

# The Other Kids

Inclusive Sport for All Canadians

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# Agenda

- My experience with sport growing up
- My experience as an adult
- Overall recommendations

- Growing up: not positive
- Late entry into sport as an adult, what these experiences taught me about our current sports programs
- This then leads to a bit of what is working well and where still need massive improvement



Nearly every child in Canada does some sort of physical activity and it's important to acknowledge that I did, too.

- equipment: bike, skates, outdoor games ... mostly chores
- school: phys ed. and recess, Fitness Awards and Track and Field day
- activities: gymnastics, swimming lessons, ballet, tae kwon do, Ukrainian dance, curling twice

# (Nearly) Sport-Free Childhood

- Poor physical literacy
- Low confidence
- Too big: fat, tall, and an early developer
- Rural / Isolation
- Poor coaching
- Resentful



- Failed swimming lessons, after not failing anything ever. I was a strong swimmer but I didn't feel safe diving into water and I hated having my face in the water.
- Driving into town seemed like an insurmountable task to me at times: ballet class
- Negative association: Experiment with grade 6 phys ed.—
- Shrink in, not be seen, not get hurt

# (Nearly) Sport-Free Childhood

- Poor physical literacy
- Low confidence
- Too big: fat, tall, and an early developer
- Rural / Isolation
- Poor coaching
- Resentful
- Coaches who tried
- Parental support
- Volunteering

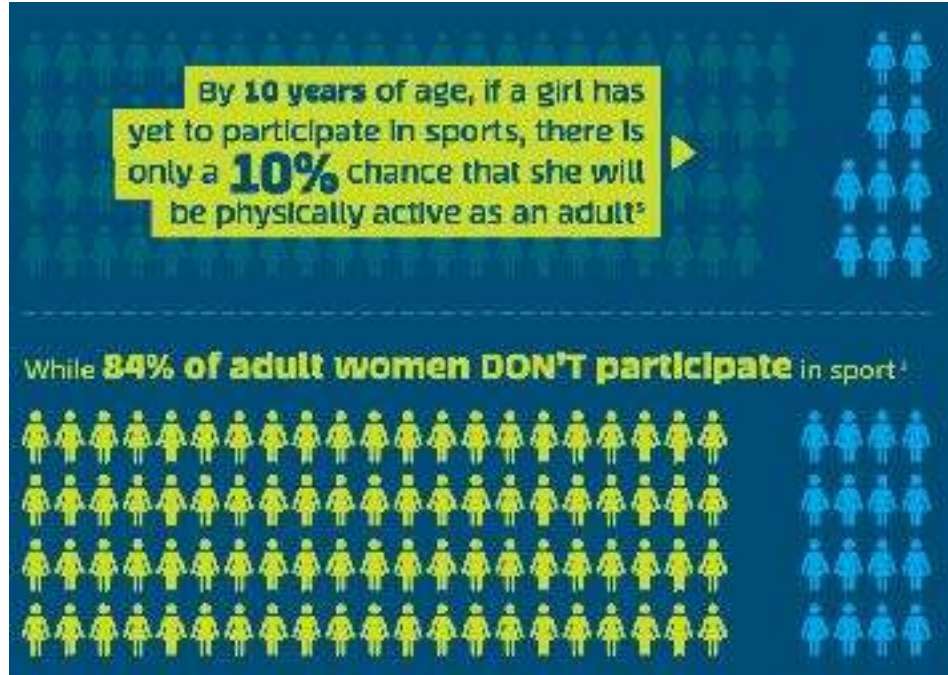
- Volleyball attempt
- Parents were willing to drive me into Humboldt for dance (and band)
- Volunteered a bit with Special Olympics at the local (all-inclusive) level



Experience with sport left me feeling poor, stupid, incompetent and angry in a way that literally nothing else in my life ever did. I was so good at academics and leadership and so bad at sports that I quit Phys Ed as soon as I wasn't required to take it.

And while I did stay active in ways that we may count as sport (specifically through Ukrainian dance) it was despite it being physical activity, not because of it.

I resented the attention and money that sports got, and honestly, I just didn't see the point of sports.



I would be part of this statistic but I had a dorm mate bring me out to the pool and say that I could do it.





- University —>
- Swimming Lessons —>
- Adult Masters Water Polo Team —>
- Rowing —>
- Running (for fun?!?)—>
- Ultimate Frisbee —>
- Masters Swimming —>
- Women's Water Polo [explain a bit more] —>
- Quidditch and parasports —>



# Surprise: You're an Athlete!

- Welcoming Environment
- Room to learn (room to suck)
- A role for everyone, with room to grow
- Quality coaching
- Appropriate demands (competition, travel, etc.)



- Inclusive: lots of ages, all genders, all abilities
- Sucking: need to make a safe environment to try something in and it's okay to fail. A lot of times in sports that was the worst part of sports. Celebrate the successes, have patience with the learners, and break it down, including everything from children's games to ones you make up yourself
- Roles: set people up for success, as much as possible, then push to grow from there
- Demands: a lot going on—classes, jobs, kids. Demands fit me at the time

# Surprise: You're an Athlete!

- Welcoming Environment
- Room to learn (room to suck)
- A role for everyone, with room to grow
- Quality coaching
- Appropriate demands (competition, travel, etc.)
- Cost (program, equipment, travel)
- Injuries
- Memories
- Other Issues

- Cost massive barrier for adults
  - Difficult to see the value—key that when I started to get active, it was completely free (borrowed swim cap, goggles and swimsuit).
  - Not having the money is massive: not fun to bounce around, to run in work boots, or use cheap shoes that lead to injuries and there are very few to no programs supporting vulnerable adults
- Injuries: plentiful and challenging, long recoveries, expensive treatments
  - ESPECIALLY for inexperienced adults, it's a challenge because you don't know what normal pain is and
  - Weight issues (fluctuations and diets), likely to re-injure themselves
- Memories: a negative moment, a thing like being picked last in a group or being the odd one out when people pair up that may seem tiny and insignificant to anyone who had a good experience with sport, can instantly undo weeks or months of learning.
  - If you're a traditional sport, you'll likely have extra barriers here with specific negative associations
- Others:
  - Pregnancy: especially if it's not meant to be public knowledge
  - Childcare: lots of issues around this, especially if you're busy running kids to / from sports

# Takeaways

- Create adult learn-to programs
  - Adult beginner friendly teams, rules, and competitions
- Train coaches how to teach adult beginners
  - Acknowledge the hurts of the past, when they arise, and minimize triggering experiences
- Financial support to beginner adult programs
- Adult participation matters, so try something

- Adults can't join what doesn't exist.
  - Some sports have tonnes of organizers doing their own thing, but joining a slow pitch team or a volleyball team was not going to happen for me (social and physical barriers)
  - Lots of people don't know how to play traditional sports, don't have strong physical literacy skills — try non-traditional sports
- Training: wide variety of techniques needed, but especially focus on a lot of adult issues (injuries, disordered eating, sleep issues / stress, probably others) and be ready to adjust everything always
- Financial Support: pays off. We can become great volunteers, board members, or employees; register our kids, or encourage our friends to join

# Thank You!

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