beginning of success and the most important aspect is the beginning.

Children grow through competitive sports by developing “social adjustment, integration, and emotional growth” (Kim 193). Children being involved in competitive sports obtain all that. Competition tends to push children above their limits and teaches them that they have to be strong-minded since there are goals to be met on the fields and courts. “Competition in sports brings out cooperative efforts among teammates pursuing a common goal” (Kim 193). The most common goal in sports is to win, which is why competition in sports helps children to learn the meaning of working together to achieve a win. One very important aspect of competitive sports in children is that they have so many opportunities to form their inner character. An inner character is formed when children fight to perform to the best of their ability. Children usually are very impressive when they start to compete because they unfold abilities that they didn't know they had. They gain an unlimited amount of confidence and tend to believe they are capable of performing to the best of their ability every time they play, which is such an important aspect in life. Being able to always believe in yourself is such a strong part of who you are and to develop that aspect so young is an accomplishment in and of itself. Children get to thrive all on their own when they are in sports because they learn their skill and work at their own pace. What children are capable of doing in games is all up to them. I believe that no one can force them to perform. There are so many different ways children development in competitive sports.

Generative Development in children happens with competition in youth sports because of how beneficial competition in children is. The competition gives children a background for creating their personal growth. Personal growth is all about developing talents and creating your identity. At a young age, children are able to create their own identity in sports because they determine if they have a strong mindset to succeed in sports or if they have a weak mindset and don't give it a 100%. Giving 100% in sports is a very important foundation children learn young. Giving 100% is proving to people that someone is giving all you got on the field or court. If there is nobody out there that is working harder than your child and it shows when then they have a strong mind-set. If they have a weak mindset, then they usually don't move forward in sports unless they realize they have to give sports 100%. Giving sports 100% let's children understand that you have to work hard for something to achieve greatness. By teaching them the meaning of working hard for something gives them a life lesson outside of sports. This gives them the mindset that anything in life, they have to give 100% to achieve success. This is where competition stems from. In the real world, everything is a competition. For example, applying for a job there are multiple people that want that job. You have to believe in yourself and know that you will give everything you can to get that job. Just like in sports when you want to score a goal or get a hit you have to believe in yourself and leave your heart on the court or field. Even if you fall short with the job or make an error or miss the goal, you can keep your head up high and know that you gave everything you had. Competition happens with everything in life and gives children a good healthy environment to know the importance of competition. " Competition encourages children to reflect on their behavior under emotionally intense situations and

to develop strong emotional intelligence” (Choi 195). Stemming back to the idea of pursuing a job; whether or not you get the job, you can learn effective emotional and psychological skills that can teach you how to deal with success or failure at a young age. Competitive sports promote self-determination and competence that are known for enhancing intrinsic motivation to perceive any challenge that will come your way in life.

Children always being able to adjust to situations in sports show that they are smart when it comes to thinking outside of the box to succeed. Being involved in sports gives children the characteristic of being a spontaneous person. Being a spontaneous person is when things are natural or instinctive causing things to happen when you least expect it. In sports, this means you are able to be quick and react without thinking, which is what sports are all about. Sports give children the mindset that they are always able to adjust no matter what gets thrown at them. For example, when a child is playing baseball and can't hit a pitch, they tend to overthink what they are doing. Later, if they finally realize they need to adjust their swing to hit the ball, which causes them to succeed in their swing, it shows them that they are capable of adjusting to any situation they get thrown into. That mindset moves forward with athletes, as they get older and go into the world outside of playing sports. If children do not get a career out of sports they still carry all the characteristics they formed from being involved in sports.

