



PCA'S APPROACH: A SELECTION OF FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

Category: Benefits of Youth Sports

- Participation in sports doesn't necessarily build character in youth, sports done right does.
 - Monacis, L., Estrada, O., Sinatra, M., Tanucci, G., & de Palo, V. (2013). Self-determined motivation, sportpersonship, and sport orientation: *A mediational analysis. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 89, 461–467. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.878>
- High-quality adult leadership in sports increases the physical, social, and psychological benefits for athletes.
 - Hedstrom, R., & Gould, D. (2004). *Research in youth sports: Critical issues status* (p. 43). East Lansing, MI: Institute for the Study of Youth Sports.

Category: Developing Youth Character, and Life/SEL Skills

Subcategory: Growth mindset is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance

- Athletes who have a growth mindset—who believe that their ability is due to practice and effort—improve in performance more than athletes who believe that their ability is fixed.
 - Dweck, C. S. (2009). Mindsets: Developing talent through a growth mindset. *Olympic Coach*, 21(1), 4–7.
- It is possible to teach youth to have a growth mindset. Youth who believe that they can learn and change are more resilient when facing challenges in life, from the classroom to the sports field.
 - Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2012.722805>
- Athletes coached in a “mastery” approach win more than those coached in a “scoreboard” approach.
 - Duda, Joan L. (2001). Achievement Goal Research in Sport: Pushing the Boundaries and Clarifying Some Misunderstandings. *Advances in Motivation in Sport and Exercise*, G. Roberts (Ed.), Human Kinetics.

Subcategory: Resilience is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance

- Being able to respond constructively to setbacks and failures improves athletic performance.
 - Galli, N., & Gonzalez, S. P. (2015). Psychological resilience in sport: A review of the literature and implications for research and practice. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 13(3), 243–257. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2014.946947>

- Resilience can be increased through high quality relationships (such as with coaches) and connections to positive organizations (such as sports clubs).
 - Masten, A. S., & Powell, J. L. (2003). A resilience framework for research, policy, and practice. In *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* (pp. 1–25). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Subcategory: Teamwork is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance

- Coaches play a critical role in developing a culture of teamwork among their athletes.
 - McLaren, C. D., Eys, M. A., & Murray, R. A. (2015). A coach-initiated motivational climate intervention and athletes' perceptions of group cohesion in youth sport. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 4(2), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000026>
- The teamwork and leadership skills athletes develop on the field transfer to other areas of their lives.
 - Holt, N. L., Tink, L. N., Mandigo, J. L., & Fox, K. R. (2008). Do youth learn life skills through their involvement in high school sport? A case study. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 31(2), 281–304. 3/26/2019

Category: How Coaches can Help Develop PYD in Youth by Intentionally Transferring Life Skills Through Sports

- Exceptional coaches promote positive youth development by providing opportunities to practice life skills (not just talk about them) and discussing how life skills learned through sports transfer to other areas of life.
 - Camiré, M., Forneris, T., Trudel, P., & Bernard, D. (2011). Strategies for helping coaches facilitate positive youth development through sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 2(2), 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520704.2011.584246> 3/26/2019
- Highly successful coaches integrate the development of life skills into their coaching; it's not something separate.
 - Gould, D., Collins, K., Lauer, L., & Chung, Y. (2007). Coaching life skills through football: A study of award winning high school coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 19, 16–37.

Category: What a PYD Culture/Environment Looks like in Youth Sports Organizations and School-Based Athletic Programs, and How to Develop It

- The primary conditions in a youth sports environment that lead to positive youth development (PYD) include 1) a PYD climate that is created, sustained, and supported by surrounding adults, and 2) intentional transfer of life skills by coaches and other adults.
 - Monacis, L., Estrada, O., Sinatra, M., Tanucci, G., & de Palo, V. (2013). Self-determined motivation, sportpersonship, and sport orientation: A mediational analysis. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 89, 461–467. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.878>

- Youth sports organizations that incorporate the five “C’s” of positive youth development—competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring—pave the way for a sixth “C”—contribution—as youth grow up into emotionally, intellectually, physically, psychologically, and socially healthy young adults who can foster positive youth development in the next generation.
 - Fraser-Thomas, J. L., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: An avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, 10(1), 19–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898042000334890>
- Programs are most successful in promoting positive youth development when they work with youth for an extended period of time, provide structure and consistency, promote healthy relationships, provide behavioral expectations, build self-efficacy, and strengthen behavioral, cognitive, emotional, moral, and social competencies.
 - Catalano, R. F., Berglund, M. L., Ryan, J. A. M., Lonczak, H. S., & Hawkins, J. D. (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591, 98–124.

Category: On-Going Research List by Topics

Subcategory: Impact of Trauma

- Perry, Bruce D., Winfrey, Oprah. (2021). What happened to you?: conversations on trauma, resilience, and healing: Flatiron Books.
- Creating Trauma-informed Sports Programming for Traumatized Youth: Core Principles for an Adjunctive Therapeutic Approach L.
 - [Bergholz](#), [Erin Stafford](#), [Wendy D’Andrea](#) Published 2 July 2016. *Psychology Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*
- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (n.d.). Toxic stress. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/key-concept/toxic-stress/>
- Ginwright, S. (2018, May 31). The future of healing: Shifting from trauma informed care to healing centered engagement. Medium. <https://ginwright.medium.com/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>

Subcategory: Mental Wellness

- Child Focus. (2023, October 16). The impact of positive relationships on mental health and well-being. <https://www.child-focus.org/news/the-impact-of-positive-relationships-on-mental-health-and-well-being/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2013–2023*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- National Health Service (NHS). (2023, April 11). Raising low self-esteem. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/raise-low-self-esteem/>
- The Growth Equation. (n.d.). The mental health benefits of mastery. <https://thegrowtheq.com/the-mental-health-benefits-of-mastery/>

Subcategory: Importance of Trusting Relationships

- Search Institute. (n.d.). *Developmental relationships framework*. <https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). Young children develop in an environment of relationships (Working Paper No. 1). Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/working-paper/wp1/>
- National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. (2019, March 8). Calls for coaches: Coaching social and emotional skills in youth sports. The Aspen Institute. <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/calls-for-coaches/>

Subcategory: Positive Sports Culture/Learning Environment

- Samuels, C. A. (2023, October 26). Children learn best when they feel safe and valued. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/children-learn-best-when-they-feel-safe-and-valued>
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. n.d. What Is the CASEL Framework? Accessed August 28, 2025. <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>
- Bean, C., & Kramers, S. (2022). How sports can prepare you for life. *Frontiers for Young Minds*, 10, Article 666078. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frym.2022.666078>