

PASSION AND PURPOSE

The New Paradigm for Exercising Our Kids

It seems that poor posture in our kids is becoming the universal norm. I see this as the new health plague that, along with obesity and teen diabetes, is sweeping the nation and our education system is not recognizing the enormity of the problem.

According to studies performed by the American Academy of Pediatricians, kids who exercise often have greater attention spans, faster cognitive processing speeds and better performance on tests than kids who are less active. The message here is clear: "move more not less."

Kids who are moving their body in multiple planes (i.e. in multiple ways) are often recognized as smarter and sharper! They look more confident, radiant, graceful and generally attractive to others. Another groundbreaking study on kids' physical development reveals that we should be getting our kids to do more resistance training from the age of 8 onwards.

Myth: Lifting weights does not stunt your growth.

Fact: Lifting weights increases bone density and reduces chronic pain later in life.

Orthopedic doctors know that a fit and healthy child must have strong bones for support and shock absorption. A child who doesn't move much has softer and more spongy bones with less support and stability. They are more prone to injury and disease.

It is my firm belief that, from a physical perspective, how you spend the first 14 years of your life will determine how you will spend the last 14 years. If you are active and sporty, as kids are supposed to be, you inadvertently expand the venous and arterial systems. This makes the smooth muscle tissue that surrounds these blood shunters softer and more pliable at a very early age. This will allow you to move and recover at a much faster rate during the latter years of your life.

There is so much psychology associated with exercise. Most kids think you have to be a “jock” to be into fitness and that the only time you need to push yourself is during sports day or school fitness tests. Letting kids decide what they love to do and not what they feel they should be doing will make them more passionate and purposeful. This requires trial and error for parents and teachers.

For example, the personality of the one kid who loves the freedom of solo rowing or adventure running is totally different from the liberated, artistic nature of the kids who prefer dance, taekwondo or parkour.

My situation was quite different. My father introduced me to more organized ball sports when I was 3 years of age. I wanted to join a more logical and organized team sport and I chose the formality of cricket. To me, it was the most exciting aspect of school life. Organized, fun and predictable, it was something I looked forward to all year round.

To this day, at the ripe age of 58, I never leave the house without a tennis ball to throw, catch or bowl. It has become so engrained into my lifestyle and movement habits. Whether playing a ball sport, skateboarding or golfing, these movements get hard wired into your motor cortex and you never forget how to perform them if you started early in life.

Lets look at my specialty: kids' postural issues. Poor posture is an epidemic. Rounded shoulders, flexed heads and necks, hunched backs and, generally, a sloppy appearance. In a recent “Fitnessgram” study of 200,000 youth reported in *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 60% had low aerobic capacity, core weakness, high body mass index (BMI) and weak upper back strength. Grades 5 to 8 are the most important years as this is when aerobic capacity declines and BMI increases.

New technologies make it too easy to sit and not go anywhere. We are becoming a world of weaklings. It is time to change the dialog with our kids. Simply put, we want them to move more.

Strong kids can easily do pushups and squats and the rest can't. Help your kids decide what is best for them. Whether it is skipping rope, penny/skate boarding, trampolining, gymnastics, dance, etc., help them find their physicality through movement.



WHAT TO DO ?

The other day I told my 12 year old that we are planning a hike on the weekend. Naturally, she said “no”. When I told her we were going camping and would spend the night under the stars, she suddenly said “oh, that sounds like fun”. Hiking No: Camping Yes.

One “must-do” exercise for your child is rowing to stabilize the upper back. The action of rowing is essential, whether using cables, dumbbells, suspension ropes (such as TRX), cables, bodyweight, therabands or pushups. Keep it diverse and keep it interesting. Keep it safe and always teach good form.

Don't exhaust your kids by making them do too many repetitions. They will lose form quickly. Make them feel they are progressing and praise them often when they reach their goals.

Kids often feel that the problem with fitness is that it is limited to cardio, strength and sport. Fitness is motion and that is the essential dynamic. The important thing is to find out what they want to do and to let them thrive. It will change their body, their attitude, their look, and their results too.

Follow us : Facebook, Google+, YouTube

#Motion Dynamics

www.chriswatts.biz

chris@chriswatts.biz

