

Positive Mental Health

Sport can contribute positively to the Age-Grade Player's mental health, helping them to feel good about themselves and cope with everyday pressures in their lives.

Sport can make a positive contribution if the Age-Grade Player's experience of sport reflects sport's positive values, such as fun, inclusion and fair play. However research has shown that when contested in a harmful environment sport can negatively impact on a child's life. NSPCC research stated 10% of young people involved in sport had self-harmed, highlighting the need for sports organisations to safeguard an athlete's health and well-being.



Sports Leaders can help Age-Grade Players by encouraging them

- to have control over their emotions and their behaviour both on and off the pitch
- to be aware of their thoughts and feelings towards themselves and others
- to manage their thoughts and feelings rather than becoming overwhelmed.

How can your club support the player's good mental health?

One in four will experience a mental illness at some point and poor mental health can lead to self-harm or suicide. Sport can make a positive contribution to a person's physical and mental well-being if conducted in a fun, inclusive environment.

According to Positive Coaching Alliance in the US 20-30 million children play sport annually but 70% drop out by the age of 13 (Michigan State University's Institute for the Study of Youth Sports). While there are many reasons, school, jobs, other interests, etc., the number one reason for quitting is that the experience is no longer fun; all the reasons have one common denominator in that sports cause young players to have a poor state of mind in relation to sport and physical activity.

The things that contribute to a positive state of mind for young athletes are respect and encouragement, which was listed as the number one characteristic of being a good coach in a George Washington study. Contrary to popular believe things that come low on a list of what children believe are fun in sport including 'winning', earning medals or trophies, getting pictures taken and practicing with speciality coaches.

Good advice in promoting fun and positive well-being is to ask age-grade players are they enjoying themselves. This is important irrespective of the age of the player or the level of competition; while the element of how they get their fun might change as the competition increases the players must still get a sense of confidence and self-esteem through their pursuit of the game.

Ensure players understand that their inclusion in physical activity can positively contribute to their mental.

As coaches / volunteers create an environment where individuals can ask for and find help if they come under stress or face a challenge that can't handle

Other useful inks include:

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2014/promoting-positive-mental-health-and-wellbeing-within-sport/>

<https://www.headstrong.ie/headstrong-support-advocacy/one-good-adult/>