

BEING HEALTHY: START EARLY
(Physical Educator as a Key Success Factor)

Wara Kushartanti

Yogyakarta State University

Building healthy body now is much better than trying to repair the body later. Health is changing, dynamic quality of life, and optimal personal fitness for full creative living. Early start to being health means intended to help youngster develop certain attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that will help establish a set of core values about a healthy lifestyle. Giving kids an early start in develop mentally appropriate physical activity, however, will provide them with a formulation for healthy lifestyle. The elementary school can serve as a primary vehicle for transmitting health-related knowledge and encouraging health-conscious attitudes and behaviors.

Physical educator can help encouraging student through active participation, to become independent learners who examine their own health behavior and develop plans for improvement. Helping students discover that they alone can make the changes in their lifestyles that will result in better health. Physical educators have the opportunity to help children understand and appreciate fitness. The success, however, depends on the methods. The old idea of jogging laps around the gymnasium or performing a few calisthenics before playing sport or game does not teach children about fitness. Teaching children the importance of fitness and involving them in regular, vigorous activity has become an objective of significant concern to parents, teachers, and society in general. The programs must provide effective, challenging, and enjoyable activities to improve physical fitness among children. The activities should address five fitness components: cardio respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition, in the frame of regular exercise.

Regular exercise produces change in the body that helps improve the physical health. Skeletal muscles become strong and firm. Exercise also keeps bones and joints in good condition and helps prevent injuries. The heart muscle, respond to exercise similarly to the way that other muscles do, becoming larger and stronger. Regular physical activity also has beneficial effects on the blood and blood vessels. Certain fats in the blood can contribute to the development of cardiovascular diseases. Regular exercise, maintain a person's vital lung capacity, or the amount of air that can be exhaled from the lungs. The chest muscles involved in breathing become stronger through exercise and the lung work more efficiently. Other body systems also become more efficient as a result of regular exercise. Food digestion and absorption improves, as does elimination of wastes. Exercise increase the rate at which the body burns calories, this helping to reduce the amount of body fat and so prevent obesity.

Key words: Healthy, Early, Physical Educator

Introduction

Health is changing and is dynamic quality for life. Health is optimal personal fitness for full creative living. Being healthy and keep healthy is a key for wellbeing, because we know that building healthy body now is much better than trying to repair the body later (Althaus, 1997). The early start to being healthy should begin with a strong infusion of the philosophical principles of healthy life style. Health and Physical Educator have a main role to improving students health and so he was being a key success factor. The United States Department of Health and Human Services has studied the impact of Health in the school. The Department's report states that health education definitely improves students health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Health related fitness components is the main focused by the physical education profession. They include cardio respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Cardio respiratory endurance, probably the most often cited component of physical fitness, involves the ability of the heart and lungs to supply oxygen to the working muscles for an extended period. The greater our cardio respiratory endurance, the longer we can sustain aerobic capacity (Johns, 1995).

Muscular strength is the amount of force a muscle can exert in a single contraction. The benefits of increased muscular strength include reduced risk of injury and improved posture, physical performance, and body composition. Developing strength requires working against a resistance in a progressive manner. Muscular endurance is the ability of a muscle to sustain a contraction or perform numerous contractions over an extended period. Improving muscular endurance requires continued use of a muscle or group of muscles. The longer a muscle is used, the greater its endurance becomes.

Flexibility is the range of motion that can be achieved by a joint. This range is affected by several factors: body temperature, elasticity of muscles, tendons, and ligaments, amount of fatty tissue around the joint, and anatomical structure of the joint. Flexibility is individual, and even differs within the same person. Flexibility can be improved by stretching. Body composition, usually expressed in a percentage of body fat, is the ratio of lean body mass to body fat.

Being Healthy

Television and video games have replaced sandlot games for many children. Electronic toys have replaced balls and jump ropes. Teaching children the importance of fitness and involving them in regular, vigorous activity has become an objective of significant concern to parents, teachers, and society in general.

It appears that children are generally born as healthy and fit individuals. As they grow, their level of fitness changed. Whether a child remains fit depends largely on environment attitude, knowledge, and lifestyle. Energy should direct instead to moving children toward being more fit and living more fitness oriented lifestyle. The fitness level can change, for better or for worse, and everyone's level moves continually in one direction or the other along the continuum.

Regular exercise produces changes in the body that help improve the physical health. Skeletal muscles become strong and firm through regular exercise. Strengthening skeletal muscles can help a person maintain good posture and avoid muscle strain and injury. Good posture helps prevent backache. Exercise also keeps bones and joints in good condition and helps prevent injuries.

