

YouthFirst

Coaches Learning About Youth Sports

The Sports Education and Leadership Program at UNLV

Grades 1-2

Motivation

"Obstacles are what we see when we lose sight of our goals"

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- Unknown

Motivation: What is It?

Motivation is the driving force behind a person's actions and choices. It is the tendency for the direction and selectivity of behavior to be controlled by its connections to consequences, and the tendency of this behavior persists until a goal is achieved. Athletes who are externally motivated are driven to participate by an outside source. Their motivation could come from parents, peers, friends and coaches. Participation could be based solely for trophies, medallions, ribbons, plaques, or team recognition. External motivators don't play sports for self-satisfaction but for extrinsic rewards. These awards are usually not given for personal goals, but for attaining goals set by others. This could result in athletes being influenced to pursue unrealistic goals and may set themselves up for failure.

Extrinsic rewards may be given when used properly. Rewards are excellent incentives for motivating youngsters who are struggling to learn sport skills. Help athletes remember that the most important reason for participating in sports is the participation itself. When young athletes understand this, extrinsic rewards are unlikely to undermine their intrinsic motivation for the game. The other athletes you will have are athletes who are internally motivated. These athletes are enthusiastic about practice and games. They realize and know their goals and attribute success to hard work and perseverance. These are the athletes that love sports for knowledge, friendships, physical activity, and love for the sport. Internally motivated athletes are there rain or shine and night or day. Try to foster and encourage internal motivation in your young athletes.



In this issue:

Quote- Unknown	-Front Page
Motivation: What is It?	-Front page
Motivation: Success is Not Always Winning	-Front page
Cont...Motivation: Success is Not Always Winning	-Back page
Fun: The #1 Youth Sport Motivator	-Back page

Motivation: Success is Not Always Winning

One key aspect of motivation is creating a way to help young athletes feel worthy. The goal of the coach is difficult; finding a way where every athlete can experience success in an environment where actual winners are few and losers are many. This is done by changing the way young athletes and coaches

learn to interpret their losing experiences. Success must be seen in terms of athletes exceeding their own goals rather than surpassing the performance of others. Winning should be secondary to athletes achieving their personal goals. These goals are specific performance or behavioral objectives rather than goals concerning the outcome of winning or losing. Personal goals should be realistic to ensure the athlete a reasonable degree of success. Coaches must help the athlete keep

Continuation From Front... Motivation: Success is Not Always Winning

a realistic perspective in setting goals suitable for themselves. Team goals should deal with learning to play together as a unit, respecting each other, having fun, and playing with good sportsmanship. Each goal should be viewed more important than winning. If athletes achieve the team and individual goals, winning will usually take care of itself. Coaches must also realize that some athletes who perform poorly doesn't always mean that they lack motivation but may indicate that their personal limits have been reached. Neither increased effort or confidence will improve their ability to perform at that level. Coaches will help athletes mature more if they encourage youngsters to seek out and discover for themselves their own limits. This way athletes learn to maintain and practice realistic goals. Once goals are set and athletes experience more success, they feel more confident and competent and the sport they are participating in. They realize that effort results in a favorable outcome and failure is an indicator for which they should work harder. Coaches need to de-emphasize winning and re-emphasize attainment of goals. These are vital steps to enhancing the motivation of all young athletes.

FUN: The #1 Youth Sport Motivator!

Why do people play sports? Playing a sport primary purpose of stimulation we seek is to have fun. Here are some ways to ensure your athletes are having fun:

1. Keep tasks difficult enough to be challenging, but not so difficult that your athletes see no chance at succeeding.
 2. Keep practices stimulating by using a wide variety of drills and activities for working on skill development.
 3. Keep everyone active rather than standing around for long periods of time waiting for their turn.
 4. Avoid constant instruction during practices and games. Permit athletes to have some time when they can get into the "zone" and absorb into the activity.
 5. Do not constantly evaluate your athletes. There is a time and place for evaluations, usually during a game is not the place.
 6. Use constructive criticism. Allow athletes to know when they are doing a skill or drill incorrectly. Tell them how to fix the mistake, and tell them what they are doing correctly. Always reinforce when an athlete has mastered a task or performed well.
 7. Guarantee success. Set goals that are realistic and achievable. Base success on attainment of these goals. These goals could be individual or team.
 8. Be a honest and caring role model. For an athlete to have fun they need to trust you, and want to be their with you.
- * Help athletes meet their need for fun by making the sport experience challenging and exciting without becoming threatening.