

Keeping Kids Physically Active During School and Little League Suspension

Maintaining a physical routine could include running around the block, doing jumping jacks, yoga, or a dance party. Screen time is no solution to keep children occupied. It can be detrimental to their mood and energy when used for a prolonged period of time, and screen time should be restricted to short intervals (no binge-watching). It is also recommended that you select the content that motivates physical activity (dance like a YouTube star) or reinforces learning and skills.

Children need free, unstructured time for play. If they do have worries, games can be a strategy to work them out. If possible, small groups of children could get together for social learning and play. Do not perpetuate mass gatherings in the hope we can wish away this virus.

Helping Youth Cope Emotionally With The Loss of Sports

According to Dr. Rob Bell, a sport psychology coach, “The way athletes cope with life is through their sport. If sport is okay and we are performing well, then life more easily works itself out. It is when we have severe on-the-field or off-the-field issues that cause our stress levels and anxiety to spike. You’ll need to treat this crisis as a major loss and/or death because the emotions experienced will be similar.”

Bell said that athletes would probably experience sadness, mood swings, or lack of initiative – and that’s normal. The key is to recognize there is nothing wrong with you and allow some time and space every day to grieve. “The worse thing is to simply ignore the emotions you’ll feel because then they will pop up when we least want them to,” Bell said.

Athletes are creatures of habit and crave structure and discipline. So, practice self-care. Keep consistent sleeping schedules. Continue exercising. Eat well and stay hydrated. Maintaining a structure to remain healthy will help avoid athletes going on massive binges of screen time or eating unhealthy food.

COACHES CAN:

- Organize Google hangouts as a way for teammates to connect.
- Encourage players to communicate about individual workouts they are performing to keep each other motivated.
- Consider having their team watch a sports movie and then come together virtually to discuss the lessons learned.

PARENTS CAN:

- Set up routines (schoolwork in the morning, “recess” in the backyard) to help normalize the situation as much as possible.
- If it allows, play with your child in the sport of their choice in the backyard or driveway, or practice specific skills and drills within the home if possible.

And remember, if you’re an athlete, “be courageous about asking for help,” according to PCA. If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, or depressed, let one of the adults you trust know. Be honest with them. Don’t hesitate to ask for help for fear that your concerns aren’t significant.

From: The Aspen Institute, Project Play