



PÉCSI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
ÁLTALÁNOS ORVOSTUDOMÁNYI KAR

Sports psychology III.

Szonja T. Erdene
contact: erdene.temulin.szonja@pte.hu

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Children in sports

“My message to today’s youth would be to enjoy sport, to try and find a sport they truly like, where they enjoy going to training. You have to enjoy what you do—because you can’t do sport out of obligation.”

— László Cseh

(cited in: Gyömbér & Kovács, 2024)



Benefits of youth sports

- development of sport-related skills
 - psychological skills such as competitiveness, cooperation, confidence
 - establish the foundation of healthy lifestyle
 - youth sport = social activity -> new friends + parents can also join
 - **FUN!**
 - **Smoll, 1998- Why do young people participate in sport?**
 1. fun, enjoyment
 2. to develop skills, learn new things
 3. excitement
 4. to spend time with friends, make new ones
 5. to experience success, victory
- > **COLLABORATION (parents- child- coach)**

Benefits	Disadvantages
development of right skills	development of wrong skills
improvement of endurance	injury, illness
learning the right strategies, rules, tactics	learning and applying incorrect rules, strategies, tactics
fair play, respect and compliance with rules	unrealistic or negative self-esteem
formation of realistic and positive self-esteem	distorted: self-, body image, self-awareness
self-awareness	turning away from sports
realistic body image, body awareness	incorrect use of rules in order to win
long-term sports motivation	lack of enjoyment, fear of failure
enjoyment	harmful social skills, psychological vulnerability
development of personal, social, and psychological skills	loss of time that could be spent on other activities

Development in Sport

- **positive youth development perspective**
- **early ages**– any form of physical activity is beneficial

preschool: 3–4: begin to develop cooperation skills (particularly through team-based play)

5: gross motor games– spirit of competition, sense of competence, self-confidence (positive feedback!)–>

primary school: development of basic sport-specific skills, but still developing

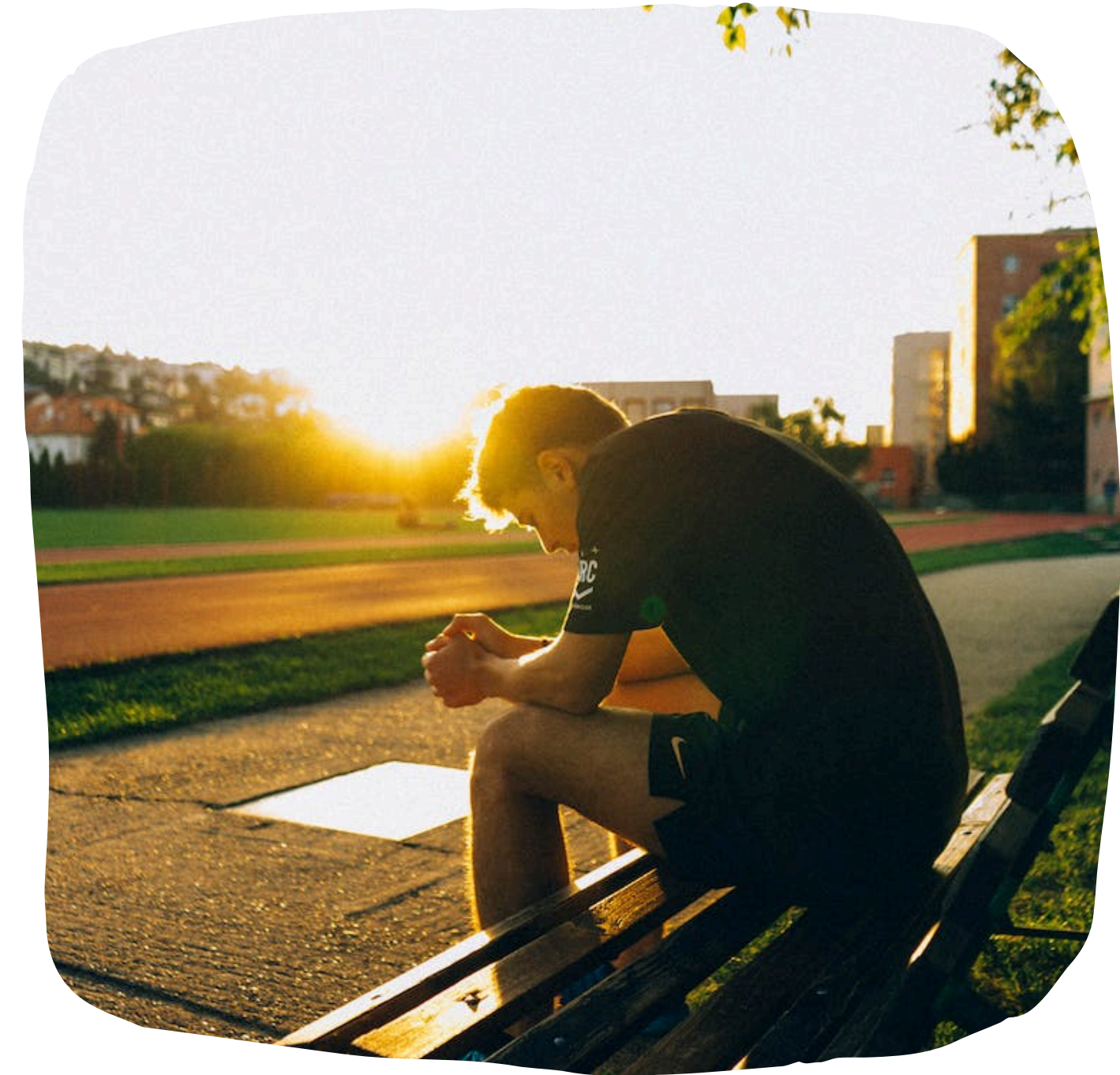
focus: practicing skills, accepting mistakes, and fostering enjoyment in learning–>

adolescence: physical and hormonal changes, individual differences in developmental pace (early vs. late maturers), increased vulnerability



The risk of sport...

