

CHAPTER 4: WHAT SPORT MEANS FOR CHILDREN AND WHAT IT CAN DO FOR THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT





MOOC 1: Developing Effective Environments for Youth Sport

Study Guide

**An Intellectual Output of iCoachKids:
*Innovative Education & Training for a Specialist Children & Youth
Coaching Workforce***

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Introduction

“A coach’s primary mission is to help sport participants develop not only as athletes, but also as people. To fulfil that aim, a coach needs functional and task-related competences that are underpinned by knowledge and reflection.”

From the European Sports Coach Framework (p. 39)

Congratulations Coach, by engaging in the iCoachKids MOOC 1, you have demonstrated that you have an open mind to learning more about coaching children and to further developing your own coaching skills.

Improving your coaching takes time and effort. Coach development should proceed in a progressive and sustainable way. Such an approach takes into consideration your stage of development as a coach, how you learn and which participants the coach is working with.

How Coaches Learn

In this MOOC, we recognise that learning is a lifelong process and that multiple experiences can facilitate the development of your coaching ability. During your progress through MOOC 1 we have included a variety of learning experiences to meet the needs of coaches and how they learn.

A coach is not a blank slate. Whether through personal experiences as participant or spectator, you arrive to coaching with your own conception of what it is and how it should happen. The following task will allow you to consider what you are bringing to your coaching.

STUDY GUIDE TASK: What Are You Bringing to You Coaching?

(There are no right or wrong replies. This exercise is about you taking stock of your previous experiences.)

Coaches Learn Best When...	Your Learning and How you Like to Learn
List Your Sports Experience	What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?
Your Education	What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?
Life Experience/Learning	What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?
Other Things You Think/Feel Reflect You	What Does This Bring to Your Coaching?

Your Learning

In the early stages of coach development, you may benefit strongly from learning opportunities provided through formal education – in MOOC 1 this is reflected in what you read and the personal tasks that you undertake in applying this knowledge into your coaching. This can be seen as laying a knowledge foundation. These activities challenge or confirm initial personal theories and support the creation of a child-centred framework that helps coaches organise and make sense of their coaching practice.

As you continue to develop as a coach, non-formal learning opportunities become more relevant. Your interaction with the children, other coaches, parents, mentors and open source material provides a chance to check and challenge your emerging philosophy and way of doing things as well as gaining new knowledge. In MOOC 1 this is reflected in activities and tasks you do with others and in your environment.

It is important to note that much of coaches' learning takes place on the job. As a coach, your self-awareness and your ability to reflect on your experiences are essential to this.



STUDY GUIDE TASK: How Coaches Learn Best and How You Like to Learn

The column on the left is what research says about how coaches learn best. The column on the right is for you to: reflect on these statements; identify whether they may apply to YOU; and if they mean anything for YOUR LEARNING. This will develop you SELF-AWARENESS of how you like to learn:

Coaches Learn Best When...	Your Learning and How you Like to Learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their prior experiences and abilities are recognised and they are encouraged to reflect and build on them	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are motivated to take responsibility for learning and are given opportunities to drive it and direct it to their own needs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The application of what is being learned to the practical context in which they coach is clear and facilitated	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The topics and learning materials are clearly relevant	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The climate is positive and supportive to minimise anxiety, encourage experimentation and challenge them appropriately	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction and sharing with other coaches is promoted	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A variety of learning activities is offered	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They experience some success and gain feedback that builds their self-confidence	

If you have completed these two STUDY GUIDE TASKS you will have started to engage in the learning process promoted in the iCoachKids MOOCs. You will have identified what you are bringing to coaching children; and how you learn.

Well done and read on to learn more about how the MOOC 1 Study Guide is laid out to assist you in your learning, how the content can be applied into you coaching and to your growth as a CHILD-CENTRED COACH of children.

MOOC 1 Study Guide Structure

In MOOC 1, your development as a coach is promoted using a blended learning package composed of various activities to foster learning (for example, reality-based activities, problem-based learning, practical-coaching opportunities and reflection in/on action). This will promote knowledge gains and behavioural change and encourage you to seek additional self-directed learning opportunities.

The following HEADINGS and icons will signify different activities you will undertake in the MOOC 1 Study Guide:



VIEW – This is the video track linked to the Chapter and Section of the Study Guide you are considering



READ – This is the content knowledge that is outlined in the video track. It gives you the opportunity to examine the content at your own pace and/or to review in writing what is verbally outlined in the video



STUDY GUIDE TASK – This is an activity that will get you to consider how the content you have viewed/read may apply during your coaching with the children that you coach, and reflect on how you may change your coaching behaviours



PERSONAL COACHING TASK: This is an activity that will get you to apply the content into your coaching, with the children you coach, and to reflect on how it went for the children and for you. You may need to do these tasks a number of times and reflect on them to be able to fully apply the content into your coaching, in line with your coaching philosophy and to the benefit of the children



COACHING WITH OTHERS – This is an activity that will get you to engage other coaches you work with to discuss, apply, try, observe, get feedback from and reflect on how they see/feel your coaching is developing, and how the content can be applied by you and the other coaches. It may also encourage you to engage other relevant people, like parents, referees, club officials and even the children you coach!



COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT – This is an activity that will get you to consider how child-centred is the approach of your

club/school/community group. You will then consider/discuss what changes may be made to become a more child-centred coach.



QUIZ – At the end of each chapter there will be a quiz for you to complete. This will give you a chance to re-enforce your learning by getting you to re-visit some of the main ideas covered in the chapter and how they can apply to your coaching. Approach the questions in an ‘open-book’ format; which allows you to re-read the sections of the study guide before you write your answer.



