
Make Physical Education Fun— for Everyone!

By Don Morgan

As a college physical education teacher, I have become aware of an apathetic attitude among students toward initiating and maintaining a personal-fitness program. Despite concerted efforts by physical educators to promote the health benefits of participating in daily exercise, a large percentage of young people still do not see physical activity as an important priority in their lives. Under the relentless academic and financial demands of school and work, many students come to view exercise as an inconvenient and nonproductive use of time. Unfortunately, this negative perception is often retained and reinforced in later years, causing adults to adopt a sedentary life-style that can adversely affect their physical health, their enthusiasm for life, as well as their spiritual well-being.

Given this scenario, it is imperative that physical educators at the elementary and secondary level realize the crucial role they play in shaping their students' interest in and enjoyment of physical activity. With this in mind, I would like to identify and discuss factors that can detract from a child's enjoyment of exercise and then propose

suggestions to encourage participation by young people in appropriate physical activity.

Physical Activity Is Fun

One of the most effective methods of motivating young people to exercise is to emphasize that such activity is fun. Children seem to experience an almost intrinsic joy while playing. To them, running and jumping are as natural as breathing. However, the lure of the sedentary life-style is powerful, even at an early age. The mesmerizing influence of television and video games in the lives of youngsters is quite evident in today's

electronic society. Our overwhelming reliance upon the automobile in situations where walking would easily suffice communicates to children the notion that exercise is an inconvenience. Furthermore, parents who do not engage in a fitness program because they are too busy, uninterested, or are reminded of unpleasant experiences associated with exercise convey a silent but clear message to their children: Physical activity is not important, necessary, or enjoyable.

Considering this scenario, the elementary and academy PE teacher is often operating at a

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Physical fitness activities should help develop cardiovascular endurance.

disadvantage even before a child has set foot in the gym or on the ballfield. However, other factors germane to the school setting can dampen a young person's enthusiasm for exercise. These include the following:

Attitude Problems

1. *Physical activity used as punishment.* The traditional practice of requiring students to perform push-ups and run laps during PE class to ensure adherence to discipline standards has caused many young persons to associate exercise with feelings of embarrassment and pain, attitudes that carry over into adulthood.

2. *Undue emphasis on competition.* Children learn at a very early age that society rewards winners and regards losers with contempt. The pressure to perform at consistently high levels in the gym and on the ballfield can place inordinate demands upon young people that may lead to failure, feelings of inadequacy, and a consequent avoidance of exercise.

3. *Female perceptions of physical activity.* Prepubescent girls are usually as physically active as their male counterparts. However, with the onset of adolescence, girls sometimes begin to view vigorous exercise as unfeminine. Activity and sports programs that exclude girls from participation (lack of or reduced time for girls' intramurals, for instance) also reinforce the notion that females do not need to exercise as much as males do. The proliferation of myths about females and physical activity can also act to discourage girls from exercising. One of the most common myths is that exercise causes girls to become heavily muscled (untrue, since females have less of the male hormone testosterone).

4. *The "too busy" syndrome.* In addition to going to school full-

Girls should be given special encouragement to participate in physical activities.

time, many academy students work at part-time jobs to help defray school expenses. Teenagers also tend to place a high priority on developing social relationships within their peer group. These activities often leave little time for any type of exercise program (even if the student realizes he or she should exercise).

5. *Uninspired role models.* Do you, as a teacher, exercise on a consistent basis? Do you look as trim as you did when you were participating in college intramurals and taking activity classes? Can you lead out in the exercise routines that you expect your classes to perform? Do you still feel the same excitement and sense of purpose teaching physical education that you did when you first started teaching? The teacher who has difficulty "practicing what he/she teaches" will have problems motivating students to embrace the necessity of following an exercise program.

What Can You Do?

