

Education and Training

Role and Influence of the Family

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„How many people have heard of Birgit Prinz, perhaps the world’s best female basketball player? Or Anna Guevara, the fastest woman on the 400 metres? ... It is generally more lucrative to be a male mediocrity in the US National Basketball Association or English football’s Premiership. For almost all female athletes, this is still the era before celebrity.“

Simon Kuper, Women still face a Glass Hurdle, In: Financial Times, Feb 1, 2004

The Austrian study „Mädchen bleiben am Ball“ („Girls are on the Ball“)

The employment situation, the level of education and socio-economic background of a family are the determining variables for access to sports for boys and girls.

When the introduction to sports succeeds, sports will be continued during adult life and athleticism becomes a part of the identity.

No Jump-Start for Girls!

Motivation inhibiting factors causing lack of sportsmanship in girls can be:

- ✓ Sports are for the men in the family
- ✓ In the family or in the peer group the message comes across that team sports are not really a feminine activity
- ✓ The girl is interested in sports, but has had some negative experiences (boring gym class, etc.)
- ✓ The girl is interested in team sports, but not on a competitive level and cannot find an opportunity to participate on a „playful“ level as a result of the lack in infrastructure or lack of girls' sports culture
- ✓ Insecurity: A girl might be interested, but cannot find access
- ✓ Negative body perceptions, fear of sports, failure and a lack of a counterbalance in the family

Contact with Sports

In our study we questioned 85 sports club members about their introduction to sports.

- 69% of the girls already had contact with the respective sport before entering
- For 45% of the girls, the contact was established in school
- For 16%, this was the case through the family
- Only 7% of club members already knew their sport from the „street“, from public places

Role Models within the Family

Our survey of 260 Austrian female students indicated a significant connection between athletic activity and the attitude towards sports of both parents and daughters:

- 73% of girls to whom sports means a lot in life have a mother who is active in sports.
- Girls who do not value sports as much have mothers who are considerably less (46%) active in sports.
- Team sports are still a man's domain: 18% of fathers, barely 3% of mothers and 55% of brothers compared to 17% of sisters participate in team sports.

Encourage Girls!

Girls have less opportunity to gain access to a sport than boys do; they have higher emotional obstacles to overcome in their athletic careers.

Boys, on the other hand, are more emotionally supported in their athletic ability to begin with, they are more confident and sports becomes a part of their gender identity.

Wanted: Female Role Models

Boys kick, throw, naturally play when they are little; this is a part of male bonding with their fathers. But daughters are just as enthusiastic about sports – they are fit and curious.

Girls need female role models, active mothers, dedicated female trainers and coaches and public support and encouragement.

Preconceptions and Changes

Adolescents live in different worlds: their parents home, peer group, school. Interplay between these worlds also appear in the study „Girls are on the Ball“.

„Subtle family fouls“ are clear messages of the parents, who have an obstructive effect on the sport engagement of girls.

CONCLUSION

Girls receive less athletic encouragement to begin with, and mothers as athletic role models in team sports are very scarce. Over 60 and 70% of girls regard their parents to be active in sports.

There's a lot of female potential!

Girls today still participate less in sports than boys do, but they voice an interest more and more – especially in sports, that are not typical for girls:

Girls want to show courage!

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