

## TEACHING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

© Zoltán BÁBOSIK  
(International Pető Institute, Budapest, Hungary)

[babosik@freemail.hu](mailto:babosik@freemail.hu)

*Our society, which has its share of the elderly and the ill, recognizes the paramount role a healthy lifestyle plays in our renewal: therefore, teaching this lifestyle has become a paramount goal. It is common for medical professionals to observe that the roots of illnesses which plague many elderly patients were planted as much as ten or fifteen years ago. An unhealthy lifestyle has consequences. This paper wishes to explore the essential components of a healthy lifestyle and offer methods with which to educate the population as a whole with regards to living a healthy life.*

**Keywords:** teaching, healthy lifestyle, students

One of the main goals of education is to assist in the development of making constructive and healthy life choices. This manifests itself in constructive and healthy activities and lifestyles. Within these goals lie the self directed life choices which lead to healthy bodies and minds. Of course living a healthy lifestyle means developing the necessary components of such a lifestyle, primarily regular physical exercise and meeting a body's hygienic and nutritional needs.

In short, it is necessary to develop a lifestyle which favors good health. Good health is also the most important prerequisite for safety. We all know that to gain and keep a job depends on our ability to perform at the workplace: similarly, our ability to keep our bodies intact depends on the condition our bodies are in. Although all of these components are vital, physical exercise stands out. This is due to the fact that physical exercise is the most important and least expensive insurer of good health in modern life. Recognition of this fact leads many countries to encourage exercise within their own populations. National sports events, such as group skiing in Scandinavian countries, distance skating in the Netherlands and London marathons all attest to the desire of these and other governments to encourage physical activity within their citizens so that they would see it as a natural part of patriotic life and thus improve the health of the people of these nations. The aforementioned solutions and those similar to them have already shown considerable results and their individual and societal benefits have been proven. (Bábosik, 1999:80)

### On a healthy lifestyle, in general

One's age, place of residence and socio-economic status all play a role in how their physical activities and fitness develop. (Földesiné, 2009).

A nation's cultural relationship to sports such as olympic traditions, does much to develop a national and personal image about sports and influences how

a person sees physical activity, although that also depends on ones' education, socioeconomic background and of course personal interests which take some of their cues from how sports are viewed in his or her society. As mentioned earlier, many societies' use cultural events to build the physiques of their people. This filters down into daily life where people are no longer passive observers but activity participants in such pastimes as neighborhood soccer matches and other activities practiced in their spare time. While participation rates have improved in many societies, Hungary has not had an appreciatble increase in sports participation over the last twenty years. (Szabó & Gál & Dóczy, 2008). Teaching healthy lifestyles, developing good motor skills and preserving our own health should all be on the agenda. While this is one of the most important components of good health, we still don't incorporate it into our daily lives. Excessive stress and excessive indolence both harm the human body. Regular excersize insures that our bodies, even when they are at rest, will be sufficiently rigorous in function. It promotes many health benefits such as educational and psychological sharpness, a greater amount of energy use and a better regulated intake of oxygen. Regular exercise enhances heart and lung capacity, and promotes a healthy balance of nutrients in internal organs while ensuring prompt and regular waste processing. A healthy body provides a greater level of immune resistance to sickness and regulates the nervous system better. Exercise benefits the bones as well, supplying them with more red blood cells and helping them develop greater strength.

Regular physical activity helps the body develop conditioning and physical coordination. (Rigler, 2003). Movement brings about hormonal changes as well, which effects the entire body and leaves it in a better shape. In the course of regular exercise, one goes through a range of emotions: success, failure, victory, defeat and of course pain and endurance. Sport teaches self control and self respect, while providing self confidence and freeing one of certain inhibitions. Excersing in a group also builds comadrie and a moral sense of fair play. However, we can not ignore that the benefits of sport and exercise are not uniform: they are affected by a variety of factors such as genes and diet.

According to the National Sports Strategy Council, "In ideal situations, physical exercise plays an important role in the safeguarding of our physical and mental health and the development of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise teaches fundamental life and leadership skills, helps raise healthy children and, through games helps the children develop problem solving skills while giving young people an opportunity for self actualization..Exercise can play an important role in the development and strengthening of family and community ties, while providing cultural and leisure opportunities, relaxation, joy, and a healthy way to spend time, all while affording an opportunity to enhance one's ability and confidence in potentially disadvantageous group situations." (XXI. National Sport Strategy, in Hungary)

A love of sports and physical activities that one develops in youth serves as a good basis on which to build motivation levels for physical activity in later years. The best time to learn and teach physical education is childhood. The role of television and video has now been replaced by computers and the internet in the lives of many children and thus it is not surprising that many children in elementary school are out of shape and that some schools have as much as a third of their students in physical therapy.

Childhood physical education forms a basis for individual motor control, their attitudes towards exercising, their knowledge about physical education,

their level and ability of physical fitness in adulthood and last but not least their preparedness for the strains of the sport world. It is the responsibility of parents and educators to create an environment conducive to physical fitness, including appropriate social interactions within home and school. Therefore, every type of school should make a broad curriculum of physical education available for all students. The development of motor skills and physical prowess takes place both in and out of school, through a wide variety of activities. (Sáringerné Szilárd, 2009:1-2)

Physical education is a field unto itself. Its goal is the long term development and maintenance of a student's ability, meeting their needs and encouraging those needs and motivation levels to change towards a healthier lifestyle. In general, the tasks of physical development are also directed towards personal development. The attention paid, the feelings developed and the moral and will power related characteristics developed through sports and exercise are interrelated. The individual tasks include many different facets of development, geared towards skills such as focus, the development of willpower and enhanced moral fiber. Healthy physical and individual, multifaceted human development are individual endeavors. While increasing the amount of physical stress one is subjected to, it is important to observe one's own physical and emotional limits. (Sáringerné Szilárd, 2007:3)

