Getting Kids to Try Out Sports

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While some families have no trouble getting their kids to try out sports, other families struggle selling the value of youth sports to their kids, and consequently end up missing out on many invaluable life experiences. Youth sports, under proper guidance, can be wonderful experience for kids allowing for many "teachable moments," life skills development, and perhaps most important – fun!!

For most kids who chose not to play sports there are a couple big reasons why they feel this way. First, if mom and dad do not find value in youth sports, it's unlikely their kids will, either. Second, many kids feel as though they do not have the athletic skill set needed to compete, leaving them with the mindset of "why even try?" Third, some kids feel as though youth sports are too dangerous, and the fear of getting hurt prevents them from trying out for a team. And finally, some kids are just shy and signing up for a team may seem a little too daunting.

If you are experiencing any of the aforementioned symptoms of why your child is not involved in youth sports, please consider the following:

- When mom and dad do not find value in youth sports, it's usually because a) they did not play themselves, or b) they have been bombarded over the years with countless stories of anger and aggression at youth sporting events. The truth is that even if mom and dad did not play themselves, it is never too late to become a parent of a youth sport participant! You can learn as you go, and you will likely find many other parents in the same position. And as far as the ugly incidents at youth sporting events, while they do occasionally occur, the vast majority of time youth sporting events go very smoothly and without problems.

- Some kids feel as though they do not have the skills needed to compete, and therefore choose not to go out for a team. If this is your child, be sure to immediately dismiss this myth! The truth is most kids are generally around the same talent level early on (before age 10), and the differences in talent are usually in their heads only (meaning they think there are big differences when really there are not). Teach your child the value of hard work and perseverance and before you know it your child may even exceed the talent level of his or her teammates!

- As far as danger in youth sports goes, while there certainly are potentially dangerous situations to be aware of, the reality is that with today's training procedures and equipment kids are safer playing sports than ever before. The key is to help your child stay focused while playing, as most kids who get hurt usually have an accident occur due to not paying attention rather than the sheer danger of playing youth sports.

- Playing sports can be a great way for a child to come out of his shell! In fact, many adults claim that playing sports and making friends with teammates helped them become less introverted and more affable when around people. With everyone pulling for you to help the team, this is a great way for kids to develop much-needed people skills for success in sports, school, and life!

Dr. Chris Stankovich, known as "The Sports Doc" for his segment on Ohio News Network and featured column in Columbus Parent magazine, is a national expert in the field of sport psychology and offers an entire line of peak performance educational training products for student athletes, coaches, and parents. Please visit www.drstankovich.com to learn more.

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