CHAPTER CLOSING TASKS – Each chapter will end with some tasks that will get you to consider/apply the ideas and coaching tools covered in the chapter into your coaching. The tasks may include:



PERSONAL COACHING TASKS



COACHING WITH OTHERS



COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT



FURTHER VIEWING/READING – By its nature, only a certain amount of content is included in the MOOC. If you want to learn more about a topic, this will direct you to additional materials to view or read

YOUR DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY AS A CHILDREN’S COACH

Working with children can be a very worthwhile and positive experience for people. With the growing knowledge and the approach put forward in the iCoachKids MOOCs, this experience can be positive for each and every child, as well as for each and every coach.









It’s over to you now to take the responsibility to grow your coaching knowledge and ability. Enjoy the journey coach!

iCoachKids: MOOC 1 Study Guide - Learner Activity Tracker: Chapter No 4

Name: _____

Date: _____

As you complete each of the activities in each of the sections, please put a tick ✓ in the circle. This will allow you to track what you have completed and where you can restart when you return to the Study Guide after a break.

Study Guide / Chapter Section	VIEW / READ 	PRE-CHAPTER / STUDY GUIDE TASK 	PERSONAL COACHING TASK 	COACHING WITH OTHERS 	COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT 	QUIZ 	CHAPTER CLOSING TASKS 	FURTHER VIEW / READ 
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Section 1	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Section 2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Section 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>					
Section 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Summary / Conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have completed each of the activities in each section and the Learner Activity Grid is complete. **WELL DONE!** You can move to the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Introduction



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

As you know, the whole course is about how to best develop effective environments in sport for children. In Chapter 1 we looked at the role of the children's coach. In Chapter 2 we explored the importance of spending time thinking about our values and beliefs and how they influence our coaching and the children's experience. Chapter 3 was all about the benefits of creating some kind of vision and strategy for our teams and clubs and how to go about it.

In Chapter 4 we are going to explore '**What sport means for children and what it can do for them**'. Specifically, by the time you have completed chapter 3 you will be able to:

1. Explain that the benefits of sport go well beyond the learning of physical, technical and tactical skills
2. Describe how sport can enhance children and young people's psychosocial development and create positive values
3. Understand how personal development through sport is not automatic but it has to be planned for
4. Explain that sport can also have a negative impact and what typical conditions lead to negative outcomes and
5. Describe how what children and young people want and need from sport varies as a function of age and development

The whole point of this chapter is to help you understand that as a children's coach, we not only have a responsibility to improve physical, technical and tactical skills, but that we can also play a broader role to enhance the psychosocial wellbeing and capabilities of the children we coach.

If school teachers said that children only go to school to learn maths or geography and not to become more rounded human beings we would be outraged. Sport is the same; it offers great opportunities to help children develop into happy,

functional adults and outstanding citizens too. But let's not get ahead of ourselves!

It's time for another pre-chapter interactive activity.



PRE-CHAPTER ACTIVITY 4.0

As quick as possible, try to come up with a list of 7-10 items of what children and young people get from sport or the benefits of participation. Once you have the list identify the number in each category of the diagram physical, technical, tactical and psycho-social.

1. What do Children get from sport?

Now plot all the items on the diagram below:

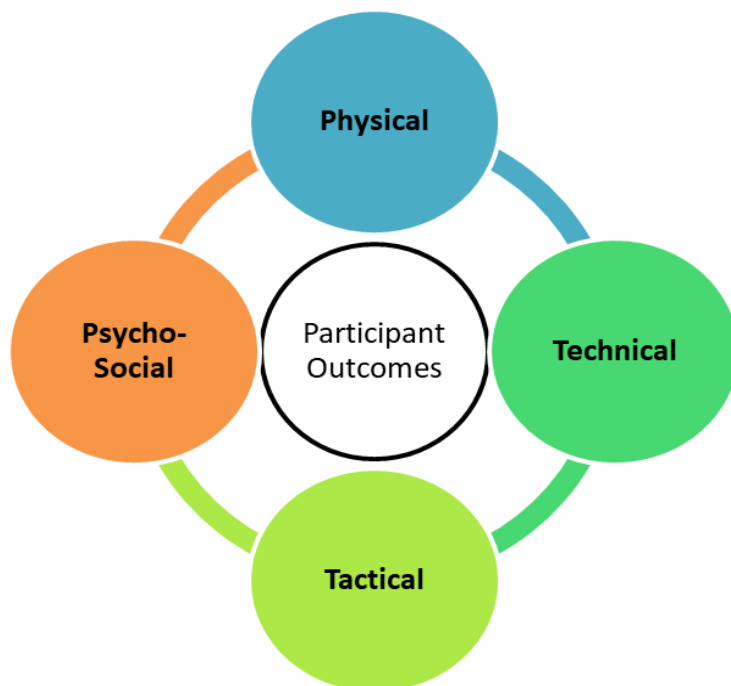


Figure 4.1 – Developmental outcomes of sport participation

Chapter 4 - Section 1

What children and young people get from sport?



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

Now it is time to explore what children and young people get from sport. We have done the activity you completed after the introduction with thousands of coaches over the years in coach education courses all over the world, and the outcome is always the same. When we ask coaches about what children get from sport, they always say things like these:

- Fun and friends
- Self-esteem
- Work ethic
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills and
- Respect

That's right, most of the things coaches say fall into the area of psychosocial development. The physical, technical and tactical always get way less answers. That's interesting, because when we ask coaches how many of their coaching activities are aimed at developing the psychosocial abilities, the answer is normally... NONE! We contradict ourselves! If psychosocial development is so important, why don't we plan for it?

