

## BPS Presidential Address 2011

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# Role of Sports in the Development of an Individual and Role of Psychology in Sports\*

Rakesh Ghildiyal\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Sports helps an individual much more than in the physical aspects alone. It builds character, teaches and develops strategic thinking, analytical thinking, leadership skills, goal setting and risk taking, just to name a few.*

**Key Words:** *Analytical thinking; Goal setting; Leadership skills; Presidential Address; Psychology; Risk taking; Sports; Strategic thinking*

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\*\*M.D., D.P.M. Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, MGM Medical College, Sector-1, Kamothe, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

Address for correspondence: Dr Rakesh Ghildiyal, 103/104, Shanti Sadan, Plot 39, Sector-15, Vashi, Navi Mumbai - 400 703, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: rakghil@gmail.com

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## Introduction

Today, I am going to speak on psychology and sports. By sports my reference is not on creating champions but as a means to developing a:

1. Sporting attitude/spirit.
2. Positive attitude towards life and its struggles.
3. Shaping one's personality and character.

We are all well aware of the fact that participating in sports/physical activity develops the five components of fitness, namely: strength, speed, skill, stamina and flexibility.

We all remember April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011, here in Mumbai, when we won the Cricket World Cup. On my way back from the Wankhede Stadium, there were wild celebrations all over Mumbai, across the streets all the way up to Vashi, Navi Mumbai; and I am sure the celebrations were equally ecstatic across the country. Unifying all, across lines of age, religion, caste, socio-economic status, educational qualifications, position held in society.

Well, that is the effect of sports. 'Healthy Mind In a healthy Body', and 'Healthy Body in a Healthy Mind'. Both these statements are 100% true.

Sports is exercise/physical activity with fun, '*masti*'.

Sports is exercise/physical activity with an objective and definite aim.

Sports is exercise/physical activity with a purpose to overcome adversities and win.

Playing sports helps release pressure and tension in a healthy and controlled way.

Sports improves sleep patterns and levels of anxiety.

Sports develops motor skills and mind/body connection.

Sports staves off depression.

Sports reduces the risk of many physical diseases.

## Sports in Psychology and Life, and Psychology in Sports

I will divide my further talk into two parts:

1. Sports in psychology and life.
2. Psychology in sports.

### Sports in psychology and life

Sports is a learning experience. Of all who take up sports only one may eventually become a champion, but definitely all will be winners. Sports has helped me and the principles of sports continue to help me through difficult times.

Sports help students study better, improves concentration, problem solving, memory. Sports teaches one to develop the following:

1. Team spirit: Working towards a common goal as a member of a team, selflessly, personal interests notwithstanding.
2. Leadership skills: Lead different people from all walks of life towards a common goal/objective. A good leader is one who leads others on to leadership.
3. Fairplay: Though winning is important, losing is not a disgrace. Being generous and graceful in victory as well as defeat. Have respect for the vanquished.
4. Never give up: Sports teaches you to never give up. 'Success is just round the bend', being persistent, nothing is impossible. You never know how close you are to success when you give up.
5. Great leveller: Sport is a great leveller - you lose 1-day only to bounce back the next. No loss is permanent. Even a loss teaches you how not to do something, or how it could be done better. No setback is permanent, never should one lose hope.
6. Focus: Sport teaches you to focus on the present. Past is irrelevant, and future, who knows?
7. Strengths and abilities: Sport teaches you to focus on your strengths and abilities, not on your opponents' strengths and capabilities.
8. Process and result: Sport teaches you that the process is more important than the result. If the process is right, success will soon ensue. According to Basketball Coach John Wooden:
  - Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.
9. Planning: Sport teaches you to plan ahead, see through the consequences of your act. You need to quickly assess the situation, adjust, adapt and act accordingly. Being flexible and not carry a fixed mindset.
10. Earnestness and sincerity: Sport teaches you not to take any situation lightly or display casualness, and that every situation should be handled with earnestness and sincerity.
11. Observation and analysis: Sports improves your observatory powers and analytical skills.

Now, to the second half of my talk.

### **Psychology in sports**

This section includes important aspects of psychology in sports which I shall present as points:

1. Positive attitude: It is often said a game is won or lost in the locker room before the start of the match. Having a positive attitude goes a long way in determining the eventual outcome of the game between closely matched participants.

