

Why Kids Play Sports - And Why They Quit

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Over 35% of the millions of children who play youth sports quit after the first year of competition. 85% of the children who continue to play dropped out of organized sports all together between the ages of 10 and 17. Why are children quitting youth sports?

WHY KIDS PLAY SPORTS:

- To Have Fun
- To improve their skills
- To be with friends
- To do something they're good at
- For the excitement of competition
- To become physically fit
- To be part of a team
- For the challenge of competition
- To learn new skills
- To succeed or win

The number one reason children play youth sports is because they enjoy playing games that are fun. Parents and coaches should ask themselves, "Why are children involved in sports and are they having fun." Sparky Anderson, a former major league baseball manager, wrote, "We're asking kids to compete to win. Why not ask them to compete to have fun?" The primary goal of youth sports should not be to form a winning team. It should be to create an atmosphere that is fun, child-centered, and develops the skills of all the participants. Developing new skills motivates children or enhances previously learned ones. Furthermore, a child experiencing a positive performance or receiving constructive feedback will also lead to continued participation. If the child perceives the event to be positive, they will be motivated to try harder. Greater effort leads to advancements in skills. Everyone enjoys winning but most children focus more on performing the activity instead of who won or lost. Success should be measured in terms of personal growth and development not by who won the contest. The majority of children would rather play on a bad team than sit the bench for a good one. Winning and receiving awards are of secondary importance to children and should not be heavily emphasized. Children love to play and have fun and that is what youth sports should focus on.

WHY KIDS QUIT SPORTS :

- Overemphasis on winning
- Lost Interest
- Not having fun
- Time consuming
- Coach was a poor teacher
- Too much pressure
- Tired of playing
- Need more study time
- Coaches play favorites
- The Sport was boring

Over 35% of the millions of children who play youth sports quit after the first year of competition. 85% of the children who continue to play dropped out of organized sports all together between the ages of 10 and 17. Why are children quitting youth sports? The primary reason is that children are not having FUN. Additional causes for children to quit sports include an overemphasis on winning by the parents and/or the coaches. The coach or parent yelled at the child for making a mistake. The verbal abuse associated with winning at all costs caused feelings of self-doubt. The child perceived that his or her abilities were not good enough to play so they quit. This perceived lack of ability creates low intrinsic motivation within the child. Their competitive flame was extinguished and consequently the child began to use excuses for not wanting to play like: I lost interest, it's not fun anymore, it's too time consuming, or I'm tired of playing. Coaches and parents compound these problems by singling out players for excellent play with extrinsic rewards: most valuable player, all-star teams, best pitcher, etc. This degrades the average and below average players, plus adds competitive stress to the athlete who received the award. Children quit sports because winning is not everything to them, having fun is, and when the game is not fun, they lose interest. Getting children interested again after they quit can be very difficult.

PLAYER'S ROLE:

Players who quit sports would consider re-joining a team if the following were implemented:

GIRLS

- Practices were more fun
- There was no conflict with studies
- Coaches understood players better
- There was no conflict with social life
- I could play more
- Coaches were better teachers

BOYS

- Practices were more fun
- I could play more
- Coaches understood players better
- There was no conflict with studies
- Coaches were better teachers
- There was no conflict with social life

WHAT KIDS WANT FROM PARTICIAPTION:

- To have fun
- To learn new skills
- To be with friends and make new ones
- Excitement
- To succeed or win
- To exercise and become physically fit

It is important that athletes are comfortable in the activities that they participate in. Fear of failure or ridicule can destroy a child's self-esteem. By participating, players improve on previously learned skills or learn new ones that will enhance their self-satisfaction. Plus, the rush of adrenaline associated with competition can spark new emotions in a player thus elevating their performance to previously unknown levels. Being involved in youth sports can also be a great atmosphere to foster social interaction and to meet new friends. Sports participation allows for physical activity and exercise in a manner that players embrace rather than dread. All players should have the same rights when it comes to participation. These Bill of Rights are a listing of how players should be treated.

Player's Bill of Rights

1. The right to participate in sports regardless of ability level.
2. The right to participate at a level commensurate to a child's developmental level.
3. The right to have qualified adult leadership.
4. The right to participate in a safe and healthy environment.
5. The right for children to be leaders and decision makers.
6. The right to play as a child and not as an adult.
7. The right to proper preparation for participation in sports.
8. The right to equal opportunity to strive for success.
9. The right to be treated with dignity by all involved.
10. And, the right to have Fun.