Now, I know what you are thinking... I have heard it before. A lot of the time, when we challenge coaches in this way during courses, the reply is something like: "I don't plan for it, but it happens naturally, because sport is good for children".

And our answer is always the same: "well, maybe some psychosocial development happens naturally, but it is way too important to leave it to chance, isn't it?"

In fact, the reality is that there is a lot of evidence showing that sport can actually become a very negative experience for some children: low self-esteem,

decreased emotional wellbeing, even depression and anorexia can all be the result of negative sport experiences.

The power of sport to do good cannot be taken for granted. You, as a coach, have to do everything in your power to deliver a positive experience. You have to create an environment where children can develop psychosocially as much as physically, technically and mentally.

Now, coaches keep telling us that there are two main barriers for this to happen:

First, coaches are not completely sure what we mean by psychosocial development. And second, coaches are worried that they haven't got enough time to work explicitly on psychosocial development on top of doing the physical, technical and tactical.

This chapter will address these two concerns. Believe me, as children's coaches ourselves, all here at iCoachKids feel your pain. Doing all of this is not easy. To be fair, how much you can do depends on your context: for instance, how often you coach the kids. The more you see the children, the bigger the impact is likely to be. Whatever your circumstances, however, it is definitely worth trying.

Psychosocial Development Framework in Sport

Over the next section we will share with you a simple psychosocial development framework. This framework contains 6 categories:

- The Development of the Self
- Emotional Development
- Social Development
- Moral Development
- Cognitive Development
- Life and Professional Skills Development

We will explain what developmental outcomes can be achieved in each of these categories. But most importantly, we will show you what kind of environmental conditions and coach behaviours lead to them so you can try it for yourself!

This chapter will transform your coaching life and the life of the children you coach.

Chapter 4 - Section 2 - Part 1

Understanding psychosocial development in and through sport



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In this section, we are going to explore in more detail the positive and negative outcomes of sport for children. But before we go any further, please watch these videos (and/or read the transcript) of children and parents talking about their experiences in sport. Please make a note of the key positive or negative outcomes they identify.

See you after the video: (*video reproduced from Positive Coaching Alliance USA YouTube channel*)

<https://youtu.be/sMC5NxuGMN0>

David Klein – “Legends Baseball is a holistic baseball development programme aimed at developing youth mentally, emotionally, spiritually and obviously physically to be the best they can not just on the field but off the field too”

“He takes an approach to really trying to build the characters of the boys in the programme not just athletes”

“He wants the boys to really learn how to be great students, how to grow up into great young men”

“He’s just unrelentingly positive, he just gives lots of positive feedback to the kids about what’s working and when you focus on the positive I think what happens with kids and it’s certainly happened with my own son is that, things they do well they do even better”

“I feel like in his drills about baseball, he mixes in things about everyday life, you can have fun and learn stuff and you don’t have to choose between the two”

“It’s been things like nutrition, see how to listen, how to be a positive member of a team or a classroom”

“I used to get super nervous at the plate and get anxiety and stuff, the mindfulness aspect allow you to calm yourself. It is just so helpful, no coach has ever done that for me, I am so grateful for that”

David Klein – “We never miss a learning moment here, a teachable moment, so that’s clearly what we focus on. I feel I was put on this earth to do just that”

“He spends a lot of his time working with each kid individually, even if it’s only for a few minutes at a time”

David Klein – “Sports do teach kids life lessons but more so it’s really the quality coach, the positive coaches that teach life lessons through the sport”

I hope you enjoyed that. There are some great stories in the video, right? Sport can be the source of great highs and deep lows. Let’s see if we can identify some of them together in the next activity.



ACTIVITY 4.1 - STUDY GUIDE TASK

Please identify some of positive and negative outcomes mentioned during the previous video.

Positive Outcomes	Negative Outcomes

Chapter 4 - Section 2 - Part 2

Psychosocial Outcomes of Sport Participation



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

How did Activity 4.1 go? How many positive and negative outcomes did you manage to find?

In this section we are going to identify some of the more important outcomes in the 6 different categories of the. Do you remember what the categories are? Here they are again for you:

1. The Development of the Self
2. Emotional Development
3. Social Development
4. Moral Development
5. Cognitive Development
6. Life and Professional Skills Development

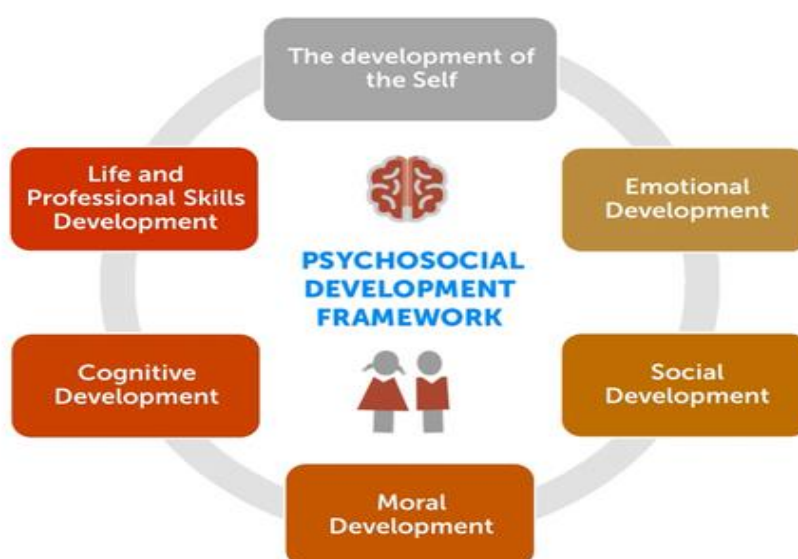


Figure 4.2 – Psychosocial Development Framework in Sport (Lara-Bercial, 2018)

The Development of the Self

The **Self** can be generally described as an understanding of 'what it means to be you' and the beliefs that we have about ourselves. Research shows that, when sport is delivered in an appropriate way, it can give children:

- A sense of identity
- A good dose of global self-worth
- Self-confidence
- A sense of hope and life purpose

Of course, the reverse of this is possible too. When sport is not delivered appropriately, it can have opposite effects like lowered self-worth and self-confidence, negative identities and a sense of hopelessness. But don't worry; we will see later how we can try to avoid these.