### Elements of teaching children to live a healthy lifestyle

Developing a healthy lifestyle requires a set of actors that influence individual development. These include:

- ✓ -The traditions and atmosphere of one's school
- ✓ -The usefulness and effectiveness of physical education courses
- ✓ -The hygienic habits which surround the individual and the assumptions that individual makes upon exposure to these habits
- ✓ -The individuals' family life

The atmosphere of a school can best serve a healthy lifestyle if said atmosphere is not dominated by one sided intellectualism, if it respects physical achievement as much as the intellectual. A solid tradition of sports and physical fitness can go a long way towards instilling respect among the students for a healthy, active lifestyle: additionally, schools must make these physical accomplishments a key, regular and prominent part of the curriculum and the school's recognized accomplishments. Through this, the possibility that schools and their students do not have equal respect for physical achievements lessens. These changes in the value systems and cognitive orientations of the individual students will lend a favorable atmosphere within which they will hold physical development in equally high esteem. At the same time, this newfound public, traditional and celebrated value system will lead students to develop physically as part of their own regimen and will, in many cases, enhance the physical fitness of the students.

In order to teach a healthy lifestyle and to develop the physical prowess of students, the Hungarian public school curriculum made a serious educational and time commitment commonly referred to as "body development." Making good use of time and resources is also vital. In order to accomplish this, and to make sure that the time and space limitations are used to maximum effect, one

must decide on a goal which is achievable, worthwhile and impactful.

Therefore, it must be understood that within the realm of physical education, the basic goal and value is not expressed in terms of raw accomplishment but rather in terms of movement and building a love for physical activity. The point is not for any one student to jump record heights but to have that student learn to love jumping. The lasting achievement of physical education classes is an understanding by the student of the need for physical activity throughout their lives and not the spur of the moment accomplishments in any one individual class. Physical education classes should uphold the value of longterm movement and physical activity and instill in students a love of these things. Naturally, the question of how these goals can be met arises. In order to achieve this goal of a love of physical activity, several tasks must be executed. Firstly, it must be understood that rote, monotone exercise and teaching regimens will drive students away from the subject. The same can be said of strategies that seek to exhaust students: these strategies will not enhance but will rather erode the relationship with physical education.

These negative educational models which distort the true value of physical education can be corrected through the use of games and the increase in game elements in physical education. (Bábosik, 1999:80-81) Under normal circumstances, physical education is quite playful as the game itself influences the students' thoughts and actions in the long term. Playfulness and games are a natural part of our lives- far more prominent in childhood- and one of the few aspects of our existence not governed by material desires. Games are naturally enjoyable and help express creativity. Games can be individualistic, bringing with them a sense of independent decisionmaking and instilling a sense of self control and personal responsibility but said games can also be played in pairs, where students need to have quick reaction times and an understanding of their surroundings while fighting their battles. And finally, games can be played in teams, with problem solving and cooperation as the ultimate goals. These goals and cooperative efforts can also develop a sense of selflessness, where students for example pass the ball instead of taking their own shot if that helps the game. Physical fitness games go a long way towards assisting with the development of physical abilities, fitness, motor skills and gaining inner emotional and mental strength. (Sáringerné Szilárd, 2007:3) Games, including those which ask one to find a solution, place physical activities into a childlike and life appropriate framework while almost imperceptively strengthening a person's desire for physical activity. However, we have closed play off from our lives, relegating it to the background and frustrating our need for it. This lack of play frustrates our developmental abilities: after all, it is a long held view that we need to continuously develop a skill, lest it wither away.

A basic premise towards teaching a healthy lifestyle is establishing, reinforcing and incorporating habits of good hygiene into daily life. These habits open the door to an opportunity for the individual to learn, execute and maintain personal upkeep congruent with the internal desires of a person. Additionally, schools must make every effort to understand that this is one area where savings in the long term are not possible, since what is saved today will be spent many times over to remedy various ailments within the general population as poor hygiene habits do lead to many illnesses and infections which effect the general population. Schools must develop and sustain a positive image of physical wellness for the students so that the link between good habits and good results are not broken over time. Additionally, it should be kept in mind that one

nation's people, specifically their poor hygienic habits, may result in others looking askance at that culture.

Last but not least, one must remember the role of the family and how indispensable it is to the physical growth and good habits of students. It is singularly important. The family, both in overt teachings and showing through day to day habits a good, healthy and active lifestyle and the regular incorporation of a wide variety of physical activities, turn their children onto lifelong habits and rhythms which will resonate with them and help them build healthy lifestyles over the long term. (Bábosik, 1999:81-82)

### References

- BÁBOSIK, István (1999): *A nevelés elmélete és gyakorlata*. Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest.
- FÖLDESINÉ SZABÓ, Gyöngyi (2009): *Szabadidősport-életmód-sportpolitika. Hazai és nemzetközi tendenciák. Útban a sportoló nemzet felé?* Nemzeti Szabadidősport Szövetség, Budapest.
- SZABÓ, Gyöngyi & GÁL, Andrea & DÓCZI, Tamás (2008): *Társadalmi riport a sportról*. Magyar Sporttudományi Társaság, Budapest.
- RIGLER, Endre (2004): *Sportjáték-elmélet* I.kötet. Semmelseis Egyetem Testnevelési és Sporttudományi Kar, Budapest.
- SÁRINGERNÉ SZILÁRD, Zsuzsa (2007): *Testnevelés óvodás és kisiskolás korban*. Főiskolai jegyzet. SB Bt., Budapest.
- SÁRINGERNÉ SZILÁRD, Zsuzsa (2009): *A testnevelés, mint az életre felkészítés egyik eszköze*. Manuscript, Budapest.