As there are many positive impacts on children being involved in competitive sports, there are also negative effects of being involved in competitive sports. Competition can diminish the excitement and enjoyment sports can bring to children due to all the pressure they have to compete. The pressure is usually sourced from parents who are too hard on their children to perform well. Parents tend to always want the best

for their child and sometimes forget that they have to support their child when he doesn't perform to the best of his or her ability in a game. “ A parent can inadvertently set a child up for failure by establishing unrealistic goals for performance and winning by forcing a young athlete to participate in sports beyond their readiness and interest”(Merkel 156). Not every game is going to be played perfect, as an athlete myself, I know, I've had a couple of bad games during a season. It's a very common aspect to “mess up” in sports, just like in real life; no one lives a perfect life. Parents believe that their child can accomplish anything, which is why they set such high standards when it comes to performing. As parents expect high standard performances from their children, the child tends to lose confidence in themselves, which steers them away from the sport itself. Being around a healthy environment helps a child succeed in sports but once there is unnecessary pressure, things tend to fall apart. Children tend to feel obligated to impress their parents, which should never be the case. Children should perform to the best of their abilities and their parents should be proud no matter what. According to Merkel, she shares that we need to collaborate better efforts when it comes to parents and coaches because we need to put in the effort to set children up for success, not a failure. “As a society, we need to change the philosophy of youth sport from a negative environment to a positive one in which most children can thrive, benefit from and sustain their participation in sports”(Merkel 157). Most of the negative aspects of sports are very preventable. “Children see enjoyment and social interaction with peers as reasons to be physically active. Although girls report a willingness to be active, this must be on their own terms in safe non- threatening environment”(Allender 13). We need to make sure parents know how to support a child when there is discouragement.

More negative aspects of the competition are the cost of many downfalls for a child's development. Children sometimes are around competition too much at a young age causing them to be overinvested in the competition, which affects their social evaluation against an objective standard. “ If they are unable to deal with pressure or there is too much emphasis on winning, children are no longer intrinsically motivated to compete. This may cause children to withdraw from sports and may also distract from their psychosocial and cognitive development” (Choi 196). This is an idea that shouldn't happen to children due to all the positive influences they can receive by staying involved in sports. Sadly, what happens in the competition is that instead of it motivating children to play and to improve their skills it simply shifts their attention to an extrinsic factor of quitting sports. “ Children who perceived parental pressure are likely to experience competitive trait anxiety and sport burnout and are more likely to drop out of sports at any early age” (Kanters 74). Sometimes children steer away from who they are involved with in sports not the sport itself. Sometimes in the teenage years, sports tend to become harder for children to stay motivated when they come across bad coach or the emphasis is only on the competition. “ The behavior of coaches has been characterized by some critics as involving high level of punitiveness and as creating an excessively stressful environment for child athletes” (Smith 208). Children lose interest in competition and steer toward other activities that interest them outside of sports. “ Competition does not always produce superior performance but instead can actually hurt performances. In today's sports world, the intense anxiety, pressure, and frustration produced by competition can often choke children's performances” (Choi 196). This usually causes children to realize that they lack competence forcing them to steer toward other leisure

activities. According to Hong Suk Choi, “ Once children withdraw from competition, they may be at-risk to become involved in dangerous, delinquent situations or gang activities” (197). This causes their egos to deflate and leaving them with no self-esteem. This is a very concerning topic when they leave sports, not due to injuries. A dark path in children is concerning because the goal of sports is to keep children in a safe healthy environment, never to steer them in the opposite direction.

One area that is concerning about children in sports is the injuries that children are getting from being involved in competitive sports at a young age. When children get hurt too young in sports it is causing serious health issues, such as affecting the growth of bone and soft tissues, which is resulting in the damage of growth mechanisms. These injuries cause so many children to not be able to play sports in general. “ Most injuries caused in children’s sports are minor and self-limiting, suggesting that children and youth sports are safe” (Shanmugam 1). Therefore even though some children get hurt it’s not a reason to quit. Physical activity plays a significant role in the well being of a child, simply because it makes them healthier. Although not all injuries are preventable, in most cases, youth sports injuries are preventable. Studies show that there is a lot of overuse in youth sports causing a lot of injuries to happen. These injuries are unnecessary, especially since they put children at risk. Playing sports isn’t supposed to put children at risk. It’s supposed to ensure a healthy lifestyle, teach them about goals and learning the adjective being a dedicated person. According to the Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine by Donna Merkel, 2.6 million emergency room visits each year for those aged 5-24 years old are because of sports. This number is a very concerning number in society and shows that society is lacking knowledge of what children are the capable of doing at their age.

