



Girls and Sports: A Winning Combination for Improving Mental Health



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Chicago Park District and
Sport for Good
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**mental health in girls
matters more than
ever. sport is the way
to improve mental
health.**

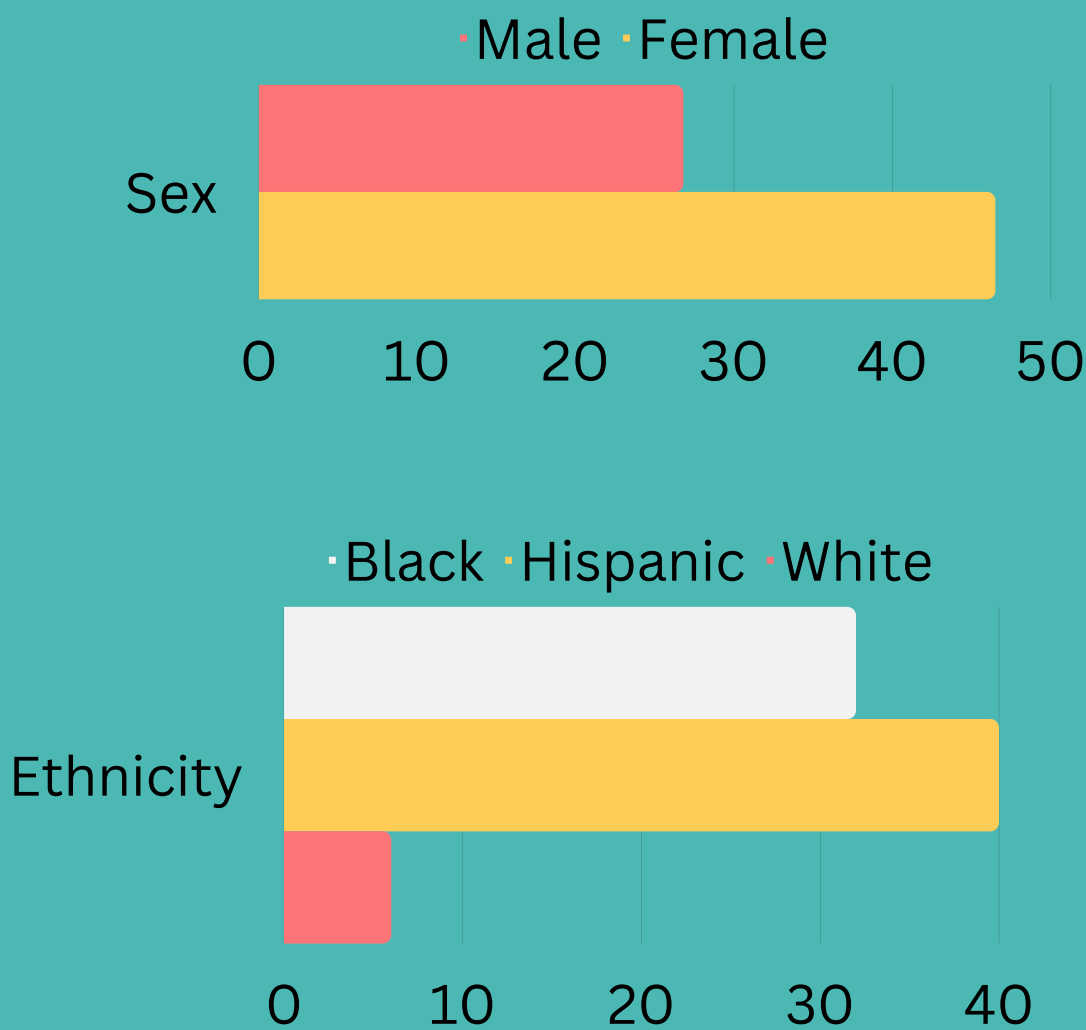




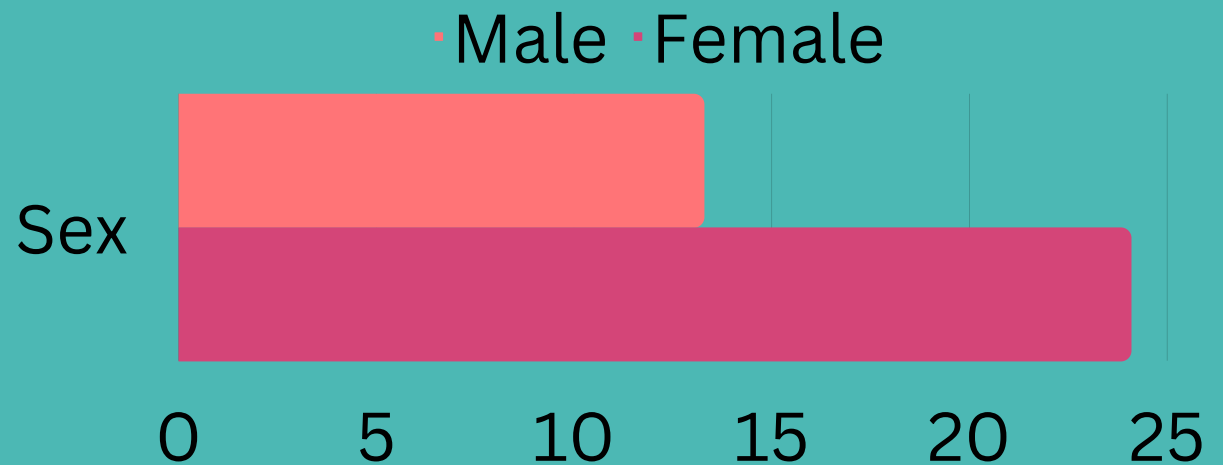
PERCENTAGE OF
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS WITH