What can you do to promote more favorable student attitudes toward participation in physical activity? The following are some suggestions:

1. *During your private devotions, ask the Holy Spirit to direct your classes.* Students often tell me that they appreciated having the class pray together at the beginning of each class period. By invoking His presence in your class, you too can help students see the strong connection between spiritual and physical well-being. Students need to feel the presence of God in the gymnasium and on the ballfield. Moreover, the blessings of health that your students reap as a result of your teaching are multiplied because you have asked the Holy Spirit to dwell with your class.

2. *Keep your lecturing to a minimum.* Don't put students to sleep with a verbal treatise on the tennis

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replaced if hazardous conditions or materials that do not meet present codes are found. All new electrical work should meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) electrical codes and should be done by a qualified electrician.

Fire Drills

In many schools, academies, and colleges that I have visited in the past few years, I have found no records of fire drills either in the dormitories or the classrooms. In some cases there have been no fire drills for two years or longer. Such drills should be conducted monthly, especially in dormitories.

Fire-drill procedures should be posted in each room, with evacuation routes shown on a floor plan of the building. Each floor or designated grouping of students and teachers should have an assigned place outside where they are to assemble for head count. Floor monitors or resident assistants should be the last persons off the floor, after they check to see that each room is vacant. After the building has been cleared, no one should re-enter for any reason. In the event of fire, if a student is missing at head count, firefighters should be notified, since they are the ones equipped to enter a smoke-filled building.

The first thing that the dean (or other person in charge) should do upon hearing the fire alarm is call the fire department. I have found that the majority of deans first look around to see whether there is indeed a fire, or if it is a false alarm. This wastes precious time if a fire is actually burning. After talking with fire departments near our schools, I have found that they would rather make a run to a false alarm than get to the scene of a fire that is out of control because of a lag in notification time. This delay

could result in a tragic loss of lives and property.

All new buildings should meet local building codes, and old buildings should be brought up to code standards if they do not presently meet them. The National Fire Protection Association NFPA 101 *Life Safety Code* should be used as a standard in planning new construction as well as in upgrading old construction.‡

*In each school building
some type of fire-alarm
device should be
provided.*

Although we believe that God is protecting our students, we must not fail to do what we can to provide a safe environment for them. We should never be presumptuous enough to expect that God will do for us what He has given us the knowledge and ability to do for ourselves. We cannot expect God to keep us safe when we are aware of safety violations but are unwilling to make necessary improvements. We should take proper actions to eliminate, as much as possible, the hazards and thus reduce both the risk and our liability in case of accidents. □

‡To obtain a copy, send \$10.50 to The National Fire Protection Association, Publication Sales Division, Battery March Park, Quincy, Massachusetts 02269.

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forehand. Instructional remarks should be concise and timely, with most of the class period devoted to activity.

3. *Use a variety of well-paced, gamelike drills.* Nothing is more

boring to students than to have to repeat monotonous, uninteresting drills that have little relation to actual game situations. Stimulate your students by using creative drill progressions that encourage skill acquisition. At the beginning of each unit, start with simple drills that give everyone a chance to succeed. Once your students have developed some mastery in a skill area, gradually increase the difficulty and variety of the drills, reflecting more gamelike settings. Utilizing this "sugar-coated" approach to practice motivates students to continue refining basic skills and helps them visualize at an early stage the relationship between drill mastery and game performance.

5. *Choreograph your class movements.* Plan the movement and organization of your students in drill and game situations prior to class so that valuable time is not wasted. Keep up the tempo of the class by moving quickly and efficiently from one drill to another. This will help maintain your students' interest and concentration.

6. *Pay attention to safety.* Inspect gym equipment to be sure it is in good working condition. On play areas, remove apparatus that will not be used during the class session. Review spotting techniques for gymnastics instruction. Know how to administer basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and be familiar with emergency procedures in case of an accident.

7. *Accentuate the positive.* Try to say something encouraging to each of your students every day concerning his or her progress in your class. When you make corrections, do so in a gentle tone of voice without condescension. Humiliating, punishing, or embarrassing students because they exhibit a lack of physical prowess

does not improve their skills and may engender a lifelong hatred of exercise, as well as a negative self-image.

