

Social Inclusion and Physical Activity



Physical activity can help children improve their social and emotional health while also supporting their fitness. Physical activity provides time for children of all abilities to play with peers, learn to manage their emotions and improve their social skills. It's important for the adults leading physical activities to understand how to help children build their social emotional skills.

Be a role model; children will watch, listen and learn from how you treat others

- Emphasize the values of respect, cooperation, and collaboration in the activities you lead.
- Plan activities that promote cooperation and teamwork over competition and winning.
- Demonstrate that you enjoy having each child in your program or class.
- Establish a “no tolerance” rule for bullying.
- Advocate against exclusionary policies, such as cutting individuals from team sports.

Give children appropriate challenges to build their skills and self-esteem

- Emphasize each child's strengths by planning some activities where they can demonstrate their skills or sports knowledge.
- Give each child opportunities to lead or to have special responsibilities.

Make relationships a priority

- Include social emotional skill development in lesson plans and activities. For example: turn taking and recognizing and respecting the feelings of others.
- Praise and reward children for being inclusive.

Use peers as a resource

- Establish a buddy or mentoring system.
- Play games in which everyone has opportunities to be both a helper and to be helped.

TIP

If a child receives special education or behavioral health services, find out how you can reinforce the social-emotional skills the child is already learning.