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Challenges for Getting Kids in the Gym.

by Jâ€™s Orkowski

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Having been in this industry for over 30 years, I can tell you that the true challenge in childrenâ€™s fitness is getting kids into the gym. For this we appeal to parents to make a good decision of getting their kids involved in what I call â€œdevelopmental sportsâ€•. It becomes our job as instructors to not only provide the programs but to educate the parents on the values of the program as well. I will not hide my dedication to gymnastics or to Gymfinity as I feel that these are the best sport and program around for children, but there are many options for children to get into sports or activities. Consider many developmental sports, because the activity must interest the child. Why do I use the term Developmental Sports? These special activities will build on stages of learning, while new skills are attained and allow other skills to be refined. These sports (gymnastics, dance, martial arts, diving etc.) help the child develop not only physical skills and characteristics but social structure and interaction as well as allowing the body to be more receptive to cognitive development. I explained these â€œstrengthsâ€• in previous posts and wonâ€™t go into that detail here. Suffice to say, developmer sports are beneficial to the whole child.

Once kids are in a program, the next challenge is to get them to engage with enough activity to overcome boredom but to not overwhelm. If the lesson is too easy or below their level of adaptation, a child gets bored and may become a discipline issue or worse, lose interest in the activity. If the child is over-challenged the same results will occur. It is imperative to get the child challenged at an appropriate level. This also applies to the parents who over-enroll their children in activities because they want to instill and active lifestyle. The end result is that the child is exhausted; meaning that optimal play is difficult and becomes a negative reinforcement that makes the child resent being there. Again this results in a dissatisfied child and eventually causes them to quit and maintain a negative view of physical activity. Finding that â€œinvolved but not too involvedâ€• place on the continuum is crucial to a childâ€™s success.

The next challenge is getting the child to trust the program and the instructor. That â€œcoachâ€• or â€œcete is the interface between you, your child and the activity. You must feel comfortable with the instructor because if you are not, your child will not be either. That child needs to trust the instructor to teach skills and help develop their ability. They must also believe that the instructor will make the activity fun enough to warrant a return. If the instructor is not paired appropriately for the childâ€™s needs/wants the child will not want to continue. In the case of gymnastics, the child must also trust the instructor during times of learning new skills when a spot or assistance is indicated. I have seen many young kids leave programs because they did not have the rapport needed to move forward. The children may have been fully capable of learning more but the situation wouldnâ€™t allow the child to feel comfortable with continuing.

I mentioned that activity selection is critical to a childâ€™s success in achieving an active and successful lifestyle. A developmental sport, like Gymnastics, provides movement that challenges the body, which in turn challenges the brain to control the body. It also creates and environment that causes the brain to be involved in learning and thus teaches (or more reinforces) the brain how to learn. These special activities allow the brain to work both sides together and independently. The right side is responsible for controlling originality, creativity, abstract thought and, as a former professor of mine used to say, â€œDevelops the curvy linesâ€•. The left side is analytical, mathematic, structured an again, to quote my professor â€œmeasures the curvy linesâ€•. When an activity challenges a child to be creative and yet follow structured technique or routines the child hones the functionality of the whole brain.

Finding activities that meet your desires for the child, peaks the childâ€™s interest and reinforces their

participation, has good trustworthy instructors and develops the whole child is a challenge in itself. Sometimes not all of these things line up; you may have a great program with an instructor that doesnâ€™t work for your child. Or an activity that your child loves but youâ€™re not getting anywhere in y specific program. In these situations it may be necessary to try other things. Maybe switch programs switch instructors or try a different activity all together. The most important thing is to lower the hurdles that keep your child from being active and that help them grow and adopt healthy habits.

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Gymfinity provides safe and efficient, a Gymnastics Birthday Party and sport training environment in including cheap gymnastics leotards, children activities and children physical education in Madison WI.

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