

HOW TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG WOMEN TO GET ACTIVE THEIR WAY

IT IS WELL-KNOWN THAT TEENAGE GIRLS FACE DIVERSE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION.

This is corroborated by national research that highlights a strong decline in physical activity for this demographic.

This resource is designed to be a starting point for parents and caregivers by providing insights into the participation gap, the motivation gap and the support gap so that you can support young women on their physical activity journey.

THE PARTICIPATION GAP

IT'S A FACT THAT YOUNG WOMEN ARE DOING LESS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THAN YOUNG MEN OF THE SAME AGE AND THAT THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS ARE DIFFERENT. HERE ARE THE STATS:

17% Young women spend **less time per week being physically active** than young men. There is a 17% gap at age 16 and a 28% gap at age 17.

15 From age 15, the **decline in physical activity rates** is steeper for young women (10%) versus young men (3%).

68% 68% will avoid participating if they **do not feel confident about their bodies**.

17 By age 17, the top three activities young women undertake are **running, workouts and walking:** all informal activities that they can do when and where they like.

Teenage girls want to do more activity but are more likely to say they are **too busy or too tired** to increase their participation in sport and recreation.

Young women are also more likely to cite **judgement, lack of confidence and fear of failure** as barriers to increasing participation.



FUN, FITNESS, AND FRIENDS

are the biggest motivators for young women to participate in physical activity.



#ITSMY MOVE



9/10
YOUNG WOMEN
WANT TO BE ACTIVE

THE MOTIVATION GAP

96% OF YOUNG WOMEN UNDERSTAND WHY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS GOOD FOR THEM. 9/10 WANT TO BE ACTIVE. SO WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

PRESSURED INTO COMPETITION

Our society favours participation in sport and structured activity. Playing sport or doing activities for results are part of the Kiwi (should this be a capital K?) mindset. We reward and incentivise winning over pure participation or enjoyment. However, assigning greater value to competitive activities is having a detrimental effect on young women's participation. Girls find the expectation to perform and the need to 'be good' discouraging.

FEAR OF JUDGEMENT

Young women attribute a high personal and social cost to imperfection so would rather opt out than participate in an activity that demands a certain level of competence, that they feel they might ultimately fail at. The pressure to not let others down with their perceived inadequacy prevents them from participating or trying new things. This is a social pressure that comes from adults and sometimes from peers.

LACK OF SUPPORT TO MOVE THEIR WAY

Many parents and caregivers are unsure how to best support young women when they start to have negative experiences in sport or drop out of traditional activities. Adults don't necessarily see informal or social activities as having the same merit, value or reward. This leads to young woman feeling unsupported either because they have poor experiences in sport or want to get active in a way that exposes them to less pressure and judgement.

THE SUPPORT GAP

SO HOW CAN ADULTS SUPPORT YOUNG WOMEN TO BE ACTIVE THEIR WAY. AND HOW CAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVIDERS ATTRACT AND RETAIN MORE YOUNG WOMEN?



IT'S ABOUT OVERALL WELLBEING

Being active brings great benefit, however young women can find their experiences negative rather than positive when pressure to succeed mounts. It's important to see physical activity through the lens of wellbeing and weigh up whether physical and mental wellbeing is more important than being on a winning team or achieving great performances.

CREATE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Taking part in sport and active recreation should result in young women feeling safe and free to express themselves. Focussing on environments free from pressure and judgement will ultimately result in more teenage girls taking part for longer.

IT'S HER MOVE

Life pressures for teenage girls start to mount due to academics, home and work commitments, and the natural changes associated with age and stage. It is natural for young women to swap sport for other physical activities they can take control of and where less commitment is required – like walking, running, gym and fitness classes. Wherever she chooses to move, move with it! Remember some physical activity is better than none.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CO-DESIGN

Provide opportunities for young women to input into the design and delivery of physical activity formats. Ask them what they enjoy, what they want to do more of, and offer them opportunities to lead.

LEVERAGE SOCIAL CONNECTION

Young women gain motivation and confidence when they are taking part in activities with friends. Encourage positive peer interaction and look for activities where the culture is inclusive and welcoming.

DEVICES ARE NOT THE ENEMY

It might feel like mobile phones and other digital devices are getting in the way of a healthy lifestyle, but the reverse is also true. Phones, social media, fitness apps, online fitness classes and smart watches are all playing a role in encouraging physical activity. Look for ways to use digital devices for good.

THE FEELGOOD FACTOR

Chances are that if it's fun, they'll do it more. Physical activity is essential to both physical and mental health and no matter what level they are participating at, keeping the fun in the game is essential.