

Development of a Sport and Life Skill Curriculum for Pre-Adolescent Girls

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Overview of the Problem

The current problem consists of women growing up with little encouragement, stability, and/or support to participate in physical activity. Because of the many stigmas associated with sports or physical activity participation in women, particularly once puberty begins, we see many girls drop out of sports and/or physical activity. Society has placed many pressures on women to be “perfect” and with the implementation of social media at younger ages, this pressure falls onto younger girls. It is often that girls feel embarrassed for biological aspects of sport participation such as sweating or developing a certain physique due to the nature of the sport they play. And other times, many women are simply unsupported and lose interest because they feel less important, or do not have the knowledge and skills to comfortably engage in sport and/or physical activity. Lack of early exposure to sport can have long term impacts on life skill development, self-esteem, body image, and overall health.

This research project is designed to develop a curriculum to use sport as a vehicle for life skill, self esteem, body positivity, and sport knowledge in pre-adolescent girls. Two curricula have been developed, one to train camp counselors how to effectively teach and support these skills, and another focused on the actual sport camp structure.

By creating a safe and encouraging environment for pre-adolescent girls to learn the values and life skills that sport and physical activity can offer them, they will hopefully be better prepared to conquer whatever it is they want to in life without the influence of other individuals’ opinions.

Review of Literature

Sport has been demonstrated as an effective vehicle for developing life skills and positive youth development (Quinn, 1999). However, specific environments need to be created in order to develop these skills, with a clear and intentional focus on life skill development and transfer. Research also shows that coaches or adults in sport environments need to be educated in how to teach these skills (Flett, Gould, Griffes, & Lauer 2013). This is specifically important for young girls, who are often not exposed to sport or physical activity at a young age. This can lead to lack of confidence in athletic abilities as they get older, as well as future risks of health concerns such as obesity (Weiss, Kipp, Reichter & Bolter, 2020). Beyond just designing the curriculum, it is important that we evaluate the outcomes to ensure we are meeting the needs of the participants, and they are able to take these life skills and apply them to their daily life and future sport experience (Bean, Kendellen, Halsal, Forneris, 2015).

Goals / Objectives

1. Design a sport curriculum that connects life skills and sport skills in order to help pre-adolescent girls develop sport knowledge.
2. Use sport as a vehicle for development, to increase life skills, self-esteem, and positive body image.
3. Design a curriculum for teaching camp counselors how to effectively develop life skills in the lives of the campers.
4. Teach camp counselors the value of life skills in their own lives.

References

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Sport Development Curriculum Sample: Soccer

Key Terms Goal Shot Pass Header Throw in Punt Corner Kick Free Kick Goal Kick Defender Midfielder Attack / Striker	Basic Skills Moderate level of fitness Running & sprinting Basic footwork Kicking Defending Basic knowledge of rules Listening/Focus skills Ability to work with a group Over-head throwing
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Sample Drill

Name: Passing Development

Life skill: Accountability

Purpose: Allow participants to become comfortable receiving an incoming pass and passing to teammates. Allow participants to practice different variations of trapping the ball

Description: Participants will pair up. Two markers will be placed 15 feet apart and another two markers will be place 5 feet behind each previously placed marker (one behind each). Participants will start at the nearest marker, make a pass, back pedal or shuffle to marker behind of them, receive the incoming pass and then make a different variation of pass which was demonstrated to them prior to executing the drill. The overall goal is to make good passes (regardless of time). Teams should will be responsible for making 10 accurate passes and traps before moving on to the next station or drill.

Potential Skill Outcomes: Sharpening technique of different forms of passing, ball control, tempering passes/kicks, communication, eye-to-foot coordination, increased overall comfort on and off ball.

Implementation of Life Skill: Due to the nature of this drill, campers will be holding each other accountable for their passing and trapping skills. Because they cannot move on until they complete 10 successful traps and passes in a row, it will encourage them to focus on each others' abilities and how to work together to get to 10.

Life Skill Curriculum Example: Accountability

Key Terms
Responsibility
Teamwork
Honesty
Reliability
Self-Awareness

Why is this Skill Important:

Accountability is an important skill because it helps build responsibility. It also ensures that people do what they say they are going to do, or what they need to do in order to accomplish a goal, whether large or small. This requires participants to acknowledge their role in successes or challenges and take ownership of the outcome of their actions.

