

Sport and Mental Health



SHAPE

SPORT | HEALTH | ACTIVITY | PERFORMANCE | EXERCISE
— RESEARCH CENTRE —

The role of sport in mental health

What can sport provide in terms of mental health protection?

But also:

How does sport play a role in the manifestation of mental health issues?

Theories in sport sociology

Conflict theory

Interactionist theory

Critical theories

Feminist theories

Functionalist theory

Sport sociologists have identified recurring themes in values orientation in sport

Character building

Discipline

Competition

Physical fitness

Mental fitness

Nationalism

Protective Factors

Socialisation (social support, social cohesion)

Sense of belonging

Striving for a common cause

Self-esteem

Lifelong motor skills

Physical activity

Protective Factors



Physical activity and mental health

Being physically active:




Protects against mental health problems




Decreases depression in older adults



Reduces the symptoms of post natal depression



Is as effective as medication for mild to moderate anxiety and depression



Improves self-esteem and cognitive function in young people



Playing sport reduces psychological distress by

34%
1-3 times
a week



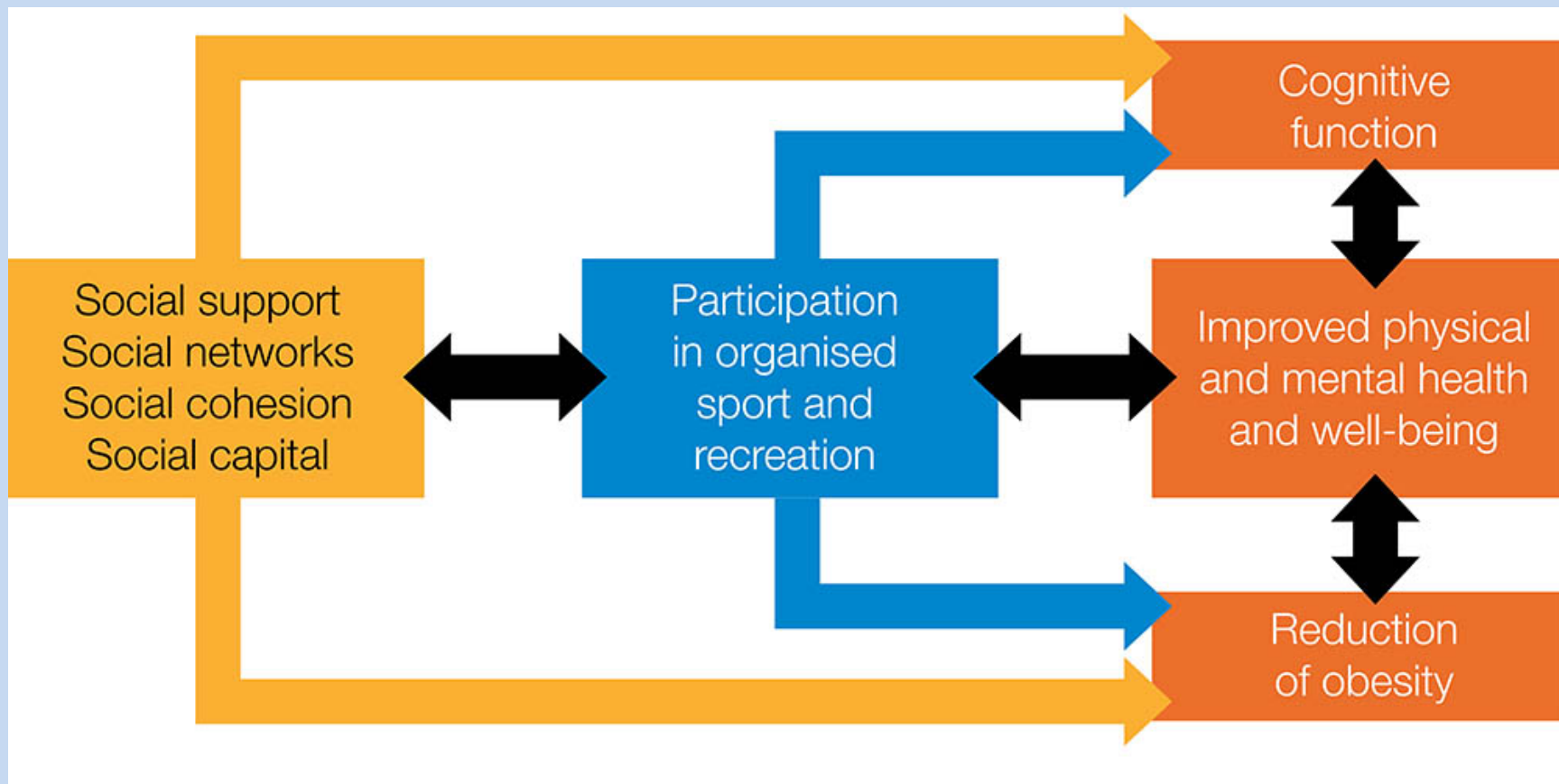
47%
4+ times
a week



People who participate in sports clubs and organised recreational activity enjoy better mental health.

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Our whole
community wins



LGBT youth display
higher rates of
mental health
issues



LGBT youth engage
in less sport and
physical activity



Sport and PA offer
protective factors
for physical and
mental health

Sport, Athletes and Mental Health: Areas for concern

Burn out (physical and mental fatigue → depressive moods → poor performance)

External pressures (*perceived* – eg. expectations & *real* – eg. contract clauses)

Internal pressures

Exercise obsession

Eating disorders

Body image

Social media

Transition phases

(juniors → youth → seniors → elite → retirement)

Talking points

Sport (and PA) offer significant benefits for individuals and communities in terms of protective mental health factors

However, these do not benefit all (marginalised / stigmatized individuals and groups)

Sport is not the panacea to mental health and wellbeing

Indeed it can contribute to mental health issues in athletes as well

Resources

<https://goodsports.com.au/programs/healthy-minds/>

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/articles/supporting-mental-wellness>

<http://www.sportsfocus.com.au/building-good-mental-health/>

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/research/key-research-areas/novel-treatment-approaches/sports-based-intervention-to-promote-mental-health-in-australian-young-men>

<https://wayahead.org.au/kicking-goals-for-mental-health-in-afl/>

https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/ais_launches_crucial_mental_health_service_for_athletes

https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/national_support_team_supporting_australian_athletes