



Finding Balance

Discovering who you are is a very important part of an athlete's life. You can think of it as a journey that starts in childhood and continues throughout your life.

For athletes, knowing who you are means learning...

- What things are important to me?
- What do I believe in?
- What do I like to do? (play badminton, read books, draw, swim, dance)
- What are my dreams and goals?
- What are my strengths?

Figuring these things out about yourself can help you to feel good about who you are. You may not know the answers all at once. Finding the answers is part of growing up.

How can playing sports help you learn about who you are? Sports allow you to:

- Deal with success and failure.
- Cope with stressful situations.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Get along with other people.
- Solve problems.
- Manage your time.

A 1994 survey by the British Columbia provincial government showed that parents' top expectations of their children's experiences in sport were to build self-esteem, have fun, develop skills, increase fitness and to make new friends.

How can playing sports make it hard for you to learn about who you are?

If you spend all your time training and competing, you may not learn about who you are outside of sports. You may think of yourself only as an athlete and you may only feel good about yourself when you do well at sports. An athlete who thinks this way, may be willing to try anything to succeed, even if it means doing things that harm their body and/or health.

You may be setting yourself up for problems if...

- You consider yourself an athlete first and foremost
- Most of your goals are related to sports.
- Most of your friends are athletes.
- Sports are the most important thing in your life.
- You spend more time thinking about sports than anything else in your life.
- Other people see you mainly as an athlete.
- You feel bad about yourself when you don't do well in sports.
- You would be very upset if you were injured and couldn't compete in your sport.



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Parents, coaches and athletes can continue to work together to make sure that playing a sport is helping the athlete become a well-rounded person with a strong sense of who she is. Playing a sport can help an athlete to develop skills that will help her be successful in other parts of her life. She should be learning to answer the questions, "Who am I without my sport?" and "How is my sport helping me?"

As an athlete, what can I do to balance my life?

- Enjoy doing things outside of your sport.
- Find out what kinds of things interest you.
- Learn other skills like skateboarding or playing an instrument.
- Spend time relaxing outside.
- Go out with your friends.
- Help others.
- Be a volunteer.
- Join a club at school.

Learn to trust your own thoughts and feelings. The way that you feel and think about things is important. Enjoy the feeling you get when you do something well that isn't your main sport. Give yourself a pat on the back and smile about it.