8. *Teach all of your students, not just the athletic ones.* Although every PE class has a few gifted athletes, the majority of students have, at best, average talents. Be especially sensitive to the needs of this group, for they can gain the greatest benefit from your influence. One of the rewards of teaching physical education is to see the uncoordinated child discover a sport, work hard at it, and eventually blossom into one of the best students in the class. Remember that an important objective of physical education is to acquaint every student with a variety of sport and game activities that each can enjoy recreationally both now and in adult life.

Encourage Girls to Participate

9. *Promote participation in girls' sports and activity programs.* Girls should be given special encouragement to participate in the same physical activities available to boys. In addition, you may want to add aerobics classes, in which exercise is performed to music. Point out to your female students that exercise can be an effective way to achieve and maintain a feminine, youthful-looking figure.

10. *Pick teams yourself.* This helps keep students from feeling unwanted because they were chosen last by a student captain. Teacher selection of teams also eliminates pressure on the student captain to choose a highly competitive team and removes the captain's responsibility for a team loss.

11. *Deal firmly with discipline problems.* A certain amount of laughter and looseness is normal and healthy in a PE class.

However, when students become disruptive or display poor sportsmanship, you must act quickly and decisively to restore order, stability, and control. Whether the problem students need to be removed from class, dealt with outside of class, or counseled during class, the teacher must demonstrate that certain types of behavior will not be tolerated.

"Getting in There" With Students

12. *Participate with your students.* Don't be afraid to play with your students. Perhaps the most effective way to inspire and stimulate students to engage in physical activity is for them to see their teacher actively participating on the gym court or ballfield with them. This also gives you an opportunity to communicate important concepts like selflessness, teamwork, and cooperation. In addition, you will increase your influence because students will respect you for "getting in there and working out with them."

13. *Deemphasize the importance of winning and losing.* When played against the backdrop of eternity, a win-loss record becomes inconsequential. Therefore, don't overly reward your students for winning and don't penalize or berate them for losing. Instead, try to keep them on an "even keel" by encouraging participation, not point totals. At no time should students feel that winning or losing reflects upon them personally.

14. *Get out and exercise!* Paralleling the need for private devotions, teachers who instruct PE classes should follow a personal exercise program. Find a block of time (30 minutes or so is sufficient) three or four times a week and do some type of aerobic exercise (walking, swimming, biking, cross-country skiing). Games and sports

activities like basketball and volleyball can provide variety. If your students see you demonstrating a healthy life-style, they'll be more likely to follow your lead.

15. *Don't vegetate professionally.* Plan now to attend the 1985 Physical Education Convention, which will be held in Atlanta, Georgia. See the latest developments in physical education equipment and teaching techniques and pick up some practical ideas that you can use in your own program. The convention will also give you the opportunity to meet your fellow SDA physical educators. For more information, contact Dr. Robert Kamieneski, Physical Education Department, Southern College of SDA, Collegedale, TN 37315.

Health Practices and Fitness

16. *Promote lifetime fitness activities in your classes.* In addition to acquiring skills in team and individual sports, students should be encouraged to adopt health practices that will promote lifelong physical fitness. Such programs should include (a) the development of cardiovascular endurance through such activities as running, biking, swimming, cross-country skiing, and aerobic movement classes; (b) the maintenance of proper body weight and composition through an understanding and practical application of sound nutritional principles; and (c) the prevention of low back pain by having students do bent-knee situps and static stretching exercises to increase the flexibility of the low back and hamstring muscles. By having students focus on these elements of fitness at an early age, you may be able to prevent obesity as well as decrease their risk of heart disease or disabling back pain in later life.