Young children are known for having weak bones, ligaments, and tendons, which causes them to be at a risk for fractures through the bone and growth plate. Once the growth plate gets fractured it can cause serious health issues later on in a child's life. Weak bones are due to children not having enough calcium in their body. This is something that parents need to take into account. These weak bones lead to fractures, causing children to be at high risk for health risks in the later years of their lives. Problems that can happen later on in their lives are their joints start to hurt. This happens when the bone doesn't heal right, which can cause arthritis in the joints and bones. As fractures can turn into ligament tears, this can cause problems when they are older because after ligaments are repaired you don't always feel the same. "Children's bones are weaker than their ligaments and tendons, therefore they are at an increased risk for fractures through the bone and growth plate" (Merkel 154). You don't always feel the same because not everything heals perfectly. There can be complications in the healing process after you damage something. Ligament tears that happen in children can cause loss of mobility, leading to complications when they are older. For example, many baseball players who have Tommy John surgery tend to never throw as hard as they could before the surgery.

Another concerning area is parents have to make sure that their child is involved in competitive sports that fits their age group. There are different levels in sports that go hand and hand with all the age groups that are offered for children in sports. Every child is different when it comes to what they are capable of, but it's important to understand that age plays a huge role in involving your child in competitive sports. They've had many studies done that shows us the technical skill and motor abilities in children during the beginning years of being active. These years have to be given careful consideration

by parents. They shouldn't just allow their child to jump right into competitive sports no matter what their age is. A study by David Archer, who is part of the Human Movement Science Journal, talks about children the ages 3-5 on team sports. They used many resources to come across the statistics they achieved. The study was done by using two groups. One group was called elite performers and the other was called non-elite performers. These groups were determined by age, speed and soccer technique. What they learned is that every athlete is different. Age doesn't mean much when a 3-year-old can sprint like a 4-year-old this study shows us that parents are able to believe that their child is capable of doing things that aren't in their age group since they were able to develop faster than other children in their age groups. Since the ratings were very low for children overachieving in their age group; this shows us that parents will be able to keep their children more protected from injuries when keeping them involved in their own age group. As making sure we keep children safe in sports, we move forward to sharing how important it is for children to be physically active as much as possible in their childhood years.

Physical activity is a very important aspect in young children because it improves their motor skills. Some of the benefits children receive from being so active are a lifelong healthy lifestyle, decreased risk of obesity, minimized the development of chronic disease and improved motor skills. Health and motor skills are very important for children because it helps them become stronger overall. They are forced to build up an endurance, which helps them to get in shape. Children should be taught about physical activity when they are very young. In most schools, there is a curriculum of physical education. Physical education is one of the first places many children develop their motor

skills. In physical education class, gym teachers share the importance of nutrition, along with doing many activities to get the children running.

“ Physical education is concerned with learning the skills and understanding required for participation in physical activities, knowledge of one’s own body and its range of and capacity for movement: and it is also a contact form and means of learning a wide range of outcomes which are not inherent to physical activity, but which are valuable extrinsic educational lessons, such as social skills, aesthetic judgment, literacy and numeracy”. (Bailey 72)

Physical education is so important to have in schools because this is a child's foundation going into sports. They tend to get their feet wet in the water when it comes to physical education class and then they usually jump in and start playing sports. The knowledge that children are receiving about their health at young ages is an awesome foundation for them. As children start to understand how their bodies grow and their abilities this tends to help them learn to prevent injuries on their own. Children are able to learn to prevent injuries on their own by having parents that kept them in a safe environment with sports. Well-educated children are educated through their parents and coaches. Parents pick coaches, which brings us back to why educated parents are an important aspect in a child's athletic career. Sometimes parents tend to make them get ahead of their abilities causing issues that are preventable.

