

## Youth Fitness Q & A with Anthony Scire, International Youth Agility Conditioning Specialist



Anthony Scire is an instructor of the youth Sports Strength & Conditioning here at the Y and is a Performance Specialist at Elite Health Services. His areas of expertise include sports strength and conditioning, youth development and physical literacy.

### **Q: What is your philosophy when developing a youth exercise program and why?**

**A:** First off, the program has to be age appropriate for the age group you are working with. Whether you are working with 6-9 year olds, 10-13 year olds, or 14+, you have to tailor the program so it is appropriate for that group. Secondly, you have to make the program fun. Thirdly, you have to make the youth you are working with part of the decision making process. Give them options to pick and let them choose some of the activities that they would like to do. Fourthly, you must work on basic fundamental movements which include a hop, skip, jump and leap that must be perfected before more complex movements can be tolerated. It is also important to make sure they know the difference between each of the movements and if they do not, give them more opportunities to practice and learn these movements. Lastly, you have to be flexible when developing a program. You have to meet them where they are at, give and

take. You have to take into consideration the different personalities of the group, differences in growth, maturity and skill level. Instead of developing a rigid program, use different tools, tactics and modes. Be willing to make mistakes and to then learn from you mistakes.

**Q: Why is it important to keep kids having fun in youth exercise programs and sports?**

**A:** Today, we try to enforce adult-like programs on little kids that aren't appropriate for them. Also, children and adolescents face enough seriousness during the day during school and need to have fun during these types of programs. Researchers from Michigan State University found that not having fun is one of the major reasons 70 percent of kids quit playing sports by the time they are 13 years old. If they do not have fun, they will not come back. This then impacts their future involvement in physical activity. We need to keep programs fun, so they will participate in physical activity for the rest of their life instead of quitting at such a young age.

**Q: Do you think it is better to involve youth in a variety of sports or is it better to be focusing on one sport?**

**A:** Being involved in a variety of sports will cut down on overuse injuries that we see with kids nowadays. Overuse injuries occur from doing specific motions repetitively over time, and this is more common if you only play on sport year-round. This doesn't give kids the proper time to let their bodies recover. Kids in general typically don't get consistent 8 hours of sleep and good nutrition which are crucial for the recovery process. Being involved in a variety of sports also allows you to be more well-rounded so you can be a better athlete overall. You need different sports that counteract the movements from other sports. It is better to play various sports that are going to enhance your other athletic abilities, which can help you with that one sport that may be your focus. The more sports and activities kids are involved in, the more opportunities that will bring them more well-roundedness in their development.

**Q: What are your favorite parts of working with the youth population and why?**

**A:** Knowing that it is going to be different every time, it is like having a new canvas every time. Also knowing that I can be a positive impact in their lives. I like being someone who they can turn to, to ask questions, ask for advice and being someone they can trust. I want to teach them not only to be a better athlete but to be a good person in the community, be well-rounded, to treat other people with respect and kindness, to work hard and that you have to give effort. Effort is rewarded when you work hard, it is not just given to you. I believe in a grassroots effort, trying to get through to one kid, one family at a time and overtime hopefully, I can change the lives others. In addition, I enjoy seeing them change, grow and develop overtime. Kids are fun and full of energy which adds uniqueness and creativity in the process.

**Q: Do you have any advice or suggestions for parents? What things can parents do with their children outside of these youth exercise programs at home that can further benefit the child?**

**A:** My number one advice for parents is to tell your kid that you enjoy and love watching them play their sport. Tell them that you love and appreciate them playing. Tell them that I love watching you play basketball, baseball, whatever the sport may be. After games, don't jump right to all the things they did wrong and what they should have done. Don't bombard them in the car on the way home, instead give them space. As a parent, you want to give them advice, you want to help them but unless your kid asks you, let it be. Let that child come to you or at least wait on it 24 hours before talking to your child about the game, whether it was a win or a loss or you feel that they didn't play well.

**Resource:**

<http://activeforlife.com/top-five-reasons-kids-play-sports/>