

Helping Young Athletes Reach Their Potential: What Does Research Tell Us?

Parents are often left with the dilemma of how to support their children in healthy sport participation. The balance between sports, academics, arts, and downtime can present a challenge as families work to find what experiences will best prepare their children for the future. Inevitably, questions about the rewards and risks of sports will arise, particularly when a child has an affinity or talent for a given activity. How can parents support their children toward healthy participation in sports to facilitate a lifelong healthy lifestyle and to reach their potential? Luckily, research provides some pretty clear answers about long- and short-term outcomes and the best ways to facilitate healthy athletic development. In this presentation, Dr. Smith will review some of this research (including research that he has conducted) and provide guidelines for parents and coaches to consider for healthy sport participation.

Dr. Steve Smith is a licensed psychologist and faculty member in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology and the College of Creative Studies at UC-Santa Barbara. He is the author or editor of six books and over fifty journal articles. He was trained as a clinical child psychologist at the University of Arkansas before completing an internship and fellowship in child and adult psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School. He served as Director of Consultation Neuropsychology at Mass General before joining the faculty of UC-Santa Barbara in 2004. He turned his research and clinical attention to athletes and youth sports in 2008. He served as the consulting psychologist for the Division I Department of Intercollegiate Athletics at UCSB and maintains a private practice (www.sparccal.com) where he works with children, adolescents, and adults (particularly men and boys) struggling with depression, anxiety, and sport or health-related issues. He is on the Board of Directors of Challenge Success (challengesuccess.org) and he frequently gives talks and workshops to teams, schools, and organizations and his presentations. He is a lifelong athlete and competitive endurance runner.