

**INTERESTING LIFE LESSONS KIDS LEARN PLAYING SPORTS**

**Parents often encourage children to get involved in a sport to keep them active and for the social interaction that it provides. They might not realize it, but playing sports also provides many important life lessons that can be useful to their children, even when they are grown up and on their own.**

#### **Sports Teaches Social Skills**

**A team sport puts children into the midst of a group where they can hone their**[**social skills**](https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/10/10/childrens-sportslife-balance/sports-teach-kids-valuable-lessons)**by observing how others use theirs. This offers a wealth of experience to help them learn the best ways to interact with others.**

#### **Sports Fosters Cooperation**

**On a team, everyone has a part to play to achieve success. You must learn to follow the plan and perform what’s expected of you. You learn to help others, and others help you. When your team is depending on you, you can’t “not feel like” participating. This forms the basis of good relations.**

#### **Sports Gives Children a Community**

**Being a part of a team gives kids a sense of belonging, a feeling there are others they can depend on and who depend on them. This feeling of being a part of a community helps to strengthen self-image and provides a support group for other areas of life.**

#### **Sports Teaches Resilience**

**An individual’s sports performance isn’t the same from day to day. Sometimes, you hit the target like a pro. On other occasions, you can’t get a win no matter how hard you try. These ups and downs teach kids that no one is perfect all the time and how to**[**improve their performance**](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS_Report_OnePager_2020-08-31_web.pdf)**. This is an important life lesson.**

#### **Sports Teaches Kids How to Lead and How to Follow**

**Being involved in a sport teaches children how to follow the directions of their leader and how to lead others. These skills will be important to their life and work in adulthood.**

#### **Sports Improve Body Image**

**Broadly, playing sports gives children the exercise necessary to make their bodies stronger and improve their**[**health**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4856309/)**. It also provides them with information about where and how to improve more specific areas, such as strength, control, and accuracy. With this information, they can set more targeted goals and achieve better physical condition and performance.**

#### **Sports Helps With Mood Regulation**

**Playing sports isn’t just fun; it can help prevent depression. Physical exertion releases endorphins—feel-good chemicals—in the brain. So does the camaraderie of being part of a team.**

**For example, a problem shared is a problem halved. Being part of a group helps mitigate the pain of a loss. At the same time, you shouldn't take your disappointment out on teammates. You learn to**[**modulate your moods**](https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2019/08/12/research-team-sports-improve-kids-mental-health/)**to accomplish the group’s goals.**

**Just as commiserating can make you feel less bad, sharing the exhilaration of a win can make you feel better than a solitary unshared victory; you pump each other up.**

#### **Sports Teaches It’s Okay To Make Mistakes**

**No matter how good you or your team are, mistakes happen. Being part of a supportive team helps you quickly learn to pull yourself together, forgive yourself, learn from your mistakes, and bounce back.**

**Engaging in a sport isn’t just about having fun. The many challenges it offers allow young people to explore their emotions and insecurities, improve their self-confidence, and enhance their mental health. These healthy coping skills may prevent resort to dangerous ones such as**[**alcohol abuse or drug abuse**](https://www.sunshinebehavioralhealth.com/california/huntington-beach/holistic-rehab/)**.**

[**PHIT America**](https://phitamerica.org/)**, the national charity who is helping improve the physical and mental health of children through physical activity programs, is introducing kids to sports in their 3 in-school programs - AMPED, PLAY TENNIS and PLAY GOLF.  Learn about these programs at**[**Programs.PHITAmerica.org**](https://phitamerica.org/key-programs/)**.**

##### **Sources**

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* [**ncbi.com**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4856309/)**- Sports and Child Development**
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