Emotional Development

Emotional Development includes an awareness of oneself and others, particularly around the identification, understanding and management of emotions and feelings. At the end of the day, we want our children and young people to become adults who are emotionally stable and healthy, don't we? Sport is a great place for personal growth in this area. Some of the positive outcomes that researchers have found include:

- Increased overall emotional wellbeing
- Emotional literacy
- Emotional control

Same as before though, sport is a double-edge sword. On certain occasions, it can lead to the development of negative emotions or decrease children's ability to control their emotions. All of this may also have an impact on the overall emotional wellbeing of the child.

Social Development

Another area of potential growth through sport is **Social Development**. This is about the ability of the child to relate to others, to form positive relationships, and to understand and adopt positive social norms. Social development allows children to function in society.

Well, there is no question that sport is a social activity. Even individual sports require interaction with others. Taking part in sport is naturally an environment in which social development may happen. Some of the most common areas of social growth that have been identified in previous research include:

- A sense of belonging
- Interpersonal skills
- Cooperation skills or teamwork
- Social capital

For the most part, sport can be a very effective tool for positive social development. However, there are also some potential negative outcomes. For example: the formation of cliques, potential bullying situation between teammates, and for young emerging athletes, social isolation because of the time they dedicate to sport.

Moral Development

The next area we are going to look at is **Moral Development**. It can be defined as the capacity of the individual for moral thinking and behaviour. For instance:

- A sense of right and wrong
- The capacity to respect others
- The comprehension and acceptance of the rules of society

This is a key area. The two main moral outcomes of sport include:

1. Learning to **respect** oneself, others and any external rules
2. An increased capacity for **moral thinking and decision-making**. In other words, learning not to cheat or hurt others in any way

Unfortunately, sport can have a negative effect in this area too, especially as children grow older: things like cheating, excessive aggression, doping and substance abuse like drinking or smoking have all been reported in different studies. Coaches and parents must keep a very close eye on all this!

Cognitive Development

Another significant growth area linked to sport is **Cognitive Development**. In the context of child sport, we can see it as the ability of the child to take in, process and produce information. The benefits of sport at this level have been proven time and again by research. This includes:

- Enhanced learning ability and academic performance
- Greater capacity for decision-making
- A marked improvement in their communication skills

Life or Professional Skills

Finally, there is a set of skills that are difficult to categorise into any of the previous 5 areas. Most of them fall into what has been named as **Life or Professional Skills** by researchers. Some of these skills include:

- An elevated work ethic
- Increased self-reliance and self-responsibility
- Goal setting skills
- Strong time-management and self-organisational ability
- A fierce competitiveness

In conclusion, we have seen that psychosocial development in and through sport is a real possibility. We provided some of the most common examples, but you may be able to identify a few more from your personal experience as an athlete, coach or parent.

Right, let's go to the next part of this section. In it, we will have a look at the conditions of the environment and the adult behaviours that can make most of these outcomes happen.

Chapter 4 - Section 2 - Part 3

Making It Happen



VIEW AND/OR READ

You [can view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In the previous section we identified some of the most important psychosocial outcomes children can get from sport. Now, understanding the mechanisms that can make all of this happen is vital. Remember, this is so important we cannot leave it to chance!

In one of our recent studies, we were able to identify 4 families of mechanisms responsible for promoting positive personal development. We called them:

1. The Attention Factory
2. The Greenhouse for Growth
3. The Personal Boost
4. The Real-Life Simulator



Figure 4.3 – Mechanisms leading to positive development in sport (Lara-Bercial, 2018)

The Attention Factory

The Attention Factory is built around the idea that sport participation provides children with a clear focus in life. Something they really enjoy and want to do. This focused attention generates positive behaviours in other areas of their life like family and school. It also appears to act as a protective shield against negative attitudes and behaviours. The desire to do well in the sport and the daily routine and structure were found to be very important factors.

The Attention Factory is linked to positive outcomes like:

- A strong identity
- A sense of hope and purpose
- A good work ethic
- An increased competitive edge

The Greenhouse for Growth

The next family of mechanisms is what we called **The Greenhouse for Growth**. This is about the features of the sport setting that lay the foundation for personal growth to take place. The main factors for success here include; a humanistic club philosophy, caring coaches, appropriate support from parents, and the wider network of relationships around the club.

The Greenhouse for Growth leads to good outcomes like:

1. Positive self-worth and confidence
2. Respect for others
3. Social capital

The Personal Boost

Another group of mechanism were grouped under what we called **The Personal Boost**. This is about all the situations that take place in sport that lift the spirits of the child. Key elements include; regular experiences of success, personal pride and the opportunity to burn off negative energy.

We found that the personal boost led to positive outcomes like:

1. A positive identity
2. Increased self-confidence
3. High levels of emotional wellbeing

The Real-Life Simulator

Finally, the last family of mechanisms we found was what we named **The Real-Life Simulator**. This was a big one! It contains all the experiences within sport that replicate the world outside. Some of the most important features include; the experience of competition, being part of a team, the constant need to pay attention and learn, exposure to different kinds of people, and being part of a mini-work place.

