

Briefing Note 3: Eight features of a quality youth sport programme linked with positive psychosocial development

An introduction to the Briefing Note

This paper is a supplement to the Safer Together through Sport Literature Review that has been carried out by Loughborough University. It outlines and details the features that a quality youth sport programme needs, in order to contribute to positive psychosocial development.

The eight features of a quality youth sport programme (Eccles and Gootman: 2002) that have been linked with positive psychosocial development are as follows:

1. Physical and Psychological safety
2. Appropriate structure
3. Supportive relationships
4. Opportunities to belong
5. Positive social norms
6. Support for efficacy and mattering
7. Opportunities for skill building
8. Integration of family, school and community efforts

Table 1 below gives a more detailed description of each feature.

Table 1: Description of eight features associated with positive psychosocial development (adapted from Bean et al: 2018)

Eight features linked with positive psychosocial development	Description
1. Physical Safety	An environment that allows youth to feel free from physical harm
1. Psychological Safety	An environment that allows youth to feel free from psychological harm; accepted, and respected
2. Appropriate Structure	Clear and consistent rules and expectations, including behavioural guidance and age- appropriate monitoring
3. Supportive Relationships	The presence of adults and peers who demonstrate concern and support for youth

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Eight features linked with positive psychosocial development	Description
4. Opportunities to Belong	Providing experiences that allow youth to develop a sense of belonging; feelings of value as an individual and part of a group
5. Positive Social Norms	Fostering clear, healthy, ethical standards, beliefs, and behavioural guidelines that promote prosocial behaviour and minimize health risks
6. Support for Efficacy and Mattering	Providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership, efficacy, autonomy, mattering and responsibility
7. Opportunities for Skill-building— Sport and Physical Skills	Opportunities for youth to develop sport and physical skills that will prepare them for the future
7. Opportunities for Skill-building - Life Skills	Opportunities for youth to develop intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills that will prepare them for the future

The importance of a ‘Building block’ approach to the eight features

Bean et al (2018) argue that these eight features should work as building blocks with features such as ‘physical and psychological safety’, ‘appropriate structure’, ‘supportive relationships’ etc. acting as the foundation so that ‘higher order’ elements such as opportunities for skill building can then follow and support positive psychosocial development for the young people taking part in the sports sessions.

This means that sports coaches must understand the importance of these features for their sports sessions and make specific decisions at both the programme and session level to ensure that these eight features are put into place at the right stage.

Moreover, Bean et al (2018) confirm that sports programmes that were not designed to teach life skills scored lower than sports programmes that were intentionally structured to teach life skills. These findings indicate the importance of coach education around these eight features to support sports coaches to foster positive youth development for their sports programmes.

References

Bean C., Kramers S., Camire M., Fraser-Thomas J. and Forneris T. (2018) Development of an observational measure assessing program quality processes in youth sport Cogent Social Sciences, 4 (1).

Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). Community programs to promote youth development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press

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