

## Getting Ahead of the Game: Mental Health Promotion in Australian Youth Sport

The large number of youth sport participants and the high number of hours that young athletes spend within their teams and clubs make sport a crucial community context in which to promote health. Given high rates of mental health problems in adolescents in particular, sport-based community mental health interventions may be useful to inform youth about mental health and provide resources to assist them. Sport organizations nevertheless rarely report employing mental health interventions or use health promotion approaches with little empirical support. Building from preliminary qualitative findings that sport stakeholders see value in promoting mental health within their teams and organizations, this paper reports the protocol that will be employed to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Ahead of the Game* program. *Ahead of the Game* is a multisetting, multicomponent, multilevel intervention that promotes mental health among adolescent male athletes from 12 to 17 years of age. The program will be delivered in Australian sport clubs and focuses on adolescent males who are likely to hold negative perceptions about mental health services. The project is guided by empirical and theoretical support for the value of promoting mental health literacy within communities to prevent, promote, and intervene in mental health. Notably, the authors defined mental health literacy as an individual's understanding of mental health and specific disorders, as well as their perceived efficacy to act in ways that may improve the mental health of themselves or others. In addition to providing health messages within community clubs, four intervention components will be delivered to athletes, coaches, and parents: (a) an in-person workshop with online modules to promote resilience in youth, (b) a workshop delivered to parents to promote mental health literacy, (c) an in-person and online coach education program promoting interpersonal skills, and (d) a mental health literacy workshop delivered to teams. The intervention will be evaluated by delivering all components to clubs that are selected from the community ( $n = 231$  athletes), in comparison to a waitlist control group of athletes who will receive a mental health-related intervention delivered by a separate organization ( $n = 231$ ). Outcomes will include athlete-level indicators, such as psychological distress, subjective well-being, youth mental health literacy, intentions to seek and provide help, athlete resilience, and athlete burnout. Parent and coach outcomes (e.g., parent mental health literacy, coach supportive behaviors) will also be measured. In addition to identifying the effects of *Ahead of the Game*, "dosing" effects will be assessed by considering how outcomes are influenced by varying amounts of exposure to the intervention components (e.g., athlete, parent, coach, and club-level participation and compliance). Finally, focus groups will be conducted to examine community ownership of the programs.

Vella, S.A., Swann, C., Batterham, M., Boydell, K.M., Eckermann, S., Fogarty, A., ... Noetel, M. (2018). Ahead of the game protocol: A multi-component, community sport-based program targeting prevention, promotion and early intervention for mental health among adolescent males. *BMC Public Health*, 18, 390. doi:10.1186/s12889-018-5319-7

Journal website: <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/>  
Author website: [https://scholars.uow.edu.au/display/stewart\\_vella](https://scholars.uow.edu.au/display/stewart_vella)

## Yoga Is Linked to Body Satisfaction

Yoga is becoming increasingly popular in the United States and has the potential to improve body satisfaction, particularly given its focus on being in the moment, promoting self-compassion, and paying attention to the body's needs. Although previous studies have found links between yoga practice and positive body image, these are generally cross-sectional studies with limited samples—usually women. This study examined whether yoga was associated with body satisfaction in young adults. Data for the present study came from 1,664 young adults who participated in a longitudinal study on eating and weight-related outcomes from adolescence to adulthood. Data from two time points 5 years apart were used. Participants completed a battery of self-report questionnaires, including amount of time doing yoga per week on average and body satisfaction. At the second time point, participants who reported participating in yoga over the past year reported higher body satisfaction than those who did not practice. This relationship remained after controlling for prior body satisfaction and body mass index. Furthermore, greater time spent practicing yoga was associated with bigger improvements in body satisfaction. Finally, the relationship between yoga and body satisfaction was strongest in those with initially the lowest body satisfaction. These findings suggest that yoga may be an effective tool for increasing body satisfaction; these relationships were found with as little as 30 min of yoga per week.

Neumark-Sztainer, D., MacLehose, R.F., Watts, A.W., Pacanowski, C.R., & Eisenberg, M.E. (2018). Yoga and body image: Findings from a large population-based study of young adults. *Body Image*, 24, 69–75. doi:10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.12.003

Journal website: <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/body-image/>  
Author website: <https://www.health.umn.edu/people/experts/dianne-neumark-sztainer-phd-mpd-rd>

## Why Are Parents More Involved in Their Kids' Sports?

Youth sport participation from the child's perspective has received extensive attention in literature, but the meaning of sport participation from the parent's perspective has received much less investigation. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to better understand why parents engage within the organized youth sport culture. Researchers took an ethnographic approach and interviewed 43 families, with a specific focus on representing a broad range of perspectives (middle class: doctors, high-level teachers; intermediate group: nurses, social workers; and working class: skilled or unskilled manual jobs and office work) in Norway. Participants ranged in age between 40 and 55 years and had children aged 14 in Grade 9. Three primary themes emerged from the interviews. First, in comparison to when these parents engaged in sport as youth, parental involvement was the cultural norm in sport. In essence, parents believed support for their child was a natural part of being a responsible parent. Second, parents used the sport context as a way to foster and maintain a close relationship with their child. Participants believed that being active in the sport context was a way to feel connected to their child. Third, parents

believed that sport was an environment that would help their child learn the skills needed to succeed in the real world, and their own involvement would enhance this development. In addition to the three main themes seen across participants in every socioeconomic background, one theme emerged that was more prominent in the economically advantaged parents. Specifically, parents—and typically fathers—engaged in deep involvement, or involvement that exceeded the standard norm of participation, in the form of attending every game and engaging in one-on-one coaching, postgame debriefing, and other developmental strategies, as a way to show their child what was required to be successful in the competitive arena. These parent interviews indicated that parents, regardless of background, are engaged in sport because this increased level of involvement has become the norm, as a means to connect with their child, and to ensure the sport experience is as beneficial as possible. Importantly though, the study also points to the importance of looking at how class differences may manifest in different parent behaviors.

