



GOOD SPORT: HEALTH BENEFITS OF RECREATIONAL TEAM SPORTS

by Kulaa Bacheyie, MS, CSCS

Every generation wants to provide a better way of life for their children. With this innate desire to make life more convenient and comfortable, technology has in some ways negatively affected our health. Amazingly, even with advancements in healthcare technology, our health as a whole has been dangerously declining.

Parents are fighting a losing battle with video games, cell phones and tablets, which are distracting our youth from a more active lifestyle: the lifestyle we once had as kids when we had the luxury of playing outdoors with our friends in neighborhoods and foliage. It was a lifestyle where we used our imaginations and minds to create, play and socialize with our peers. Children learn best through play. Sports were created for our recreation and enjoyment. This article looks at how team sports can help kids live a healthy lifestyle despite an environment that is leading kids to a life of obesity and inactivity.

THE ROLE SPORTS CAN PLAY LATER IN LIFE

Our children spend most of their days in school where they are taught mainly to learn and study individually, but when our kids eventually graduate college and hit the work force, they need to learn to work as a team. Team sports and athletics are a great way for kids to learn the social skills to work along others with the same goal in mind. Sport is a great metaphor for life; it teaches us how to handle life's ups



and downs, politics and wins and losses. Despite all these dynamics, we have to learn to work together, each having our different roles on the team. Socially, sports are a great introduction for kids into play. Kids enjoy play best with others. It is very important early-on that children associate exercise with fun. Exercise is uncomfortable, so it is very important that both parents and kids find activities they enjoy doing. This will better ensure that our children will adopt a healthier lifestyle doing activities they love.

TEAM SPORTS & INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

TEAM SPORTS

Generally, team sports are a great introduction for kids into activity. Team sports are an excellent way for your child to make new friends and learn to work with others. The following team sports are great for kids who want to play on a team:

- **BASEBALL**
- **FOOTBALL**
- **HOCKEY**
- **BASKETBALL**
- **SOCCER**



INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

If a team sport is not the best fit for your child, an individual sport may be to their liking or benefit. Individual sports can help with independent and focused thinking. The following Individual sports are great for kids who do better on their own:

- **TENNIS**
- **GYMNASTIC**
- **DANCE**
- **GOLF**
- **SWIMMING**



Overall, an athletic experience that involves participation in both team and individual sports is best in developing athleticism, character and competition. Finding the balance between behavior that benefits both the team and individual is an important skill set that kids learn best through sports that involve both dynamics. A sport like baseball is the perfect union of individual performances like hitting and pitching but team dynamic of still working together to get an out or a score.

A SPORT LIKE BASEBALL IS THE PERFECT UNION OF INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES LIKE HITTING AND PITCHING BUT TEAM DYNAMIC OF STILL WORKING TOGETHER TO GET AN OUT OR A SCORE.

COMPETITION & MULTI-SPORT PARTICIPATION

It's important for kids to be competitive. We live in a competitive culture where the strongest survive. The success of the better athletes can cause the less athletic kids to be discouraged or left out. It is important to teach our youth joy in participating in forms of exercise that isn't competition and sports-based. The following are examples:

- **ZUMBA**
- **YOGA**
- **WEIGHT TRAINING**
- **RUNNING**
- **MARTIAL ARTS**





These activities are proficiency or effort based. Success is found in execution and technique, as opposed to winning and ability. It is important for parents and children to feel rewarded and overjoyed in giving their best. Our society praises the winners despite their path to victory, whereas more emphasis needs to be acknowledged to those individuals who do their best to be a winner.

Healthy development of our children is a holistic approach; it involves both their mind and body. Variety is the spice of life! Allowing our children to experience a variety of exercise options is best at developing athleticism and their search for activities they enjoy sweating out. Making kids a one-sport athlete actually hurts them athletically and could burn them out. Participating in multiple sports and activities helps build strength and coordination of the entire muscular system. It also helps kids while they grow to adapt better to their ever-growing bodies. Partaking in multiple sports mentally helps keep children engaged and excited for the new challenges each sport or activity brings.

PARTAKING IN MULTIPLE SPORTS MENTALLY HELPS KEEP CHILDREN ENGAGED AND EXCITED FOR THE NEW CHALLENGES EACH SPORT OR ACTIVITY BRINGS.

Give our children the opportunity to try new things. Sometimes you don't know what you like until you try it. Many fitness options help teach our youth how to challenge both their body and minds, which is key to improving one's health.

DANGERS OF TOO MUCH TECHNOLOGY

In my experience training all demographics, I am finding a growing epidemic associated to our new technology-based society. We have too many gadgets that force us into a forward, usually slouched position with hands on something. This position puts stress on the spine and negatively affects posture. Also, since we all sit too much, our buttocks have become weaker and less responsive. It is imperative that we instill healthy lifestyle habits like exercise, nutrition and sleep quality to our youth.

“According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, in 2012, more than one third of children and adolescents were affected by excess weight or obesity.”

Due to our participation of youth in team and individual sports, most adolescents stay particularly active. Once they hit teenage years, participation in recreational activities decrease due to competition in team sports at the high school level. These once active adolescents become less active, especially the females once they attend high school. This is why it is so important for our youth to enjoy non sport-based physical activity options. Most children only learn through experiencing many fitness options.

Parents, coaches and teachers all play roles in influencing our youth to healthy lifestyle habits. The confidence instilled through physical fitness is effective to our social media-influenced youth. The mind and body relationship is so strong that when children participate in physical activities, it builds strength and endurance. Kids will naturally think more confidently since they physically feel so strong. This positive way of thinking helps kids socially and academically. The best way to teach our kids how to incorporate fitness into their lifestyle is for them to learn by the examples we set as adults. Kids learn best from doing. Your children will more easily adopt the importance and enjoyment of fitness by viewing our fitness. Also, participating in activities that can be enjoyed by the entire family reinforces importance and improves family unity.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the real competition lies between technology versus activity. If the advancements in technology and healthcare can be teamed up with the ever-growing science of exercise, what true reform and actual healthcare our nation would receive, instead of our current crisis care system. It is vital that we take the physical toll our new technological age is taking on our minds and bodies seriously. We now think less and move less. Sports are a great avenue to develop kids physically and socially, and to instill healthy lifestyle habits they can carry on into adulthood.

About the Author:

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ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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