

Teamwork. Discipline. Confidence. Fun
How Organized Activities Benefit Your Children

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Children running. Playing soccer in the park together. Taking a dance class. Cycling. Walking with family. Having fun. More than just entertainment, these activities have a deeper and more long-lasting impact than many parents realize. Involvement in positive physical activities such as these affects how children see themselves – often inspiring a good sense of their own abilities and outlook for the future.

Children benefit from being physically active and involved in organized activities. Active children tend to be more confident, have a greater sense of well-being, experience better health, and are less involved in risky behaviors such as tobacco and drug use.¹ As parents, you want the best for your children and take pride in instilling important values.

Children learn important lessons through organized physical activities such as playing a team sport, camping with the local Boy/Girl Scouts, or taking a dance class. Making a commitment to organized programs teaches children the importance of being on time, the value of teamwork, and the pride of working hard and seeing themselves improve. These lessons help youth acquire healthy habits that can last into adulthood.²

Children seek attention and feedback, wanting to make sure they're doing the right thing and showing off their talents. Organized physical activities give children the opportunity to achieve a sense of competence, receive recognition from peers and parents, and establish a strong sense of self.³

Getting Your Child Involved

Any positive activity starts with you – the parent. Do you have a hobby or engage in physical activities? Show your children how important it is to be active and the benefits of having a hobby or passion. Assist them in exploring their own interests by doing their favorite activities with them and helping them find a program where they can be with other children who share the same interests.

Children listen to their parents. They are influenced by adult ideas and suggestions. Encouraging your children to be active is important for their health. This encouragement can be shown in several ways: helping your children find programs, making sure they have transportation to and from their activity, and going to performances or games to show your support.

The Added Benefits of Activity

In addition to being physically healthier, engaging in positive and physical activity will benefit your children in other ways:

- Greater self-esteem.
- Joy from feeling involved and included.
- Recognition for something good they have done and progress they have made.
- A sense of optimism and hope; children who participate in organized activities tend to have greater aspirations for the future.
- A sense of contributing to the greater good; when children participate in a group setting they have a sense of being a part of something bigger.
- Fun!
- More friends! Activities give children an opportunity to meet new people who like the things that they do.

Finding Activity Programs

Today there are many resources available where you can find bilingual information. Start by asking friends or neighbors. Here are a few places that may offer after-school and weekend programs:

- Schools
- Local parks and recreation centers
- YMCA/YWCA's
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Religious groups
- Local AYSO (soccer) chapters
- Community groups

Finding the Right After-School Program for Your Child

If your children have never been involved with organized physical activities, you may have questions and concerns: Is participation expensive? Will my children be safe? How do I find the time and ability to get them where they need to go? Consider these ideas to make sure that any program your child will be involved in will be a positive experience for both you and your family:

- Speak to other parents, trusted teachers, your priest, or religious leaders to learn about quality programs.
- Before enrolling your child, visit a class or practice and meet the teacher/coach. Watch the children – are they having fun? Are they learning? Bring your child with you – did he or she like the other children, teacher, activity?
- Many programs have enrollment fees to pay for teachers and for equipment. If cost is a concern for you, ask if there are scholarship programs or payment plans. Consider activities part of your child's education, so whatever you can afford is worth the investment.
- Accompany your child to classes/practice or have older children supervise the smaller ones if you are unsure about their safety.
- Organize a rotating schedule with neighborhood parents to share supervision while children play or provide transportation to clubs and practices.
- Offer to help the coach or teacher – you may discover your own hidden talents!

VERB™ . Ponte las Pilas™.

VERB is a campaign that aims to get 9-13year-olds, also known as “tweens,” to be more active. VERB motivates tweens to find their own VERB or try a new one, whether it’s running, playing soccer, dancing, or doing any other positive physical activity they already enjoy or want to try. VERB is made possible by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Let’s work together to encourage and support children’s participation in positive physical activity and give the Hispanic/Latino community yet another reason to be proud.

For more information, visit www.VERBparents.com

ADDENDUM

FOOTNOTES:

1. A Report to the President on Physical Activity from the HHS and Education Secretaries, 2000. Washington: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/physicalactivity/promoting_health/pdfs/ppar.pdf
2. The role of early, multilevel youth development programs in preventing health risk behavior in adolescents and young adults. Ethier K, St Lawrence JS. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 2002 May;156(5):429-30.
3. Marsh, H.W. , 1990. The Structure of Academic Self-Concept: The Marsh-Shavelson Model. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82, 623-636.