Stefansen, K., Smette, I., & Strandbu, A. (2018). Understanding the increase in parents' involvement in organized youth sports. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23, 162–172. doi:10.1080/13573322.2016.1150834

Journal website: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/csese20/current>

Author website: <https://www.hioa.no/tilsatt/karis>

### Same Age, Any Gender: Increasing Exercise Adherence in Older Adults

Older adults report the lowest levels of physical activity; thus, finding ways to encourage this group to be more active is important. According to self-categorization theory, individuals categorize people based on various social categories, such as age and gender. Growing research suggests that older adults prefer exercising with peers of similar age and gender. This randomized controlled study examined two different group-based exercise interventions for older adults (same age, same gender; same age, mixed gender) against a standard exercise class that included both older and younger adults of mixed gender. Participants were 627 older adults (71% female) aged 65–91 years who were healthy enough to engage in physical activity. Each intervention entailed 60-min group-based exercise classes three times per week for 24 weeks. In the same-age, same-gender group, single gender classes were structured to emphasize group identity and were taught by an older adult of the same gender. The same-age, mixed-gender group classes were identical, but included both male and female participants. Participants in the mixed-age, mixed-gender classes took part in the regular group exercises classes at the YMCA; thus, they included individuals of any age and gender. Class attendance and self-reported physical activity were assessed at baseline, 12, and 24 weeks. Results showed that participants in the two same-age groups reported significantly higher attendance at both 12 and 24 weeks compared with the mixed-age groups, with no difference between the two same-age groups. There were also no differences between men and women. The authors concluded that when trying to improve exercise adherence in older adults, classes should be limited to that age group, be led by an older adult, and include strategies to promote the distinctiveness of the group.

Beauchamp, M.R., Ruissen, G.R., Dunlop, W.L., Estabrooks, P.A., Harden, S.M., Wolf, S.A., . . . Rhodes, R.E. (2018). Group-based

physical activity for older adults (GOAL) randomized controlled trial: Exercise adherence outcomes. *Health Psychology*, 37, 451–461. doi:10.1037/hea0000615

Journal website: <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/hea/>

Author website: <http://kin.educ.ubc.ca/person/mark-beauchamp/>

### Thinking Fast and Slow: Older Adolescents' Thoughts About Physical Activity

The life transition from adolescence to adulthood is generally marked by a decrease in physical activity. To date, research has primarily examined explicit physical activity cognitions to understand changes in physical activity during this transition (e.g., attitudes about exercise, confidence to self-manage exercise during the transition). The role of implicit cognitions has largely been ignored. Dual-processing theories suggest that human thought functions through two systems that influence our behavior: deliberative and automatic. Deliberative processing produces explicit cognitions, which are controlled thoughts that form coherent judgments (e.g., explicit attitudes about exercise). Automatic processing produces implicit cognitions characteristic of uncontrolled gut reactions or emotion-driven thoughts (e.g., feelings of boredom) that can impact physical activity behavior outside of individuals' deliberate intentions. During the transition to adulthood, implicit cognitions may provide valuable insight into the physical activity decline beyond deliberative cognitions like intentions. The first purpose of this study was to examine implicit associations between health- and appearance/social-related outcomes and physical activity. Reaction times of desirable health or appearance/social word pairs (e.g., sport and healthy) were compared with reaction times of undesirable word pairs (e.g., sport and lazy). The second purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between (a) implicit cognitions, (b) explicit cognitions of attitudes and outcome expectations, and (c) self-reported physical activity. Implicit cognitions were measured using the Go/No-Go Association Task; two target categories were presented on a computer screen (e.g., physical activity and desirable), and the participant was instructed to click the space bar as quickly as possible any time a word from both categories appeared on the screen. Faster response times represented stronger implicit associations. Participants were 144 adolescents (109 women and 35 men) between 17 and 19 years old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 18.11$  years). The majority were low active. Participants demonstrated a significantly stronger positive automatic association between desirable appearance/social outcomes and physical activity, compared with undesirable outcomes. There was no significant implicit difference between desirable and undesirable health outcomes. Furthermore, there were no significant correlations between implicit cognitions and physical activity while all attitude and outcome expectation subscales were significantly related to physical activity. When all cognitions were entered into a multiple regression, instrumental attitudes came out as the only significant predictor, accounting for 15% of the variance in physical activity. Findings support previous research demonstrating that individuals may focus on the potential of achieving positive external social outcomes of physical activity rather than avoiding the negative outcomes. The authors suggest that older adolescents may be more impulsively drawn to physical activities that evoke social- or appearance-related outcomes.

McFadden, K., Berry, T.R., McHugh, T.F., & Rodgers, W.M. (2018). What older adolescents expect from physical activity: Implicit cognitions regarding health and appearance outcomes.