The heart muscle responds to exercise similarly to the way that other muscle do, becoming larger and stronger. Having a strong heart provides many health benefits. A strong heart beats with greater force than a weak heart, pumping more blood with each beat. Because less hard when the number of heartbeats is lowered. A strong heart also helps maintain a normal blood pressure and can lower blood pressure that is too high. Keeping blood pressure within normal ranges helps reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.

Regular physical activity also has beneficial effects on the blood and blood vessels. Certain fats in the blood can contribute to development of cardiovascular diseases. Exercise helps decrease the levels of these fats. Regular exercise also helps improve circulation by increasing the number of usable blood vessels in muscle tissues. Improved circulation to the heart muscle is especially important in preventing and recovery from heart attack. Regular exercise maintains a person's vital lung capacity, or the amount of air that can be exhaled from the lungs. The chest muscles involved in breathing become

stronger through exercise and the lung work more efficiently. Having efficient lungs means that we breathe more deeply and more of the oxygen in each breathe. Breathing rate slows down because each breathe provides more oxygen to the body.

Other body systems also become more efficient as a result of regular exercise. Food digestion and absorption improves, as does elimination of wastes. Exercise increases the rate at which the body burns calories, thus helping to reduce the amount of body fat. Recent research suggests that exercise helps increase a person resistance to such communicable diseases as colds and flu. Some diseases seem to occur less often or are less severe in people who are active. Many people choose to exercise because they want to look and feel good. Regular exercise can improve appearance by reducing the amount of body fat and building firm muscles (Hinson, 1995).

Regular exercise can help one release tension. We feel more relaxed and alert after exercising, and can sometimes think more clearly. Exercising helps decrease feelings of depression and anxiety, and improves our overall mental health. Self confidence increases as we see results from our efforts. Exercising also helps the rest and sleep betters, which can contribute to our ability to cope with stress. Being fit helps feel good by increasing the energy level.

Start Early

An early start is intended to help youngster develop certain attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that will help establish a set of core values about a healthy lifestyle. According to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2002) the preschool level is ideal for establishing healthful behavior. The earlier, the better. Changing children's attitudes about physical activity and eating patterns gets more difficult once they have reached their teens. Giving kids an early start in develop mentally appropriate physical activity, however, will provide them with a foundation for healthy lifestyle and with the necessary motor skills, games, and sport activity later in life (Virgilio, 2006).

Teaching children to be competent movers will open many doors of opportunity throughout their lives. Most important children will appreciate the joy of movement and

what it can accomplish in their mental, physical, or social development. The elementary school can serve as a primary vehicle for transmitting health-related knowledge and encouraging health-conscious attitudes and behaviors. In physical education lesson, each child should receive a well-balanced program of physical education, including rhythm, dance, games, expressive movement, play, exercise, and skills.

Physical Educator as a Key

Physical educators have the opportunity to help children understand and appreciate fitness. The success, however, depends on the methods. The old idea of jogging laps around the gymnasium or performing a few calisthenics before playing a sport or game does not teach children about fitness. The program must provide effective, challenging, and enjoyable activities to improve physical fitness among children. The activities should address five fitness components: cardio respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Many of the activities require little or no equipment, and are non-competitive, and offer challenges for children at their own levels. The emphasis of each activity is participation and movement. There are no scores to be kept, and there are no losers.

Physical educators will be able to make a difference in the lifestyle of the children and set them on the roads to healthy lives. The definition of fitness and of being “in shape” has changed dramatically over the years. Tests of athletic and motor ability were one major determinant of fitness testing. Today testing to determine fitness levels focuses instead on health-related components, such as cardio respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. There are three primary fitness objectives that can be accomplished in limited teaching time. We should not be product-oriented. Don’t aspire to have children run a mile in less than 10 minutes, and don’t be concerned with whether they can do 1 pull up or 20. The goals are process-based and, for the most part, relatively simple. We want children to experience vigorous activity, learn to be self-responsible, and live healthy lifestyles.

Vigorous activity is well known that developing and improving cardio respiratory endurance takes time. But, time is limited, so our chances of making enormous gains in a

child's cardio respiratory fitness are remote. Instead of making our goal, redirect our efforts to offer episodes of vigorous activity for the sake of the activity itself. The opportunity to engage in it is valuable to children. It teaches them what their bodies are capable of and what it takes to improve the cardio respiratory system. The experience of approaching anaerobic threshold, combined with brief explanations of what is taking place in the body, is an important part of the foundation children need to continue on their own.

Self-Responsibility: Everyone pursues fitness differently. One like to cycle, weight train, and in-line skate, the other enjoy running, swimming, and playing tennis. Children need to learn that being fit is a choice they get to make. But to make it, they need to be self-responsible. We can't exercise for them, and we can't just give them fitness. Fitness must be earned by the person who wants it. Taking responsibility for one's own level is a critical step in developing lifelong fitness habits. To ensure self responsibility among children, we must first make them feel comfortable with their current level of fitness. Next they need to realize that only they can change this level. And, finally, we must offer a variety of activities that capture their interest.