2. Respect for the opponent is necessary but do not let this overwhelm you. Respecting their abilities, giving your best always, and no casualness in approach even when comfortably placed. Remember on a given day anything and everything is possible.
3. 'Killer instinct' is necessary at all times (within the framework of fairplay). By this, you are giving due respect to your opponent and acknowledging the fact that he/she is as good as you, and the slightest slackness shown by you will allow your opponent to claw back and the outcome of the game may easily be reversed.
4. Never give up attitude: As mentioned in section above, however hopeless the situation may seem, success is just around the corner. No match is won till the last ball is bowled. Play to your strength, give it your best, enjoy the game, you have nothing to lose. Loss is not the end, there is no shame, disrespect, humiliation, provided you have given your best.
5. Fear of losing will increase your anxiety and cause distress and hence leading to poor performance and undesirable results.
6. Use stress as a motivating factor to raise your performance to optimum levels especially in crucial/crunch games.
7. Never bother about consequences, give it your best shot always, enjoy the game.
8. Always have a positive body language.

## Conclusions [Figure 1: Flowchart of Paper]

Playing sports or engaging in extracurricular activities play an important part in one's character/personality development. One develops management skills,

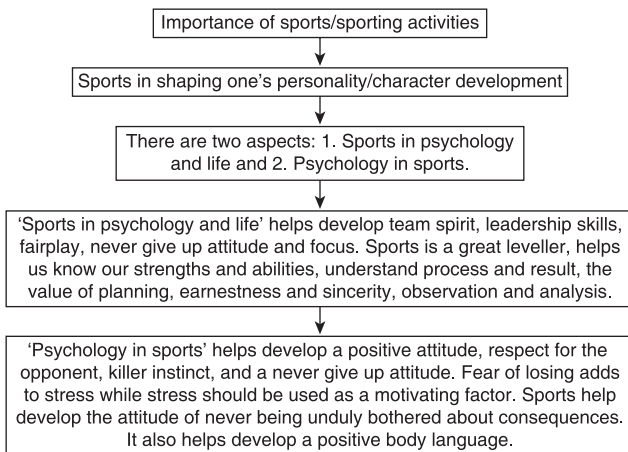


Figure 1: Flowchart of paper

negotiation skills, communication skills, convincing skills, conflict management and confidence.

1. *Sports in psychology* and life helps develop team spirit, leadership skills, fairplay, never give up attitude and focus. It is a great leveller, helps us know our strengths and abilities, understand process and result, the value of planning, earnestness and sincerity, observation and analysis.
2. *Psychology in sports* helps develop a positive attitude, respect for the opponent, killer instinct, and a never give up attitude. Fear of losing adds to stress while stress should be used as a motivating factor. Sports help develop the attitude of never being unduly bothered about consequences; it also helps develop a positive body language.

### **Take Home Message**

1. Take up to a sport now; it is never too late.
2. Always have a sporting attitude.
3. Sports/physical activities are a way of life.
4. Healthy mind in a healthy body.

#### **Conflict of interest**

None declared.

#### **Declaration**

This is my original unpublished article, not submitted for publication elsewhere.

### **Acknowledgements**

I humbly acknowledge my parents, my teachers, my mentors, my guide, and last but not the least my wife and my son.

### **Questions that this Paper Raises**

1. Does sports eat away into study time?
2. Is it true that you can either be a sportsman or a scholar?
3. Sports exercises only your body, not your mind. Is this so?
4. Does sports shape personality/character?

### About the Author



*Rakesh Ghildiyal MD is presently Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, MGM Medical College, Navi Mumbai, since 2001. He is also Consultant Psychiatrist, MGM's New Bombay Hospital, Vashi and a Consultant Psychiatrist in private practice at Vashi, Navi Mumbai since the past 25 years. He is a Postgraduate (MD) teacher in Psychiatry and a PhD guide. He is a keen sportsman having represented his College in Badminton and Football and won the All India Inter-Medical Badminton Championship in 1980. A keen trekker (high altitude), he has done Everest Base Camp (Gorakhshep and Kaala Patther-approx. 18,500 feet) in 1992.*