

Youth Sport Participation

Annually, more than 40 million youths participate within the basic fundamentals of physical activity.

A child's initial view and experiences gained within sport will adhere to the stability of maintaining a developing a healthy lifestyle, including a healthy mindset.

The Importance of Sport Participation include:

- Maintaining a high level of Cardiorespiratory fitness
- Controlling weight
- Building strong muscles and bones
- Reducing the risk of developing further
- Reducing symptoms of Anxiety and Depression

Participation Decline

Research has shown that a decrease of up to 30% of youths drop out of physical activity before the age of 15.

In 2018, 68% of youths aged 2-15 years in Scotland participated in sport, which followed a decline from 73% in 2010.

Currently participation in sport peaks between the ages of 8-10 years at 81% participation. Then declining to just 60% of 13-15 year olds. There is also a decline in gender participation with 74% of 11-15 year olds boys participating in comparison to 58 % of girls.

Factors Effecting Youth Participation

A leading factor currently present within the lack of participation in youth sport is the continuous negative factors presented by an individuals parents or carers, which therefore lead them to quit sport entirely.

Further, families with a lack in social status effects participation due to an inability to **support, encourage** and **fund** their childs participation and allow the child to develop to their highest level.

Most recently youth participation has witnessed a decrease due to lack of fun and willingness to participate in strict, competitive sport.

“39% of Boys and 38% of Girls drop out of Athletics before a Competitive Stage due to lack of FUN!”

Further stated that strict guidelines and rules, alongside immense pressure and strict practice routines took the fun away from the participation.

Youths also stated that they feel mentally challenged when taking part in sport due to:

- Lack of Social Support
- Inclusion
- Motivation

The Effects of Youth Drop-Out in Athletics



Parents Guide to Retaining Youth Participation

The 'Importance' of Success and Competition

Within the sport of athletics, youths are required to compete in all events; Run, Jump and Throw, until specialising in one main event come the mature age. Through research has highlighted that parents are more prone to place **pressure** on their child to specialise and develop earlier to encourage success in competition.

“Success and Winning are the main factors that encourage children to participate within sport”

As a parent you should encourage your child to develop and continue to explore sport until the age of at least 13 years old. The increase in practice and pressure placed on an athlete of a young age will increase the risk of **Injury** caused by **Burnout** or **Overuse**.

Not only does pressure effect an athlete physically but also effects their mental health. Parents are often very forceful of their childs competition level, and believe they own the right to make decisions and act as a voice of opinion for their child which provides the athlete with a series of detrimental acts including:

- Lack of power
- Lack of ownership
- Lack of willingness

Coping Strategies

As a parent it is extremely important to encourage and support your child to their full capabilities. The main cause of youth drop out can be placed on both physical and mental pressure. These traits are established through pressures of taking part and competing, success and belonging within a sport. The pressures witheld within sport participation can be reduced through a sense of support and a figure of identity in which a parent can withhold.

It is stated that three main factors can play a huge part in maintaing and developing youth participation within athletics. These factors include:

- Participation balance and structure
- Personal development
- Performance outcomes

The three factors set together will create a healthy balance of focus and fun within youth sport and should be encouraged to support a healthy lifestyle.

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Seeking Support and Information

If a child is believed to have become withdrawn from participation it is important to encourage and provide social support to the athlete. As a parent you are one of the most comfortable, stable figures a child will have in their life, and will most likely discuss queries and worries with you. As a parent you should ensure you communicate with coaches to acknowledge your childs progress in participation. You can also encourage your child through researching and understanding the sports transition, general information and rules to provide reassurance.

As a lot of anxiety and stress developed within athletes is caused through and increase in pressure they feel to perform, as a parent you must encourage reflective practice where both you and your child reflect upon the issues that may affect you and provide a sense of self-awareness to regain control over the situation.

It is important to talk to your child and share an understanding of their level within the sport. Providing suitable goals and encouragement will ensure a child is further motivated to develop towards set goals rather than an overwhelming focus on success in competition. Further, developing a healthy behaviour with competion and structure will encourage further participation

For further information on coping with both physical and mental pressure within competition, the charity Mind works to raise awareness of how mental health can effect sports performance and encourages social support.

<https://www.mind.org.uk>