Since physical activity is so important in a child, as parents or guardians of young children there has to be a better understanding of their child's capabilities in sports. A better understanding of a child's capability is making sure they are measured by body size, athletic ability, and biological maturity. By giving children the best atmosphere in

sports keeps them healthy and lets them have fun. Every child should always be set up for success when it comes to sports, which is why understanding what they are able to do at their age is important for them to have success. Children should know why being active is such an important aspect of being a healthy person. As many children understand that eating healthy is very important they should also understand the importance of being active. Being active helps improve overall health, including reducing the risk of developing diseases, have lower blood pressure, stronger bones and feel better with more energy, better mood and being able to sleep better. These are all important aspects children should know when they are being active. They are all positive aspects. Physical activity allows children to have weight management, enjoyment, social interaction, and other benefits.

Changing the future of youth sports is important to keep children involved in sports. As moving forward in the sports atmosphere parents need to have more knowledge about the environment that surrounds their young athlete. There are many more positive influences in sports than there are negative. Society can help with providing more of the knowledge parents need. Society needs to have trained coaches for the youth to ensure that children understand every aspect of the sport they are playing. Understanding the enforcement of sports safety is key for society to provide safety on fields and courts that children will be playing on. Rules and regulations guided by science should be made very clear for parents to see how important knowledge is when it comes to children in sports. As these are understood to the best of their knowledge we tend to eliminate a lot of the negative sports have. Along with providing education for coaches

about safety for the children and safe facilities and fields; improved policies and procedures that are needed to participate in youth sports should also be provided.

As society always has room for improvement when it comes to the youth in sports, the parents have to always stay positive for their child. Parents have to have positive, appropriate praise and be sure to always put emphasis more on fun than on winning and performance; children look up to their parents. By staying positive, they may tend to keep more children involved in sports. Parents have to help children focus on goals of skill acquisition instead of always sharing negatively. Children always look for positive reinforcement before, during and after games and practice, which is why parents need to understand that it's very important to stay positive. Parents sometimes forget about always promoting sportsmanship, punctuality, and preparedness for children in sports. They tend to always look at everything the child did wrong, instead of sharing ways to help improve their skill work. Parents need to be educated on how to keep their child involved in sports since it's a way to live a healthy lifestyle. By keeping parents educated we set so many children up for success in sports. A healthy environment is important for children as they grow up because we are encouraging more children to be active and healthy. “ School[s] and community sports programs have the potential to help youth establish lifelong, healthy, physical activity patterns” (Russell 908). Organizations are being created to help parents know the importance of keeping their children active.

There's an organization called Project Play where it collects and distributes data on the youth in sports and physical activity to help parents learn the importance of children in sports. According to their organization children in sports is decreasing, which isn't

good. According to Project Play: “ 37% of children ages 6-12 played sports regularly in the year 2017, which is a very low number considering the number of children in the world”. Project Play was created to show America that there is a health concern in the youth. Many children aren't playing sports because parents rather give them electronics than teach them sports. The goal of Project Play is to show parents all the great benefits children receive from playing sports. The benefits children receive from playing sports are only available to them if they play sports. Project Play is such an amazing organization for parents to be educated on their child's physical activity. “ The program provides a venue for thought leadership where knowledge can be deepened and breakthrough strategies explored on a range of issues”(Project Play). This organization is an organization that is constantly improving their statistics on children in sports to show that they are aware of the negative and positive aspects of sports. They thrive on all the positive aspects sports give children and they thrive on seeing percentages go up in the involvement of children that are participating in sports. The goal is to have as many children as possible out there to play sports! All the negative aspects of sports are issues that can be resolved by having knowledge. Knowledge is power and without it, there is clearly no common sense. Children should be around positive atmospheres at all times. To fully protect the youth in sports, Project Play must continue to spread the positivity sports give children.

