

Children, Sports or No Sports?

Sports do not just deal with getting the ball in the net, or running the ball into the end zone, or even hitting the ball in the hole. Sports go much deeper both physically and mentally, and can play a large part in many children's lives, but how does this affect them? There are many positive and negative aspects of children being involved in sports. I believe that sports play a positive role in many children's lives, children can gain the important skills that are useful in any relationship (Dr. Bolter). Despite my view others believe it can hinder them both physically and mentally. This commonly disputed issue will never truly be solved because it depends on each individual child, how they react, how athletic they are, and how well they learn.

In some ways, sports can have a negative effect on children. Only a certain number of children get to participate in sports, and some get turned away and are discouraged at a young age before they ever reach their potential. This leaves many children devastated and with a ruined self-esteem. This can affect them all through life thinking that they are not good enough (Statsky, Jessica). Sometimes too much pressure gets put on children in sports. This can lead to children using steroids or other drugs in order to make them more competitive in sports (Bell. *Bigger, Stronger, Faster*). But is that what life is really about? Gymnastics is known to be one of the most detrimental sports for girls. Girls are greatly affected by gymnastics because it requires such a little weight, that it even turns some gymnasts to anorexia. Gymnastics is also known for having more injuries than any other sports. The competition level in gymnastics is found to be higher than any other sport, so it requires more out of children. Another sport that is harmful (mainly for boys) is boxing; it is the only sport where the full intention is to harm your opponent. The sport found to cause the most injuries is soccer; it puts a strain on many ankles and legs (Dr. Bolter). Sports not only cause injuries, but they tend to take up time, something that many people do not have to spare. So, this could take away from children's studies, and take the

emphasis away from education and learning. Parents are another reason why children should not play sports. Parents get too involved and often cannot control themselves. This hinders the parent/ child relationship outside of the sport, that can lead to expectations not met, disappointment, failure, and occasionally even broken relationships (Statsky, Jessica). Another reason that children should not waste their time on sports is because of the unlikelihood of making it to the top. Less than one percent of athletes go professional, which crushes the dreams of the millions that did not make it. To make it to the pros and be successful it is found that you need to work ten thousand hours over a ten year period. That is a lot of work, especially if you are not assured to make it. You not only have to work really hard, but you also have to have the genetic gift for that sport in order to make it big (Dr. Bolter). It is found that children have other options when trying to develop the three c's: cooperation, communication, and compromise. They can turn to different club groups or even girl scouts and boy scouts (Dr. Bolter). Exposing young children to sports is like showing them the competitive capitalist society that we live in too early. They are going to have to grow up and work in it, so why should we expose them to the competition earlier than they have to be?

Conversely, sports are beneficial for children and teach them lifelong skills. Children need to be exposed to sports around the age of five. This is the beginning of the interpersonal juvenile age where it is important for children to learn three skills. The three main skills that are taught in sports are "the three c's," cooperation, competition, and compromise. Without a good grasp of all three of these skills it is hard to get by in any relationship, let alone have a healthy one (Dr. Bolter). Many lasting friendships begin in sports, because it is a common way to meet people. Whether it is cheering or playing for a team, it can bring people of all walks of life with different backgrounds onto one field with the same goal. Children begin to learn many things about themselves and how they operate when playing sports. It truly begins to point out different strengths and weaknesses of the personality, this helps in learning who they are. Sports encourage a healthy lifestyle with physical activity (Dr. Bolter). This helps

kids stay in shape and not fall into the percentage of overweight children in America. Sports are also helpful because they keep children busy, this can help to keep them out of trouble. Dr. Bolter emphasized the positive effect of team sports on teenage pregnancy. He said that girls involved in team sports were found much less likely to get pregnant. Most sports that children play are not dangerous. Our bodies were made to heal themselves and most injuries that occur are not beyond natural repair by the body (Dr. Bolter). A healthy parent child relationship can come from sports. If the parents support their children and do not force them into a sport, (to live out their childhood sports dreams,) then children respond positively. This makes for a relationship that involves healthy communication.

There are many negative and positive effects of children being involved in sports, and it varies from child to child. With all sides and information taken into account I deem sports a positive outlet in life for children. I believe it has many things to offer children, at such a crucial growing stage and truly helps them develop. The arguments against sports come from extreme circumstances, where sports are viewed as more than just an activity. When sports begin to takeover a child's life and become what the child is defined by. Now that is not good. When a sport is treated as an activity it is very healthy for children to be involved in. You decide.....where do you stand?