Healthy lifestyle: Lifestyle is a matter of making decisions about how you want to live. It is based on selecting behaviors from choices you are confronted with. When an adult makes a lifestyle decision is based on knowledge and experiences that was attained since childhood. If the knowledge acquired has been beneficial and the experiences positive, perhaps the lifestyle decision will be a healthy one. Choosing sedentary activities moves the child in a negative direction along the fitness continuum. Children need information on how to make healthy lifestyle choices. They need appropriate knowledge and experiences involving health-related fitness component's and their benefits. The children must learn that the body will store fat in excessive amounts if they let it. They must learn that body composition is something they can influence through positive lifestyle choices of diet and exercise.

Teaching for Inclusion

Inclusion refers to having all children involved in activity for its duration at a level that is appropriate to their individual needs and abilities. It is a concept made popular by

Muska Moston with his slanted rope experiment (Moston and Ashworth, 1990). Moston found that when children tried to jump over a rope held horizontal to the ground, some were eliminated because they could not clear the rope. A rope held on a slant, however, gave every child a suitable place to jump over. The principle behind inclusion is to challenge all children at their level that they decide is appropriate to their ability. When this challenge occurs, the potential for growth and development is greatly enhanced.

Inclusion is very important component of any fitness lesson. When selecting a fitness activity for inclusion, we must answer two questions. Are the children able to select levels of participation that match their individual abilities? Does the activity involve all children all the time? When a fitness activity offers a low personal challenge, children become bored. When the challenge is too high, they become frustrated. Both attitudes are detrimental to developing healthy lifestyles. In addition, children who spend time waiting in line for a turn to participate are offered less opportunity for growth. Fitness activities that are not inclusive should not be used with young children. Asking children to sit out or to participate at levels below or beyond their abilities causes them to become callous toward physical activity.

Motivation to Participate in Activities

For years, educators have used extrinsic motivation to persuade children to participate in activities and learning. Rewards are the most common type of extrinsic motivator. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, means doing an activity for personal enjoyment and for the sake of conquering a challenge. Participation is not centered on an award, recognition, or other external rewards.

Extrinsic motivation: When teachers use extrinsic rewards to control or manipulate children into participating in activities that they might have chosen to do on their own, then children view the rewards as the reason to participate. In relation to fitness activities, then, if a child participates knowing a reward awaits at the completion of the activity, the child's focus is on participating for the rewards and not for personal satisfaction or accomplishment. When children participate in fitness activities for recognition or rewards, they tend to view fitness as a product instead of an ongoing process. If we reward children

for achieving particular fitness standards for example, they may believe that once they have received their rewards, they can stop working at fitness. The process ends because the product has been received.

When extrinsic rewards are used as a motivator to persuade children to participate or to achieve a specific standard, then they do not promote intrinsic values. When children choose to participate on their own and experience feelings of competence, extrinsic rewards help reinforce those feelings. This in turn enhances their intrinsic motivation to participate in the activity. The key, however, is to introduce the extrinsic rewards in the correct manner. The best solution is to avoid using the rewards as the focus of the activity. If children do not know the rewards will be given, their effort and participation will not depend on them.

Intrinsic motivation: When children participate in fitness activities for intrinsic reasons, they view fitness is a process. It becomes an ongoing activity that leads to personal satisfaction and competence. Intrinsically motivating activities have four characteristic in common: challenge, curiosity, control, and creativity. Choosing and arranging activities so that children can experience each of these is important in helping foster intrinsic motivation. There are several considerations concerning the implementation of these characteristics in fitness activities.

First, we must teach on the basis of inclusion. All children must be involved at the level of challenge that meets their individual needs and abilities. Bored and frustrated learners require extrinsic motivation to be convinced to participate: for them the activity offers no intrinsic motivation. Though we can coax participation with rewards, it is far better to change the level of challenge to better meet the need of each child.

Second, intrinsically motivating fitness activities need to provoke children's curiosity. When an activity arouses curiosity, a child's become more motivated to partake for the sake of satisfying the curiosity. The curious child participates for her or his own reasons.

Third, children need to feel a sense of control over the activity and the environment. The more decisions children make within an activity, the more control they

have. Giving children control and decision making power teaches self-responsibility, which is one the goal of the fitness program.

Finally, children need to be able to be creative and to fantasize about the content of the activity. This makes the activity fun, while giving children a chance to use their creative thinking skills. When children can create and fantasize they are better able to associate the activity with personal experiences. The relationship makes the activity more meaningful and relevant.