

chapter

24

Character Development and Good Sporting Behavior

Session Outline

- **Defining Character and Good Sporting Behavior**
- **Approaches to Developing Good Sporting Behavior**
- **Moral Reasoning and Moral Behavior**
- **Do Sport and Physical Education Enhance Character Development?**
- **Guiding Practice in Character Development**

Defining Character and Good Sporting Behavior

There is no one universally accepted definition of *sportspersonship*, or what in this unit is called *good sporting behavior*. However, character and good sporting behavior fall within the general area of morality in sport.

Three Components of Morality in Sport

Good sporting behavior

Concern and respect for the rules and officials, social conventions, and the opponent, as well as one's full commitment to one's sport and the absence of a negative approach toward participation.

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Kids' Takes on Moral Issues in Sport

- **Categories of moral issues identified by youth:**
 - **Fairness**
 - **Negative game behavior**
 - **Negative teammate behavior**
- **These findings confirm and extend adult perspectives on moral issues in sport. They also show that issues of rightness and wrongness occur in practices, before and after games, and at home, not just during the game.**

Approaches to Developing Good Sporting Behavior

Social–psychological approach

To understand morality and character, one must consider the *personal* elements in the structural–developmental approach plus *social factors* that go beyond reinforcement, modeling, and social comparison elements of the social learning approach.

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Components of Social Learning

Modeling or observational learning

Learning by watching what others do (or do not do)

Reinforcement

Being reinforced or penalized for one's actions

Social comparison

Exhibiting behaviors in an effort to fit in with one's peer or comparison group

The Structural–Developmental Approach

Moral behavior

The execution of an act that is deemed right or wrong

The Structural–Developmental Approach

Moral behavior

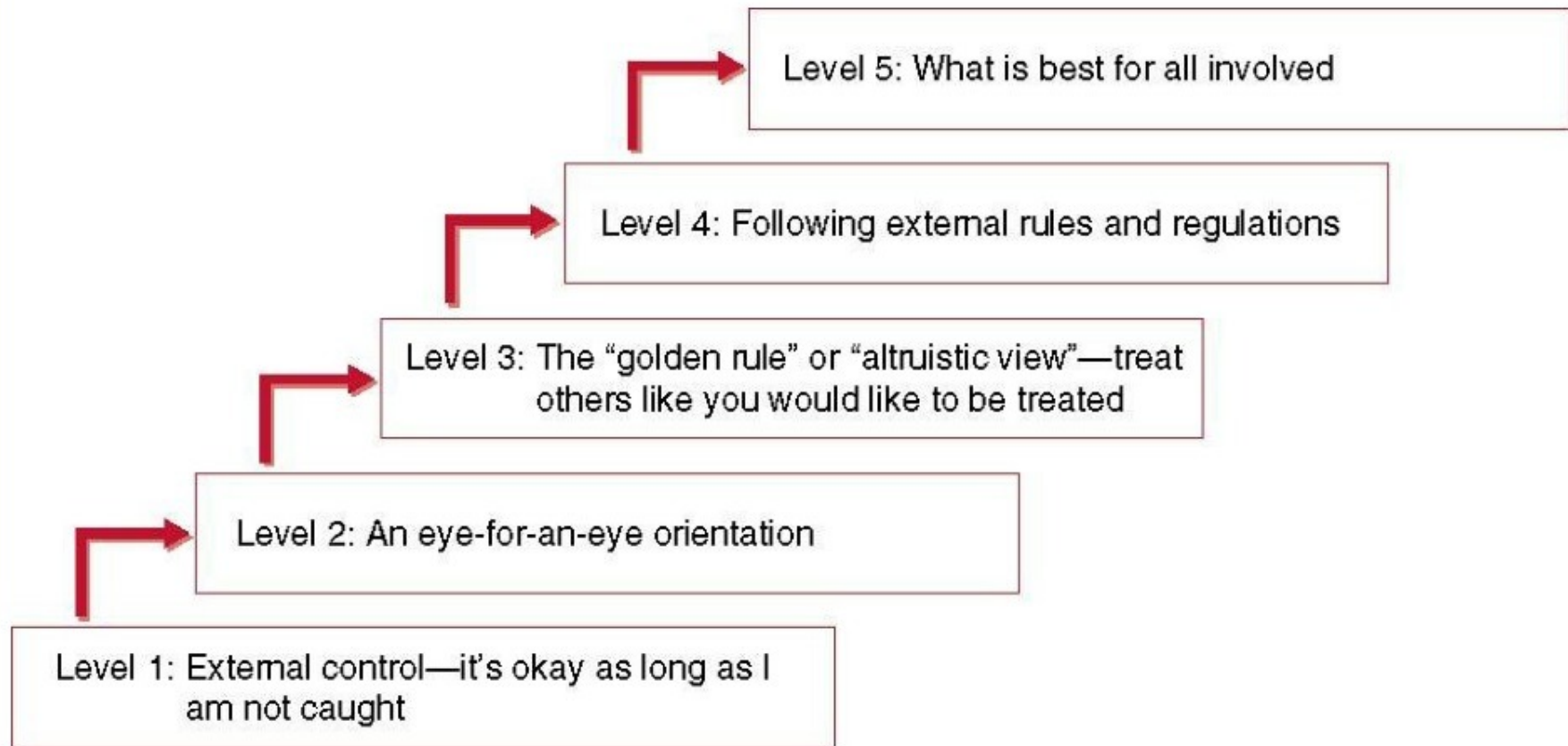
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The Structural–Developmental Approach

