

SPORTS PROMOTE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Anyone that has participated in sports recognizes how sports can positively impact one's life. In addition to improved physical health, sports play a large role in psychological well-being and emotional development. Compared to nonathletes, youth who play sports are more likely to have better mood and perceptions of themselves, feel competent, experience physical and psychological well-being, be better able to control their own behavior, develop positive social skills, and have greater life satisfaction.



MOOD

Sports participation increases levels of exercise and physical activity. Much research has demonstrated that exercise and physical activity can reduce negative emotions and thoughts. Research has shown that:

- Middle and high school athletes are **46%** less likely to report being upset, **49%** less likely to report being sad, and **37%** less likely to feel hopeless.
- Middle and high school athletes are **25%** less likely to experience depression.
- Male and female high school athletes are **24% - 41%** less likely to report suicidal ideation, considering suicide, planning suicide, or having attempted suicide.

SELF-ESTEEM

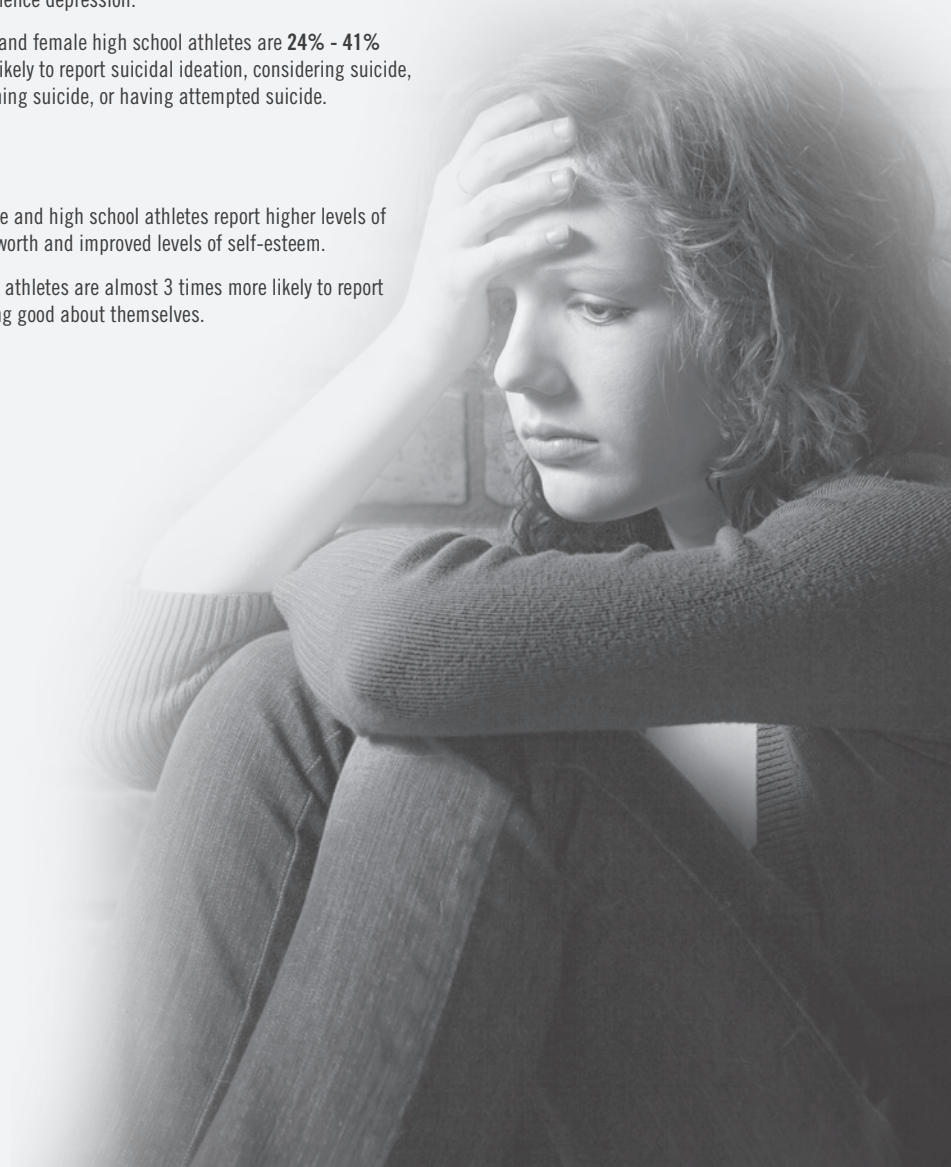
Self-esteem is an individual's perception of their overall self-worth. Compared to nonathletes research has shown:

