

# GOOD SPORTS SPINE

The Good Sports Spine is a sense making tool to help understand how adults impact children's sporting experiences. The two different 'climates' should be seen as opposite ends of a continuum. Good Sports aims to encourage adults to move towards the Climate of Development.

## Climate of Performance

*Primary focus is on:*

### Winning & Losing

Win at all costs attitude  
High concern for status/ego  
Mistakes are to be avoided  
Focus on the outcome

### Only the Best Matter

Love / affection based on performance  
Playing favourites to most talented  
Encouraging gossip or rumour

### Strict Adult Control

Adults make all decisions  
Mistakes immediately corrected  
Ignore children's ideas / feelings

### Performance Training

Repetitive drilling  
Direct instruction & punishment

### Early Specialisation

Single sport  
Year round  
Pressure to select only one sport

## Area of child's experience

### INSPIRE

Child's belief in their own ability

### CONNECT

Child's sense of belonging

### EMPOWER

Child's sense of personal autonomy

### PLAY

Purpose of training and the role of adults

### SAMPLE

What investment in sport during childhood means for long term participation

## Climate of Development

*Primary focus is on:*

### Effort & Improvement

Striving to play to one's best  
Little concern for status / ego  
Mistakes are necessary for growth  
Praise for effort and trying new things

### Everyone Matters

Cheering for all children  
Unconditional affection  
Encouraging friendship and care  
All valued as important

### Kids Have Control

Time given to correct own mistakes  
Recognise children's ideas / feelings  
Children lead decision making

### Learning Through Play

Enjoyment first and foremost  
Discovery approach  
Strategic questioning  
Healthy desire to compete

### Late Specialisation

Trying multiple sports  
Balance with school and friends  
Single sport focus best after sampling

# RESEARCH RATIONALE

The adult behaviours most meaningful to our children's experiences can be clustered into two patterns: (1) *Climates of Performance* and (2) *Climates of Development*. While no individual or group will fall 100% into one or the other, support for these clusters of behaviours exists around the world. The Good Sports Spine is informed by internationally tested models of motivation and positive youth development in sport.

## Self Determination

Research into Self Determination finds that we have three basic psychological needs that, when satisfied, lead to optimal experience, development, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000):

**Autonomy:** the desire to engage in activities of one's choosing and to be the origin of one's behavior

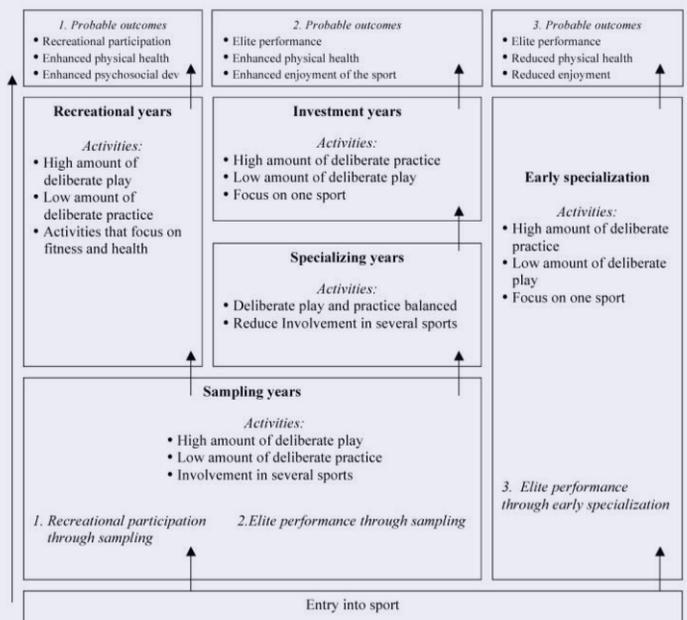
**Competence:** the desire to have an effect on the environment and to achieve desired outcomes

**Relatedness:** the desire to feel connected to valued others

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268. doi:10.1207/S15327965PLI1104\_01

## Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP)

1. Early sampling does not hinder elite sport participants where peak performance is reached after physical maturity
2. Early sampling is linked to a longer sport career and has positive implications for long-term sport involvement.
3. Early sampling allows participation in a range of contexts that most favourably affect positive youth development.
4. High amounts of deliberate play during the sampling years build a solid foundation of intrinsic motivation through involvement in activities that are enjoyable.
5. A high amount of deliberate play during the sampling years establishes a range of motor and cognitive experiences that children can bring to a primary sport.
6. Around the end of primary school, children should have the opportunity to specialise or continue sport at a recreation level. Late adolescents have developed the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills needed to invest their effort into highly specialised training in one sport.



Côté, J., Lidor, R., & Hackfort, D. (2009). ISSP position stand: To sample or to specialize? Seven postulates about youth sport activities that lead to continued participation and elite performance. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 7(1), 7–17. doi:10.1080/1612197X.2009.9671889