Moral behavior

The execution of an act that is deemed right or wrong

Levels of Moral Reasoning



Adapted from *Handbook for Youth Sport Coaches* with permission from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), 1900 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191.

Moral Reasoning and Moral Behavior

The link between moral reasoning and behavior is not absolute because several moral-action stages must be completed:

1. *Interpreting* the situation as one that involves some sort of moral action
2. *Deciding* on the best course of moral action
3. Making a *choice* to act morally
4. *Implementing* a moral response

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Do Sport and Physical Education Enhance Character Development?

Character is not caught but taught in sport, exercise, and physical activity settings. Teaching character involves the systematic use of certain strategies.

Do Sport and Physical Education Enhance Character Development?

- **Research has shown that the systematic and organized delivery of moral development information can change children's character.**
- **Moral reasoning can be taught (e.g., Fair Play for Kids curriculum).**

Fair Play for Kids Curriculum

Sample Activities

- **The problem-solving running shoe approach to resolving conflicts (problem identification, alternative, consequences, solution)**
- **Fair-play dilemma improvisation cards**
- **Self-directed and organized relay games followed by “let’s talk” time to discuss conflicts that had to be resolved**

Moral Development Research Conclusions

Physical activity offers an attractive vehicle for effective moral and social development change in children and adolescents.

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Sport Participation and Delinquency

Participants in organized sports are less likely than nonparticipants to engage in delinquent behavior.

(Seefeldt and Ewing, 1997)

Explanations for Relationship Between Delinquency and Sport Participation

Key

Most likely, the relationship between delinquency and sport participation is best explained by all four of these views.

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Sport Participation and Gang Behavior

- **Sport can serve as a deterrent for gang behavior by increasing self-esteem, providing an important source of identity, lending social support, and giving participants positive role models.**
- **Sport will serve as a deterrent to gang behavior only if programs are properly run, organized, and implemented.**

(See Trulson's 1986 study of delinquent teenagers and taekwondo.)

Strategies for Enhancing Character Development

Strategy 8

Create a task-oriented motivational climate.

Strategy 9

Transfer power from leaders to participants.

Sample of Written Code of Good Sporting Behavior

***Area of concern:* behavior toward officials**

***Sporting behavior:* questioning officials in the appropriate manner**

***Unsporting behavior:* arguing with officials; swearing at officials**

(See table 24.2 on p. 560 of text.)

Strategies for Enhancing Character Development

Strategy 8

Create a task-oriented motivational climate.

Strategy 9

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Hellison's Levels of Responsibility

As participants gain levels of personal responsibility, they can take on greater social responsibility.

Level 4: Caring

Level 3: Self-direction

Level 2: Involvement

Level 1: Self-control

Level 0: Irresponsibility

Character Development As a Mind-Set Versus an Isolated Activity

- **Moral development and good sporting behavior must become part of a leader's mind-set where she or he is constantly looking for opportunities to develop and enhance these positive qualities in participants.**
- **Developing morals and positive sporting behavior takes forethought and consistent efforts on the part of physical educators and coaches. In must be a mind-set that runs constantly versus an isolated activity that occurs from time to time.**

Guiding Practice in Character Development

Teaching for transfer

Transfer is not automatic. Discuss how values learned in sport can transfer to nonsport environments.

Realistic expectations

Character development is an imperfect process. Be optimistic, but be realistic!

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Guiding Practice in Character Development Play an Educator's Role

Physical educators, coaches, and exercise leaders are in positions to positively influence character, behavior, and development.

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Strategies for Developing Resiliency in Youth

- **Focus on the athlete's strengths rather than the weaknesses. Build the athlete's self-confidence.**
- **Don't focus only on the sport or physical activity. Focus on the whole child and the child's emotional, social, economic, and educational needs.**
- **Be sensitive to the youngster's individuality as well as the child's cultural differences. Get to know the child as a person.**

(continued)

Strategies for Developing Resiliency in Youth *(continued)*

- **Keep program numbers small and emphasize long-term involvement.**
- **Provide leadership that makes the program work despite obstacles.**
- **Make sure the program links with community and neighborhood.**
- **Provide good contact with adult models who care and offer support.**

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