

Contributions of Physical Education to Adolescence

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The first part of this paper attempts to build a physiologic and anatomic background for heart and circulatory considerations that are discussed in relation to physical education activities. This material is a summarization from such authorities as Percy Dawson, R. Tait McKenzie, Edward C. Schneider, John Mason Tyler, William H. Howell, Henry Gray and James H. McCurdy. The material is summarized in order to present the idea that there is a natural weakness of the heart during adolescence that would make necessary a protective program in activities. Heart conditions vary greatly and prescriptions should vary accordingly. Certain children of Junior and early Senior High School age develop a murmur of the heart with considerable irregularity of cardiac action. There is no organic disease and the condition is recognized as adolescent heart. These cases improve markedly under regular, fairly vigorous exercise that avoids continuance after fatigue. Competition for these children is not desirable, particularly competition of the inter-scholastic type. Many boys are sacrificed on the altar of successful athletic teams through lack of control of high school inter-scholastic competition.

The paper then discusses the values of prescribed exercise in relation to the heart, the lungs, and the weight of adolescent boys as shown by experimental data from the United States Public Health Service.

At this point the physiologic values of training are related, again emphasizing the values chiefly to the circulatory apparatus. In protecting the adolescent boy and girl it would be well to regulate games according to age. There has been some idea that this age boy should be taking part in less highly organized games. It must be remembered that children are great imitators. Boys and girls want to imitate activities of the grown up. This is evident in all types of child play—playing house, doctor, gardner, mother, "Babe Ruth", etc. They are not content to play in doll houses with playthings that are for children. Failure to follow up this idea into adult games has been too much discouraged to the child copying adult play. If play for the child were conducted properly, the protective element physiologically would result and greater interest would attain. Children would learn to play skillfully, rather than feeling discouraged and awkward.

Why should a child play volley ball on a court worked out for adults? Why play badminton on a court and with a net worked out for adults? The paper emphasizes the importance of games played on courts and with equipment fitted to the child.

We continue to take part in activities we do well or hope to do well. We encourage skills then so that the individual will continue regular activity because knowledge and skill in some activity has been acquired. Basic changes take place during adolescence. Preparation for and guarding of adolescent youth is urgent in terms of physical activity. Let's not be so greatly concerned with stream lined trains, all-wave radio sets, air flow cars, television and the like and more concerned with sound bodies, through regulated exercise particularly during adolescence.