

7 Tips and Facts About Child and Youth Athletes

Sport psychology is useful for everyone, regardless of age, gender, abilities, and competitive level.

Sport can be an important venue for learning and developing sport-specific skills as well as for fostering physical, psychological, physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social development. ^(1,2)

1 Can Children Benefit from Mental Skills?

Yes! Children (5-12 years) and youth (13-18 years) can benefit from the use of mental skills, as long as the skills are delivered in a way that is tailored to their needs and development level. ^(2,3)

These tips can be used to tailor any of the skills for children and youth on the Sport Psychology for Coaches website.

2 Age Does Not Define Ability

Just because someone may be the same chronological age as another individual, does not mean that they are at the same level physically and mentally.

3 Use Images Instead of Words

Use demonstrations, videos, photos, or diagrams help them understand concepts. Children often engage in imagery on their own so visuals may assist with developing imagery skills.

4 Language to use

Simplify the language being used.
Avoid the use of jargon.
Use metaphors to help with challenging concepts. ⁽⁴⁾
Example: Relaxed muscles may feel like cooked spaghetti. ⁽⁴⁾

5 Understand and Acknowledge

That child athletes will have unique experiences and expertise. They may have physical skills comparable to older athletes, but may not have the ability to cope with the pressures of sport. ⁽⁶⁾

6 Be Aware of Burnout

Young athletes may have different stressors than older athletes, regardless of their competitive level. Watch for signs of burnout and help them to develop strong coping skills. ^(6,7,8)

7 More Tips for Implementing Mental Skills:

- Reduce the length of time spent in mental training sessions.
- Make it fun!
- In the same time limit, cover less material.
- Use their words.
- Children are constantly evolving (physically, socially, mentally, etc), evolve with them.
- Athletes may have large variations in where they start and how quickly they mature.

To Learn More Visit: [Sport Psychology for Coaches](https://sportpsychologyforcoaches.ca) It's FREE!



Source: <https://sportpsychologyforcoaches.ca/diversity/child-adolescent-athletes/>