The real-life simulator leads to a massive amount of outcomes, but some of the most common include:

1. Cooperation skills
2. Emotional control and
3. A strong work ethic

So, there it is. We now have a much clearer idea of what children can get from sport. More importantly, we also know what kind of environments and coach behaviours make all of this happen.

It's time for you to think about your club/school/community group and your coaching to see how well you are doing in this area already.

Please complete the next activity.



ACTIVITY 4.2 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK - Comparing your personal experiences to the experiences of the children you coach

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:

1. Think back to your own sporting experiences, particularly as a child:
 - a) What were the key things you gained from being involved in sport?
 - b) Why did you gain these from sport?
 - c) How did your coach help to make this happen?

What did you gain? (1a)	Why? (1b)	Coach? (1c)

2. From your own experience of coaching:
 - a) What do you think your participants develop through being involved?
 - b) Why do you think they are learning these things?
 - c) Do you do anything specific to make this happen?

What did you gain? (2a)	Why? (2b)	Coach? (2c)



ACTIVITY 4.3 - COACHING WITH OTHERS

- ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION - TO DO IN YOUR OWN CONTEXT

1. Go to your club and ask the kids and their parents about the key things they gain from being involved in sport. Capture their responses below:

Things kids said	What parents said
List some of the similarities and differences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••••	



ACTIVITY 2.4 - COACHING IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT - Psychosocial Development Audit of your Club or Team

Please complete the below reflective template with key questions regarding your current practice in relation to the contents of this section of the course.

What psychosocial developmental outcomes do you think your club/team is fostering the most?

What are the processes leading to them?

What additional outcomes could you do more to promote?

How would you go about it?

What one thing will you do more of going forward?

Chapter 4 - Section 3

A Model of Personal Development Through Sport



VIEW AND/OR READ

You [can view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

By now you should have a pretty clear picture of what psychosocial benefits children can gain from sport. You should also be familiar with some of the environmental conditions that support this development.

Would you like a few more ideas and tools to use in your sessions? Great! Let's have a look at a simple model that has been successfully used to promote personal development through sport.

This model has come to be known as the **C's System for Personal Development through Sport**. The original idea came from Professor Richard Lerner in the US and it has been adapted for sport by David Haskins and UK Coaching.

The model is rooted in what's known as the Positive Youth Development movement (PYD). PYD focuses on supporting children and young people develop the attitudes, behaviours and skills they need to flourish. PYD is not about eradicating negative behaviours. PYD is more about equipping kids with what they need to do well and to become fully contributing members of society.

A favourite mantra of PYD is that:



This is a way more positive and proactive approach to personal development.

In a nutshell, the C system comprises six elements. When these 6 are sufficiently developed, children seem to thrive and make more successful transitions into adulthood. These elements include:

1. **Competence** is about developing a positive view of one's actions. That is, feeling and being capable of doing things that are important to us.
2. **Confidence** involves an internal sense of overall self-worth; for instance, thinking 'I am a worthy human being regardless of how I look or my ability'. Confidence also relates to our perceptions of how well we can deal with the demands of everyday life; this is also called self-efficacy
3. **Connection** is about building positive relationships with people and the institutions or environments we live in. These positive relationships benefit both the child and others and create a sense of belonging to something bigger than oneself
4. **Character** deals with having a sense of right and wrong and of respect for societal and cultural rules
5. **Caring** is about developing a sense of empathy and having the capacity to care for others. It is also about experiencing a feeling of being cared for by those around us
6. **Creativity** is understood as the capacity to find solutions to problems and to have original thoughts and ideas

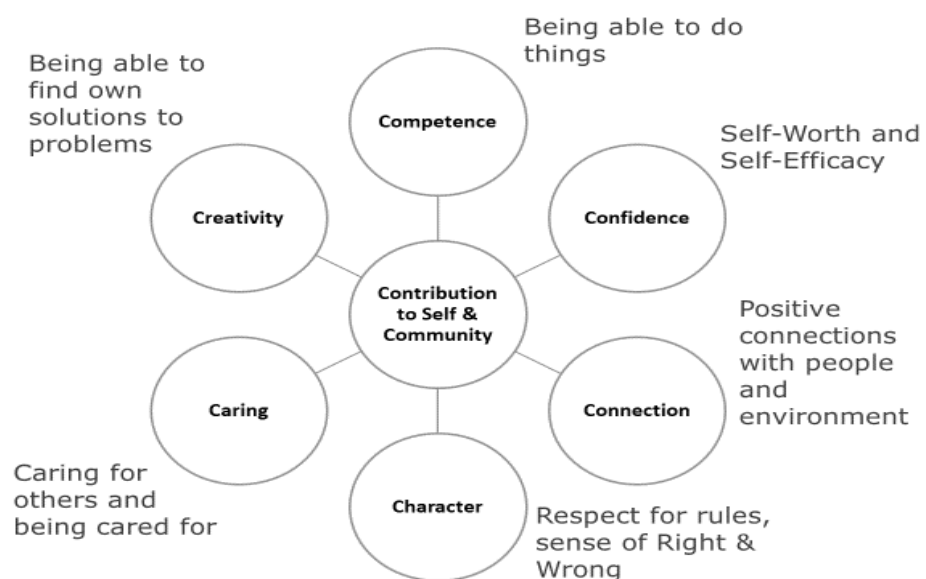


Figure 4.4 – The C's System – Adapted from Haskins (2010)

What's really interesting about the C's System is that research shows that children who score highly on the C's seem to develop an additional C: **Contribution**. These children seem to be able to make greater contributions to their own development and to those around them and their communities. It's a Win-Win situation, for children, sport and society.

