



## Mental Health

Sport can make a positive contribution if the Age-Grade Player's experience of sport reflects sport's positive values, such as fun, inclusion and fair play. However, research has shown that when contested in a harmful environment sport can negatively impact on a child's life. NSPCC research stated 10% of young people involved in sport had self-harmed, highlighting the need for sports organisations to safeguard an athlete's health and well-being.

Inactive children are more at risk of mental health problems including anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Engaging in regular physical activity has proven to improve mental health and also promotes an improvement in physical health by reducing obesity levels.

### **How can your club support the player's good mental health?**

Sport can make a positive contribution to a person's physical and mental well-being if conducted in a fun, inclusive environment. In Ireland participation in rugby halves at each transition period from primary to secondary school and from secondary school onward, highlighting the importance of the retention of players through a fun and inclusive environment

### **Things that contribute to a positive state of mind**

- Respect and encouragement
- Good advice in promoting fun and positive well-being is to ask age-grade players are they enjoying themselves. This is important irrespective of the age of the player or the level of competition; while the element of how they get their fun might change as the competition increases the players must still get a sense of confidence and self-esteem through their pursuit of the game
- Ensure players understand that their inclusion in physical activity can positively contribute to their mental
- Create an environment where individuals can ask for and find help if they come under stress or face a challenge that can't handle
- Contrary to popular believe things that come low on a list of what children believe are fun in sport including 'winning', earning medals or trophies, getting pictures taken and practicing with specialty coaches

#### **Irish Rugby Football Union**

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

[www.irishrugby.com](http://www.irishrugby.com)   



## How Coaches & Volunteers can help age-grade players

- Encourage players to have control over their emotions and their behaviour both on and off the pitch
- encourage players to be aware of their thoughts and feelings towards themselves and others
- encourage players to manage their thoughts and feelings rather than becoming overwhelmed

## Recommended Daily Guidelines for Exercise:

- Children and youth aged 5–17: at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily
- Adults aged 18+: at least 30 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily

World Health Organisation

## Exercise has a number of benefits

- Better social life
- Less tension, stress and mental fatigue
- Improved sleep
- Less anger/frustration
- Improves self-esteem
- Releases Endorphines
- Engaging in sport 1-3 times a week reduces psychological distress by 34%
- Exercise is as effective as medication for mild depression/anxiety

### Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

[www.irishrugby.com](http://www.irishrugby.com)   

