

The benefits of being part of a team

It has long been thought that the many aspects of playing sport – the discipline of training, learning teamwork, getting used to the leadership styles of coaches and captains and learning to win and lose provides lifelong skills.

Team sports in particular, provide a chance to unwind and engage in a satisfying challenge that improves fitness. They also offer social benefits by allowing a connection with teammates and friends in a recreational setting. The sense of community that comes from being involved in a sporting team can boost someone's health and self-confidence, and help with problems from depression to bullying.

There is strong research that shows that involvement in sports reduces a child's tendency towards bullying behaviour.

Feeling a sense of belonging is very important, and the opportunity to train, play, win, or lose together, people involved in sports are naturally more inclined to adopt a "team mindset" in the workplace and in social situations.

–When people who aren't a part of such a network, they can be more prone to the problems that come with isolation. The isolation that a lot of people feel, in which they are not getting out and meeting or interacting with people, is a contributing factor to some symptoms of mental ill health, particularly around depression. Everyone feels lonely from time to time, but long periods of loneliness or social isolation can have a negative impact on physical, mental and social health. Some signs include:

Physical symptoms – aches and pains, headaches, illness or worsening of medical conditions

Mental health conditions – increased risk of depression, anxiety, paranoia or panic attacks

Low energy – tiredness or lack of motivation

Sleep problems – difficulty getting to sleep, waking frequently or sleeping too much

Diet problems – loss of appetite, sudden weight gain or loss

Substance use – Increased consumption of alcohol, smoking, medications, drug

Negative feelings – feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness or thoughts about suicide

Team sports demand strategy, spontaneity, creativity and other mental talents that are motivating and challenging. Playing with others in a team environment gives us an extra

incentive: we don't want to let our team mates down and we want to improve our technique to commit to the team.

Sport can be a great leveller and introduces us to people who share a common interest, and a common goal, despite members coming from many different walks of life.

Please call Lifeline WA on 13 11 14 if you, or someone you know, needs crisis support. For more information please visit www.lifelinewa.org.au