- identity development – self-concept– can merge with the athlete role
- later → e.g. *injury* → ***whole identity may be threatened***
- risk factors: early, overly intense participation in sport→ immature personality
- environment!
- parents and coaches have key responsibility in supporting an athlete's personality development



Goals:

- **cooperation!** (child, parent, coach, club)
- open communication, clarification of questions, and goal setting
- *What decisions do I make, and why this way? What do I need for that?*
- transparency, clear boundaries
- **balance:** creating space for motivation, grow



false conception of victory (Martens, 1978)

- friendliness, and generosity towards the opponent = weakness
- joy and sense of freedom = lack of competitive spirit
- following the coach's instruction, that gives „unfair advantages“
- encouragement of substance use or cheating
- winning becomes the top priority – while friendship, family, confidence, other skills, health, and a healthy self-esteem are pushed into the background

BUT! goal:
**!health- physical and
personal development!**

-> everything else (also victory!)-
secondary
-> focus: gathering experience

Erikson (1991)– stages of psychosocial development



1. Infancy (0-1 year)	trust-mistrust
2. Early childhood (1-3 y)	autonomy- shame/doubt
3. Play age (3-6 y)	initiative-guilt
4. School age (6 -11 y)	industry (performance) – inferiority
5. Adolescence (12-18 y)	identity – role confusion

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556096/>

Sports psychologist- children I.

common reasons:

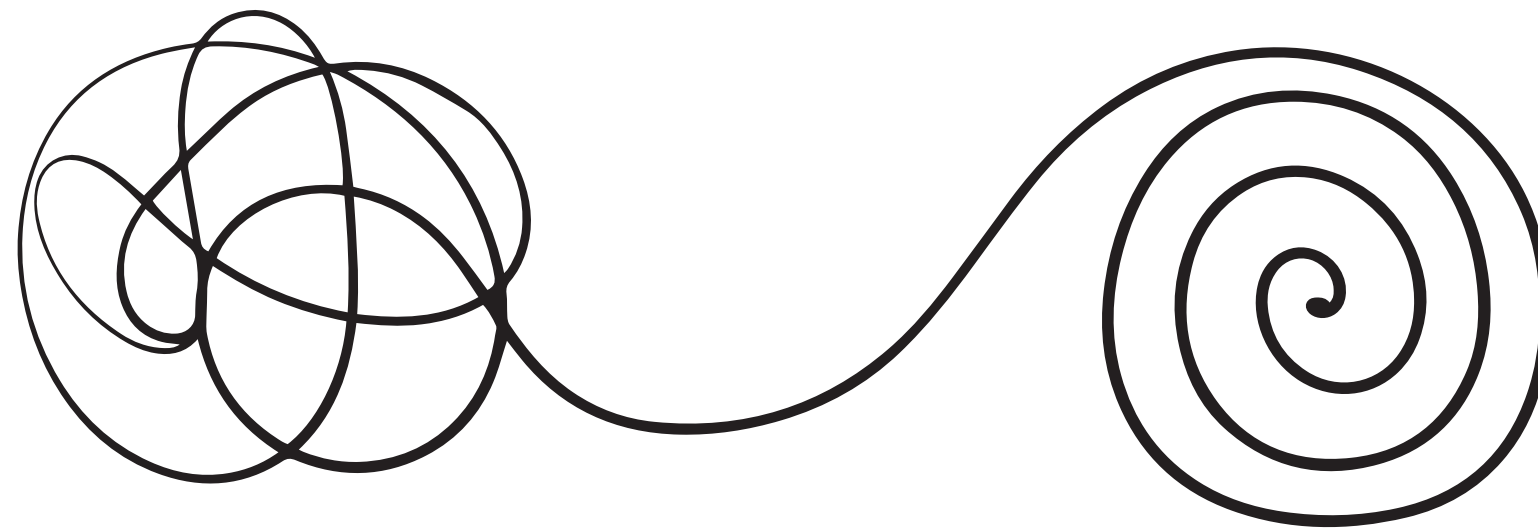
- **competition anxiety** – before the performance situation
- **psychosomatic symptoms**– e.g. head- / stomach ache
- **attention problems, lack of concentration**– distraction, freezing after instruction
- **adolescents acting out**– impulsive actions, behaviours
- **nail biting**– anxiety, frustration – action visible, motivation behind it not conscious –e.g. trying to meet others' expectations
- **enuresis**– anxiety
- **tics, stuttering**– often linked to unresolved conflict with the environment, suppressed anger
- **eating disorders**– especially athletes competing in weight categories are at risk!
- **sleep problems**– e.g. poor sleep quality before competition

Sports psychologist- children II.

- communication** with parents, coaches
- consultation with the parents usually the first step
- clarification of the **framework**- parents, coaches, child
- child's symptoms = family's symptoms**
 - diagnostic stage- define the most important psychological factors
 - consultation - collaborative work
- feedback!**- confidentiality



TASKS





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**Thank you for your
attention!**

Literature

- Gyömbér, N., Kovács, K. és mtsai (2012). *Fejben dől el: Sportpszichológia mindenkinek*. Budapest: Noran Libro.
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