

Impact of Participation in Sports on Physical Activity and Feelings of Belonging Among Persons with Disabilities

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Objective:

To examine how participation in sports helps people with disabilities function and get exercise. To research how people with developmental disabilities are involved in sports and how they meet others through their involvement. To share the value of participating in sports by relating stories of persons who have lived experience with disability.

Method:

Literature review of six scholarly articles located through Google scholar searches using the key terms “individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” “participation in sports,” “belonging,” and “benefits” in various combinations. Inclusion of personal experiences shared by individuals with disabilities.

Results/Conclusion:

- “Integrating opportunities to make choices and ensuring that persons with IDD experience social support, positive staff attitudes, friendships, community, and a sense of achievement are key to facilitating participation within sporting environments.” (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2021).
- Personal stories of Sport participation are useful tools to help sports organizations create inclusive opportunities. (Allan et al., 2018).
- I participated in my high school cross country program. At the end of the race, they cheer you on – no matter if you were last in the race. The whole team would be cheering you on. It made me feel included and encouraged. It felt like it was an inclusive and supportive program. It encouraged me to do some races in the future; I did the Kickoff to Kinnick 5k last fall.
- More research is needed in this area.
- Disability should not prevent people who want to participate in sports with their peers. Sports participation can be an important tool in building friendships for people with IDD.

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