Sports participation in the youth has been known for providing a prosocial environment fostering basic values for children. Giving them the confidence they need to socialize and make friends with their teammates. Sports enhance social skills for children because of all the confidence they gain by playing sports. Along with improving positive

social behaviors, athletes should always make a good appearance. Athletes are known for being leaders, which is why good behavior is important for them to understand. One of the most important aspects children learn from sports is goal setting. Goal setting is something that will forever be involved in your life at any given time and age. There are unlimited amounts of goals you will want to conquer in your life and learning the meaning of setting goals at a young age is very important. Setting goals is an important aspect of a child's life. They can learn that they are able to achieve these goals they set by believing in themselves. Children tend to believe in themselves when they have teammates that support them and believe in each other. This shows how important a healthy environment is for a child to succeed.

There is a lot of success in sports that start with youth sports. In today's world, we are overpopulated by sports. Sports are constantly talked about on TV, social media and in the newspaper. Sports do play a huge role in society because they bring people together. People make careers out of sports. Famous athletes are often role models for the youth. Many young children who are involved in sports often enjoy wearing their favorite athletes' jersey and often aspire to be like that athlete. These are such inspirational things in sports when children have dreams. Society has to keep children's dreams alive by keeping positivity in sports. Children are able to make dreams and have inspiration in sports by watching all the famous athletes out there. Careers are made out of sports in today's society showing us how important sports can be in a child's life. Some careers include being a pro athlete, a coach, umpire or a referee; causing you to be active. Since careers are made out of sports this shows us that if our youth can make careers in sports it can help ensure that they will have an active and healthy lifestyle, and also make a living

out of it. This is something society should keep in mind when raising children around sports. There are so many doors that can open if a child stays involved in sports. Besides being healthy, children are able to be involved in travel teams that travel all around the states. You experience so many different things by being dedicated to sports.

One important aspect that has opened many doors for children is in today's society many children that remain involved in sports are often to go to college for free. From personal experience I have witnessed many scholarships be handed out to high schoolers. I myself have received a scholarship for softball. This is one of the many important opportunities sports have. By not participating in the youth sports, children may miss out on getting a partial or full scholarship to college or even making a career out of playing a sport. This is showing that you can receive benefits by playing sports. These benefits are you do not get stuck with a student loan or you are able to make playing sports your career. Knowledge is key to the success and up rise of youth sports, which is why society has to do everything to keep children involved.

Based on my experience as an athlete, I was fortunate to receive all these positive benefits sports offer because my parents were very knowledgeable about sports since they were athletes themselves. I truly believe that sports have set such a huge foundation in myself by giving me great confidence to understand the meaning of pursuing something I want. My parents in a very healthy environment, which just kept growing my confidence, supported me. I learned the meaning of dedication and turned the aspect of dedication into getting a scholarship to play softball in college. As I played at the highest level in sports I could, I feel that I can achieve anything I want in life. I believe in that because I was molded to know what dedication is through sports. I have gained such great

resources from sports, starting with my health and ending with all the roles sports gave me. Sports label you as a leader because it molds you to learn the aspect of leadership. My life is a proven example that children should be involved in sports and should always be supported in a positive environment to succeed.

As discussed, knowledge is key for parents when it comes to children in sports. Parents need to have knowledge on what their child's motor skills and environment. Sadly this topic is overlooked in our current society. This is a very alarming topic with the high percentage of children that aren't involved in sports due to lack of knowledge society has on children in sports. Children are being set up for failure when they are forced into competitive sports too soon, causing them to have no self-esteem, making it very easy for children to quit right away. If anyone was set up for failure right away the odds of him or her quitting right away is very likely. Having the youth constantly involved in physical activity is very important not just for their current lifestyle but also for when they are adults. As children play sports it doesn't only keep them healthy as kids but it also gives them a healthier lifestyle when they become an adult.

As discussed, The Project Play Organization is an awesome starting point to find a solution to keeping the youth involved in sports for a long time. As I support the Project Play Organization with constantly doing research on how many children are involved in sports, I believe that there will be a turn around for the youth with improved health and a healthy environment.

I hope children receive all the benefits I know I have as an athlete. I've been involved in sports as long as I can remember and it molded me into the confident and determined young woman I am. Many other children out there can look back and say the

same thing if we support them the right way. I believe it is important that this goal is reached for the benefit of the physical and mental health of the youth.

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