Can sport contribute to the C's?

Of course, sport is an ideal place to develop the C's right? Let's explore what kind of things we can do as coaches to foster them:

1. **Competence:** To develop **competence**, coaches should set up activities that are pitched at the right level. These will progressively enhance the children's real and perceived levels of ability. Here, it is also important that coaches find ways to show the children that they are getting better. Setting targets and testing for personal bests every now and again are good ways to go about it.
2. **Confidence:** To develop **confidence**, coaches should help children experience success regularly and create what's called a mastery climate. This is about helping kids focus on their improvement rather than comparing them to other kids or to elite athletes. Having said this, a big part of building confidence is challenging children enough to foster a certain level of resilience and the ability to cope with failure, setbacks and disappointment.
3. **Connection: Connection** is a very important piece of the puzzle. It can be developed naturally by being part of a group, but coaches can also promote it by making sure that being at the club feels special and by showing kids their appreciation. Coaches can also encourage connection by giving kids a chance to work cooperatively with others, by helping others and even by letting them help the coach run the session. And why not organise social events every now and then: disco or bowling night are always big hitters!
4. **Character:** Sport is a perfect fit for **character**. Being part of an environment that respects and cares for participants, coaches, officials, parents and the rules of the sport should do it. Coaches should model and reinforce these values at all times.
5. **Caring:** Coaches have a major role to play here. Greeting children by their name as they come into the session, asking them about their day at school or how their weekend went goes a long way. Coaches can also ask children regularly if there is anything they can do to help them improve or to enjoy the sessions more. And coaches can also create situations where children have to care for each other, for example, using a 'buddy-system' where pairs have to look out for each other.

6. **Creativity:** Creativity can be fostered by using activities and creating situations where participants have to think for themselves. Helping children understand rather than making them 'copy and repeat' mindlessly is key. Small sided-games, team challenges, self-assessments and questioning techniques can make a very big impact here.



Figure 4.5 – Bringing about the C's – Adapted from Haskins (2010)

It's a lot to take in, right? But also, a bit of a recipe and plenty of ingredients we can use to cook up a good personal development session for the children that you coach. Importantly, for those concerned about the lack of time coaches have to work on personal development, everything we have just talked about can be integrated into your regular training sessions. It just needs a little bit of extra thought and preparation. The impact on the kids is well worth the effort!

Hope you have enjoyed this section. Please complete Activity 4.4.



ACTIVITY 4.4 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK - Promoting the Cs in your sessions

Please think about how you are already promoting the Cs in your sessions and what else you could do going forward

	What do you already do to promote this C?	What else could you do?
Competence		
Confidence		
Connection		
Character		
Caring		
Creativity		

Chapter 4 - Section 4

Making the Sport Fit The Child, Not The Child Fit the Sport



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In the previous sections we looked at what coaches can do to promote personal development of children through sport. There were lots of ideas and practical tips that we can use straight away. Now, as children grow and develop, what they want, what they need, and how we give it to them changes over time. We have said multiple times that CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI-ADULTS, but a 5 year old and a 12 year old are also very different and need to be treated differently. If we don't, we risk them getting bored, getting injured or even dropping out of sport altogether...

To complicate things a bit more, children's development is influenced by what's called the three ages of sport: chronological age, biological age and training age:

Chronological age is the actual age of the child as per their date of birth.

Biological age is the developmental age of the child based on their level of biological maturity. Research shows that children of the same chronological age may be up to 3 or 4 years apart based on their rate of maturation. The kids on this picture are all the same chronological age, but they are clearly not the same biological age.



Training age is the number of years a child has been practicing a sport or activity. So, two children could share chronological and biological age, yet be poles apart in terms of skill and understanding if one has trained substantially more.

As coaches then, we should try to work out the current stage of development of each child based on the combination of the three different ages to adapt the way we coach them. This will be covered in a lot more detail in MOOC 2, but we would like to share with you at this point, a simple model developed by iCK Director Dr Sergio Lara-Bercial, a few years ago to help coaches of children work through the growth and development of children.

Growth and Development: The SPEC Model (the Social, Physical, Emotional and Cognitive development of children)



Figure 4.5 – The SPEC Model (reproduced from Wildcats Activ8 Coaches' Resource – Sport Northern Ireland, 2012)

Let's start with **Social Development** area. Some of what coaches need to know:

1. Children start by being very self-centred and unable to share or work cooperatively. When given the chance however, they progressively become more able to work in groups and actually enjoy it a lot. For you as a coach, this may mean being mindful that very young children may not be ready to work in groups or to complete tasks that require high amounts of cooperation or collaborative thinking. It may also mean that some kids may appear selfish and self-centred, but that doesn't mean they are 'bad kids', it's just where they are!
2. Children do not always understand the difference between their performance and the team's. They don't really get that different players may have different roles either. And they also struggle to see that working together for a common purpose, even if this means sacrificing your own goals, is a desirable thing to do. Again, as a coach, don't get mad if a child appears selfish or disinterested in the group. Just help them understand until they get it!
3. Children (like adults) tend to become close friends with some kids and not others and they also form small friendship groups. As a coach, it is not so much about breaking up these groups, but about creating opportunities for them to interact with kids they don't spend a lot of time with regularly. Purposefully pairing kids up with a non-close friend may lead to them getting to know each other a bit more and becoming closer.