Without Accountability:

If individuals are not held accountable by themselves or others, there would be little progress in many areas such as sports teams, education, workplaces, as well as professional and personal relationships. This may cause an individual to blame outside factors for problems which in turn can break down communication and overall function of the team.

Examples in Sport:

An example of being held accountable in sport is saying that you are going to improve your foul shot percentage in a given year, then putting up extra foul shots every day after practice (keeping track of how many you make/miss) until you show improvement. This enforces the idea that if an individual holds themselves accountable by putting in the time to work on their skills/performance, they will likely not blame outside factors for their progress or lack there of.

Examples in School

An example of being held accountable in school is when you want a good grade on a test, but you are really struggling in the class. You can hold yourself accountable for studying by creating a schedule of times/days you are going to study. When you study during that allotted time, you can check it off. Understanding that the outcomes are a result of your own actions rather than blaming outside sources is key.

Examples with Friends

An example of accountability in a friendship could be when an individual says they are going to go to their friend’s birthday party and then they go. They are doing what they they are going to do, and therefore holding themselves accountable. Conversely, if they did not attend, the friend that had the party may hold them accountable by asking why they did not come instead of letting it go or ignoring their friend.

Counselor Training: Initial Session

What are Life Skills and Why Sports?

- Qualities, characteristics or behaviors that allow for more successful interactions with others
- Making the most out of your life
- Transferability from sport into other aspects of life: school, friends, family, work
- Socialization and experiences/opportunities in sport that are different than classroom education

Developmentally Appropriate Support:

- Recognize the variety of physical abilities in the campers and be considerate of these differences. We may need to adjust drills based on athletic ability and previous experiences
- Importance of building lifelong love for physical activity: need to focus on development as opposed to competition so participants don’t lose interest.
- Self Determination Theory: Competence, autonomy and relatedness. This is the core of what we are creating
- Recognize the difference not only in skill but sport knowledge

Teachable Moments:

- Pausing a game or drill to explain why something happened or SHOULD have happened is very important, to show campers the real-world hands-on examples of the application of life skills.
- Avoid calling someone out or embarrassing someone for making a mistake, discuss as a group what other options are available, and how those options may have changed the outcome of a situation
- While learning the sport skills are important, we want to make sure the athletes are having fun and developing life skills, so stopping a game or drill is the right call anytime you can.
- Highlight good choices as well as poor choices in the teachable moments.

Modeling and Feedback:

- Corrective feedback and watching someone else perform a skill is the most effective form of teaching.
- Attention and retention
- Verbal feedback through key words
- Part vs Whole Instruction
- Simple to complex skill development

Strategies for Enhancing Character Development

- Define good sporting behavior in the program
- Reinforce and encourage good sporting behavior
- Model appropriate behaviors
- Explain why certain behaviors are appropriate
- Discuss moral dilemmas and choices
- Build moral dilemmas and choices into practice
- Teach cooperative learning strategies
- Create a task-orientated motivational climate and use autonomy-supportive instruction

Sample Counselor Curriculum: Communication

Definitions

Two-Way process of sending and receiving messages

Interpersonal: communication with others

Intrapersonal: communication with self

Encoding and decoding: deciding to send a message, send the message, listener receives the message, listener interprets the message

Two-Way process of sending and receiving messages

Sub-Themes

Verbal and nonverbal communication – impact of both

Active listening

Clarity of messaging – consistent language, pace of speaking, developmental ability of listener

Supportive listening

Empathy

Role Playing Practice Scenarios

How to Model Effective Communication

Physical communication – eye contact, get on their level, head nodding when listening

Instructional and motivational feedback

Feedback sandwiches – highlight successes and improvement when providing instructional feedback

Highlight and point out examples of yourself using good communication when talking to athletes

Feedback / Questions to Ask Campers

Highlight successes as well as opportunities for improvement / to learn from

If there is a miscommunication, ask what was HEARD vs what was SAID

Question: Are there other ways to share your message?

Question: How did you let the person know with nonverbals what you needed?

Expected Outcomes

Increase in campers’ understanding and use of life skills

Increase in campers’ self esteem

Increase in counselors’ confidence and ability to identify life skills

Increase in counselors’ ability to teach life skills