17. *Don't forget that your pri-*

mary purpose is to bring your students closer to God. As a teacher, you have the wonderful privilege of equating the joy of activity with the joy that comes from knowing and loving our wonderful Creator. With God's help, lead and encourage your students to accept the challenge of becoming physically educated. []

Guidelines for Parent-Teacher Conferences

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that the teacher is always aware that he or she is responsible for seeing that the conference moves toward some specific goal.⁸ A teacher may do very little of the talking, but it is important that he or she remember to move the topic of the conversation back to the main purpose without appearing to be rushing the conference.

Conclusion

A successful conclusion to a conference is essential, or the entire process will be another frustrating experience for both the teacher and the parent. If a teacher has good listening skills, he or she has been providing feedback to the parent during the course of the conference, and this will make the conference conclusion easier for both the parent and the teacher. "The sandwich technique" can be helpful in ending a conference on a positive note. A teacher brings up the student's deficiencies and problems only after praising the student at the beginning of the conference, and then points out some other praiseworthy attributes of the student near the end of the conference. The important point to remember is that, to be effective, this approach must be handled tactfully and sincerely.⁹ The conclusion culminates the meeting,

with the teacher pinpointing major areas of discussion and outlining mutually agreed actions which will follow the meeting.

Each of the guidelines for a teacher-parent conference complements the other. Conducting a conference is an art form, and a teacher who practices these guidelines will be able to enhance his or her ability to conduct a conference. Through practice will come assurance that teacher-parent conferences will become less painful and much more profitable for parent, students, and teachers. It is worth the effort. The gains in psychic satisfaction may prove to be immeasurable. []

FOOTNOTES

¹ Gertrude McPherson, *Small Town Teacher* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 130.

² Mary E. Bredemeir and Harry C. Bredemeir, *Social Forces in Education* (Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred Publishers Co., Inc., 1978), pp. 276-277.

³ N. Miller and P. Zimbardo, "Motives for Fear-Induced Affiliation: Emotional Comparison or Interpersonal Similarity?" *Journal of Personality* 34 (1966):481-503.

⁴ John Kord Lagemann, "The Delicate Art of Asking Questions," in *Word Power* ed. Editors of *Reader's Digest* (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), pp. 157-158.

⁵ Ron Zembe, "Picture This: Using Mental Imagery to Enhance Learning," *Training*.

⁶ Timothy C. Brock, "Communicator-Recipient Similarity and Decision Change," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (June, 1965), pp. 650-654.

⁷ Lon Albee, *Job Hunting After Forty* (New York: Arco Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), pp. 76-77.

⁸ Charles R. Gruner, Cal M. Logue, Dwight L. Freshley, and Richard C. Huseman, *Speech Communication in Society* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1972), pp. 270-271.

⁹ Howard Bloomethal, *Promoting Your Cause* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1974), p. 25.

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Tips for Better Bible Teaching

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Church, vol. 6, p. 154). Every effort should be made to ask questions that reflect all cognitive levels

and are adapted to the individual differences and needs of the class. Questions should be chosen keeping in mind the various levels of spiritual maturity of the students. Questions can be designed with specific students in mind but directed toward others. Sufficient time should be allowed for the students to think through their answers. Surveys indicate that most teachers allow, on the average, less than one second before requiring an answer. Practice waiting at least five seconds before you call for a response or answer your own question.

System and Order

The Bible teacher can feel assured that he or she need never be alone in the process of communicating God's Word in the classroom. God has made available the Holy Spirit, apart from which there can be no true understanding or effective sharing of spiritual truths. However, Christ's declaration that the Holy Spirit "shall teach you all things" and "guide you into all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13) is a *conditional* promise. The presence and work of the divine Teacher can be hindered or limited by the attitude of the teacher, his or her methods of teaching, as well as classroom conditions, atmosphere, and decorum.

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul discusses the issue of spiritual gifts, and in conclusion, identifies the kind of environment that must be provided in order for the Holy Spirit to operate most efficiently. Note the apostle's words: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

In describing God's organization of the camp of Israel, Ellen White states:

God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the