What about the **Physical Development** dimension. Some key facts coaches need to know include:

1. Children grow at different rates from birth to full maturity and this affects what they are capable of learning and doing, as well as their proneness to injury. Some of them, particularly girls may have a growth spurt as puberty starts from as early as 11 years of age. What coaches need to know is that during periods of rapid growth, coordination may suffer as the brain adapts to the new proportions and children may experience growing pains and be more susceptible to high impact or repetitive strain injuries.
2. Children grow from the top down and from the centre out. The implication for coaches is that children will be able to control body parts closer to the brain and to the midline earlier than those further away. Think about it this way, they will be better with their hands than with their feet and better with strength-based activities than dexterity-based ones (for instance, kicking for distance versus kicking for placement).
3. Children's energy systems are not as developed as those of an adult. Their aerobic and anaerobic systems will not be working at full capacity until their teens. For coaches, it means that, particularly young children should not be working for more than 5 to 20 seconds at a time with equal recovery periods. They will progressively be able to engage in longer and more intense activities.

Ok, so now let's look at the **Emotional Development** area. Some of the things coaches should be aware of include:

1. First, young children may struggle to cope with disappointment or not getting their own way. Some may react by throwing a tantrum while others may look sad and withdrawn. As a coach, you can't expect every child to behave in the same way. Getting to know every child and speaking to their parents about the best ways to help them control their emotions will be very useful for you.
2. Second, children can have little emotional self-awareness. This means they don't really realise the impact of their actions and behaviours. It also means that they may struggle to express emotions and feelings, and this again may lead to either tantrums or withdrawal. In the long run, a calming voice and repeated explanations of the impact of losing control tend to work much better than discipline.
3. And finally, most children don't really get 'delayed gratification' so this idea of 'if you work hard we will play games at the end' may not really work. As a coach, while fostering the development of their 'delayed gratification' capacity, you have to make sure there is sufficient 'immediate gratification' for them to enjoy the sessions and keep coming back for more!

And finally, let's explore the **Cognitive Development** area:

1. First, coaches need to understand that children learn in multiple ways, by doing, by observing and emulating, by listening, etc. But coaches also need to know that, at first, children will learn much more by doing and using trial and error than by observing and listening. For you as a coach, it means that the focus should be on giving kids a greater chance of doing and trying things and using simple demonstrations and explanations when required.
2. Second, children's concentration span is short and their ability to process lots of information is not as well developed as in adolescents or adults. In other words, don't talk for too long, don't give complex or lengthy explanations and don't keep them waiting in lines! If you do, there is a strong chance they will lose concentration, get bored and start doing things you don't really want them to!
3. And finally, children also struggle to differentiate between cause and effect and between effort and ability. For this reason, they tend to think that if they try hard they should get it right straight away. Failure may be difficult to cope with and coaches have a big role to play in getting young players to understand that learning doesn't happen overnight.

So, what does this all mean to you as a coach? Well, imagine the four dimensions as four related yet different journeys the kids have to make on their way to full maturity. There are a few consequences for coaches:

1. Pitch Activities and Sessions at the Right Level: If we want activities, full sessions and programmes to work, these need to be pitched at the right level. But not only on the physical dimension, which is the more visible dimension out of the four, but on all of them. Children develop at different rates in all four areas. A child may have the physical ability to do something, but if socially, emotionally or cognitively the task is at the wrong level, they won't be able to do it or do it consistently.

We use something call the **Coaching Zones** to illustrate this point. As you can see in this figure, when we get it right and our activities and session are set right above the kids' current level of ability, the magic happens and they enjoy themselves and learn a lot. We call that the **Learning Zone**, and that's where we want kids to be as much as possible in our sessions.

Coaching Zones



Figure 4.6 – The Coaching Zones (reproduced from Wildcats Activ8 Coaches' Resource – Sport Northern Ireland, 2012)

Anything below that, we call the **Comfort Zone**, where learning may be consolidated and things feel safe, but if kids spend too long there they quickly drop into the **Boredom Zone**, and as you know, nothing good happens there.

At the other extreme, when we are asking kids to do something that is way above their current level of ability, we call it the **Panic Zone**, and in the panic zone not much good happens. Kids either withdraw and fall into the boredom zone or freak out and never come back! The only good use of the panic zone may be when we want children to experience a little bit of difficulty and hardship to see if they manage to bring themselves back to an emotional state where learning can

happen. Now, this has to be done in a very skilful and controlled way as it can quickly escalate and get out of control!

2. Including All Children: The second implication for coaches of the multidimensional nature of children is that there is bound to be different levels of development between all the children in your team, and in all four areas. This makes providing suitable activities for everyone in your session a challenging proposition, yet one that is worth working for. Running differentiated sessions takes a bit of planning and skill, but it is very, very important. We will deal with this in MOOCs 2 and 3.

Ok! So now you understand a bit more about how children grow and develop and what it means for you as a coach. Please complete the following activities to make sure you can apply these ideas to your coaching.



ACTIVITY 4.1 - STUDY GUIDE TASK - How to do it Better

Please think about how you are already promoting the Cs in your sessions and what else you could do going forward

We have put together a set of scenarios. See if you can work out where it went wrong for these coaches based on what we covered in this section and how they could do it better!

Scenario 1

John is coaching a group of 11 year olds in a community football session. Some of the children can do the skills and others are struggling. The noise level has increased among the boys and they are getting a bit rowdy, John can even hear swearing, and it seems the level of aggression has gone up. John is concerned the session may not be safe at the moment.

1. What is the first thing John should do?
2. Why do you think the session may have gone that way?
3. What could John do to bring it back to a safe and enjoyable place?

