

Young people can gain a lot of value from participating in physical activity regularly. The World Health Organisation developed the global recommendations physical activity and this recommends that children and youth aged 5–17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. Our class discussion revealed that the majority of us are actually doing more than this when you accumulate all physical activity participated in over the day eg: walking to school, training, lunch time sport etc....

My main motivation for participating in physical activity is to be physically healthy and keep a fit body. I also like to exercise and train hard so that I can compete at a really high level in football. However, the Ministry of Health also state that the benefits of participating in physical activity for young people are not only physical but also include the following:

- help with social development and interaction
- build self confidence
- provide opportunities for self-expression.

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Through our class discussion and interviews with other students I became aware that there were a lot of different reasons young people at our school participate in physical activity. Therefore it seems that physical activity plays a variety of roles in young people's lives and this needs to be taken into consideration when people are trying to get us more active.

This is also in line with my own survey results which revealed over 15 different reasons why students participate in physical activity. The top 3 reasons from my survey were:

1. Fun, enjoyment
2. Keeping fit and healthy
3. Being competitive

Looking back at my questionnaire now I wish I had tried to get students to be more specific about what they mean by 'fun' as this would have given me further understanding about the role physical activity plays. SPARC stated that 'fun' was a common motivation for young people being active but explained that different people have different understandings of what is fun. I think this is an important point to consider because for example I know I find fitness training fun whereas someone else may find this horrible and define social sports as their 'fun'...

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...SPARC have also released a research document titled "It's All About Children and Young People". This also emphasises that involvement in physical activity is significant for young people for a variety of reasons not just physical. For example, the introduction states that: "Not only is participation important for their health and wellbeing but ongoing participation can contribute to:

- development of social skills and moral and ethical behaviour;
- development of personal skills such as problem-solving, communication, decision making and leadership;

understanding and feelings of inclusiveness and empathy with the needs of others;

- transmission of cultural norms and values;
- opportunities for the development of personal and group identity;
- improvement and maintenance of physical, mental and emotional health;
- productive use of leisure time; and
- helping individuals, groups and communities of people realise their full potential".

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This reinforces that physical activity can affect all dimensions of hauora not just the physical. The document specifically comments on “mental and emotional health” (taha hinengaro) and also “development of social skills” (taha whanau).

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I believe our school sports department are doing a pretty good job of catering for students differing needs because as well as the usual competitive sports we also have the opportunity to play for social teams for netball and touch rugby. I talked to some of the students in the Year 12 social netball team to find out how and why physical activity might be significant in their lives and one student emphasised to me that she only exercised with friends because it helped her forget she was actually working out. When questioned further she explained that she hated the compulsory PE classes in Year 9 and 10 because there was so much fitness. Staying fit through social sport is an added bonus for her but she sees its main role as having fun with friends....

I also talked to my parents and some of their friends about what role physical activity plays in their lives and I noticed that when compared to my friends they were much more interested in exercising for health rather than exercising for fun. I could not find any research to back this up, however, this would be a significant factor to take into consideration when people are planning physical activities for target groups...

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In junior PE, we spent a lot of time participating in practical activities and therefore lots of physical activity. However, I have noticed that our Year 12 programme has a lot of theory and we do not seem to get the same opportunities to be active. I think it is important for young people to stay active their whole lives and therefore I think physical activity should be compulsory right through school, not just the junior levels. I also think we would learn more in our PE programme if we had more practical physical activities and we could incorporate the theory components into the activity while we are actually participating. If young people are going to keep physically active they will need strong messages that it should be valued. This will not happen if the theory in our course keeps outweighing the practical components.