- Middle and high school athletes report higher levels of self-worth and improved levels of self-esteem.
- Youth athletes are almost 3 times more likely to report feeling good about themselves.

PERCEIVED HEALTH

Perceived health refers to the perception of a person's health in general. In comparison to nonathletes:

- Middle school male athletes have **5.4** times higher levels of self-reported health.
- Middle school female athletes have **30.9** times better self-reported health.
- High school athletes increase perceived health by reducing negative health behaviors (e.g. smoking) and increasing physical fitness.



LIFE SATISFACTION & WELL-BEING

Life satisfaction is how a person perceives his or her life has been and how they feel about life in the future. Life satisfaction can serve as a measure of well-being which reflects a person's happiness, health, and overall success. Compared to nonathletes:

- Middle school athletes report higher levels of life satisfaction.
- High school sports participation increases levels of physical well-being.
- High school students participating in endurance sports report higher levels of physical and psychological well-being and lower levels of anxiety, depression, and social inhibition.

COMPETENCY

Competency refers to having a specific range of skills, knowledge, and ability. There are many types of competency. Youth sports promote athletic competency, physical competency, and social competency. Compared to nonathletes:

- Youth that are highly active in sports have higher levels of athletic competence and social competence. Higher levels of athletic competence are associated with lower levels of overall problems, internalizing problems, anxiety and depression, social problems, and attention problems.
- Female high school athletes are more regularly active, have higher levels of physical competence (including strength competence, coordination competence, and sports competence), and have better psychosocial well-being.

POSITIVE SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS CAN PROMOTE MANY PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS. GETTING YOUTH INVOLVED IN SUPPORTIVE AND FUN SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS CAN POSITIVELY INFLUENCE THEIR ATHLETIC AND OVERALL DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

US Anti-Doping Agency
True Sport: Compete Strong. Play Fair. Achieve More.
<http://www.truesport.org>

National Council of Youth Sports
<http://www.ncys.org>

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Prosocial behavior is positive, helpful, and intended to promote social acceptance and friendship. In comparison to nonathletes:

- Student participation in middle and high school sports is associated with social acceptance.
- High school athletes are **85%** more likely to report that their friends care about them.
- Increased social support associated with sports team participation can help buffer negative moods and experiences.
- Athletes in an urban middle school are found to be more socially competent and less shy and withdrawn, indicating that sports involvement positively influences personal and social adjustment.

SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is an individual's capacity to alter his/her behaviors based on self-monitoring, self-evaluation and implementation of a set of skills such as planning, controlling emotions, and using resources effectively. Behaviors are changed in order to meet standards, ideals or goals either stemming from internal motivation (e.g. perform personal best in today's competition) or societal (e.g. following rules of a sport) expectations. In comparison to youth who do not participate in sports:

- Middle and high school elite soccer players report higher frequency of self-monitoring, evaluation, reflection, and effort indicating they have better self-regulatory skills.
- High school sports participation is associated with using a more internalized locus of control indicating that athletes believe that they are in control of their actions.
- Female high school athletes report being strong, coordinated, physically fit, independent, and intrinsically motivated. They report participating in more physical activity their first semester of college and having greater psychological well-being.
- High school athletes report better self-knowledge, emotional regulation, and physical skills.