Scenario 2

Jenny is working with a group of 7 year olds girls in a basketball camp. The girls are doing a technical drill, some of them clearly understand the instructions, but she can see some of them are getting bored and withdrawing, some others are chatting to each other and a group of 3 have decided to go and do something completely different.

1. What could be the reasons why the girls are behaving like this?
2. What could Jenny do to get the session back on track?

Scenario 3

Hannah is coaching a mixed group of 9 year olds in a handball session. Some of the children have been in the group for a year and others have just joined last week. The boys are starting to pick on the girls and the girls are getting upset and withdrawing. This has happened before in previous sessions and in fact a lot of girls have stopped coming.

1. What could Hannah have done to avoid this situation?
2. How could the club help Hannah?
3. How could Hannah encourage the boys and girls to work better together?



ACTIVITY 4.2 - PERSONAL COACHING TASK - How good are your SPECs?

And second, we would like you to, using the template provide below, reflect on how well your sessions cater for all children and in all four areas of development of the SPEC model and what you could do better going forward.

	How well do your sessions cater for all children in this area?	What could you do better?
Physical		
Emotional		
Social		
Cognitive		

Chapter 4

What Sport Means for Children and What It Can Do for Them - Summary and Conclusions



VIEW AND/OR READ

You can [view this section on the online MOOC](#) or you can read it in the Study Guide. If it re-enforces your learning, you can do both.

In this section we are going to summarise Chapter 4 'What sport means for children and what it can do for them'.

We started the chapter by demonstrating that sport can do a lot more for children than just developing their physical, technical and tactical skills. However, we also saw that personal development through sport, although it may happen naturally as a result of participation, it is far too important to leave it to chance. One reason for this is that we know that sport, when delivered in the wrong way, can also have negative, consequences at a personal level, leading to dropout.

Psycho-Social Development Framework for Sport

With this in mind, and to help coaches get their head around what personal development means in sport, we used a model out of our latest research. This model contained 6 development areas that you can see in the diagram here. They were:

1. The Development of the Self
2. Emotional Development
3. Social Development
4. Moral Development
5. Cognitive Development
6. Life and Professional Skills Development

The model also proposed a series of four families of mechanisms or environmental conditions that contributed to personal development in sport as you can see in this diagram. They were:

- The Attention Factory
- The Greenhouse for Growth
- The Personal Boost
- The Real-Life Simulator

C's System of Personal Development through Sport

The chapter then tried to make all of this even more real by drawing on the C system of personal development through sport. The C system proposes that children and young people who develop Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Caring and Creativity make a more successful transition into early adulthood and a stronger Contribution to their own development and to their communities.

Growth and Development: SPEC Model

Finally, we looked at how children grow and develop using the SPEC model of social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Using this simple model helped us understand how what children want and need from us changes over time. Remember, as coaches we have to get to know each child and pitch activities at the right level in all four development areas to keep them in the learning zone!

And that's it for chapter 4. Please complete the quiz to check that you understand all that's been covered in the chapter. Then do the chapter Closing Task.

Thanks a million for your hard work! We will see you in the next chapter "What are the ingredients of a positive sport environment?"



STUDY GUIDE TASK: QUIZ

1. Identify the 6 categories of the psychosocial development framework:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

2. Identify 4 families of mechanisms responsible for promoting positive personal development

1.
2.
3.
4.

3. From the following list Identify the 6 Cs on the Personal Development Model

	- Competence		- Competition
	- Confidence		- Connection
	- Composure		- Collaboration
	- Character		- Commitment
	- Caring		- Creativity

3. Match the three ages of sport: 1) Chronological age; 2) Biological age; 3) Training age, to their definitions below

- The developmental age of the child based on their level of biological maturity, which may be up to 3 or 4 years apart based on maturation.
- The number of years a child has been practicing a sport or activity.
- The actual age of the child as per their date of birth.



Q1

- The development of the Self
- Emotional Development
- Social Development
- Moral Development
- Cognitive Development and
- Life and Professional Skills Development

Q2

1. The Attention Factory
2. The Greenhouse for Growth
3. The Personal Boost
4. The Real-Life Simulator

Q3

- Competence
- Confidence
- Connection
- Character
- Caring
- Creativity

Q4

1. **Chronological age** is the actual age of the child as per their date of birth.
2. **Biological age** is the developmental age of the child based on their level of biological maturity. Research shows that children of the same biological age may be up to 3 or 4 years apart based on their rate of maturation.
3. **Training age** is the number of years a child has been practicing a sport or activity. So, two children could share chronological and biological age, yet be poles apart in terms of skill and understanding if one has trained substantially more.

Chapter 4 - Closing Tasks



ACTIVITY CT 1 - PERSONAL COACHING (Written/Oral):

Choose one of the Cs and spend 2 weeks purposefully trying to develop it in your sessions. Write a 500-word/Record a 3' video reflective piece on how this experience went.



ACTIVITY CT 2 - COACHING WITH OTHERS:

Run an interactive workshop for the parents of the kids you coach about the benefits of sport for their children based on the ideas presented in this chapter. Write a 500-word/Record a 3' video reflective piece on how this experience went.



FURTHER VIEWING/READING

- **Sport Ireland Coaching Children Programme** description and link to its Factsheets: <https://www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Coaching-Children/>
- **Prof Richard Lerner YouTube talk about the 5 Cs:** <https://www.icoachkids.eu/who-what-how-key-principles-of-coaching-children.html>
- **Positive Coaching Alliance Founder Jim Thompson's TEDTalk:** <https://www.icoachkids.eu/who-what-how-key-principles-of-coaching-children.html>
- **Blogs on** www.iCoachkids.eu
 - <https://www.icoachkids.eu/who-what-how-key-principles-of-coaching-children.html>