**persistent
feelings of
hopelessness
or sadness**

2019 YOUTH RISK
BEHAVIOR
SURVEY



PERCENTAGE OF
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS WHO
**seriously
considered
attempting
suicide**



2019 YOUTH RISK
BEHAVIOR
SURVEY



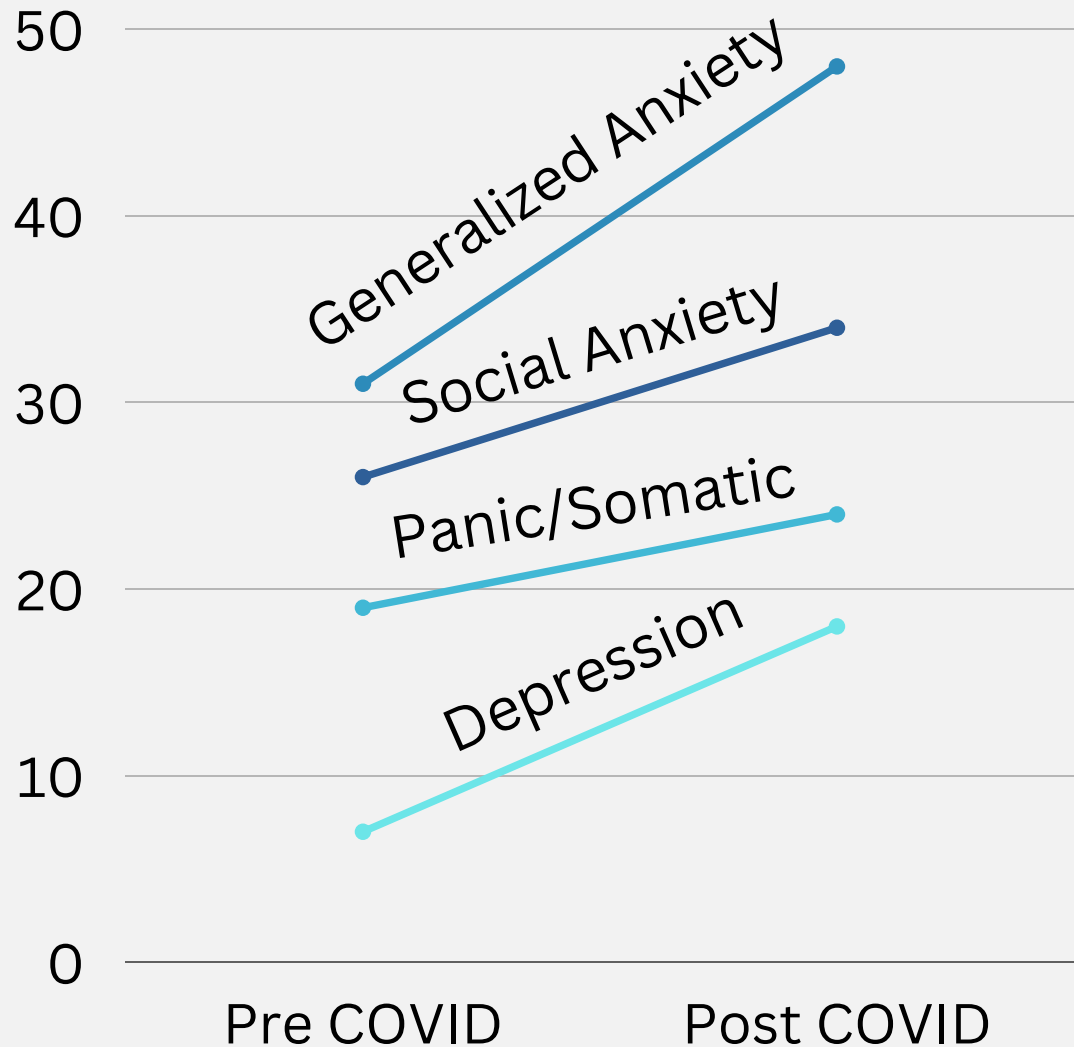
Girls were more impacted by COVID 19 than were boys with respect to depression and anxiety (panic/somatic).

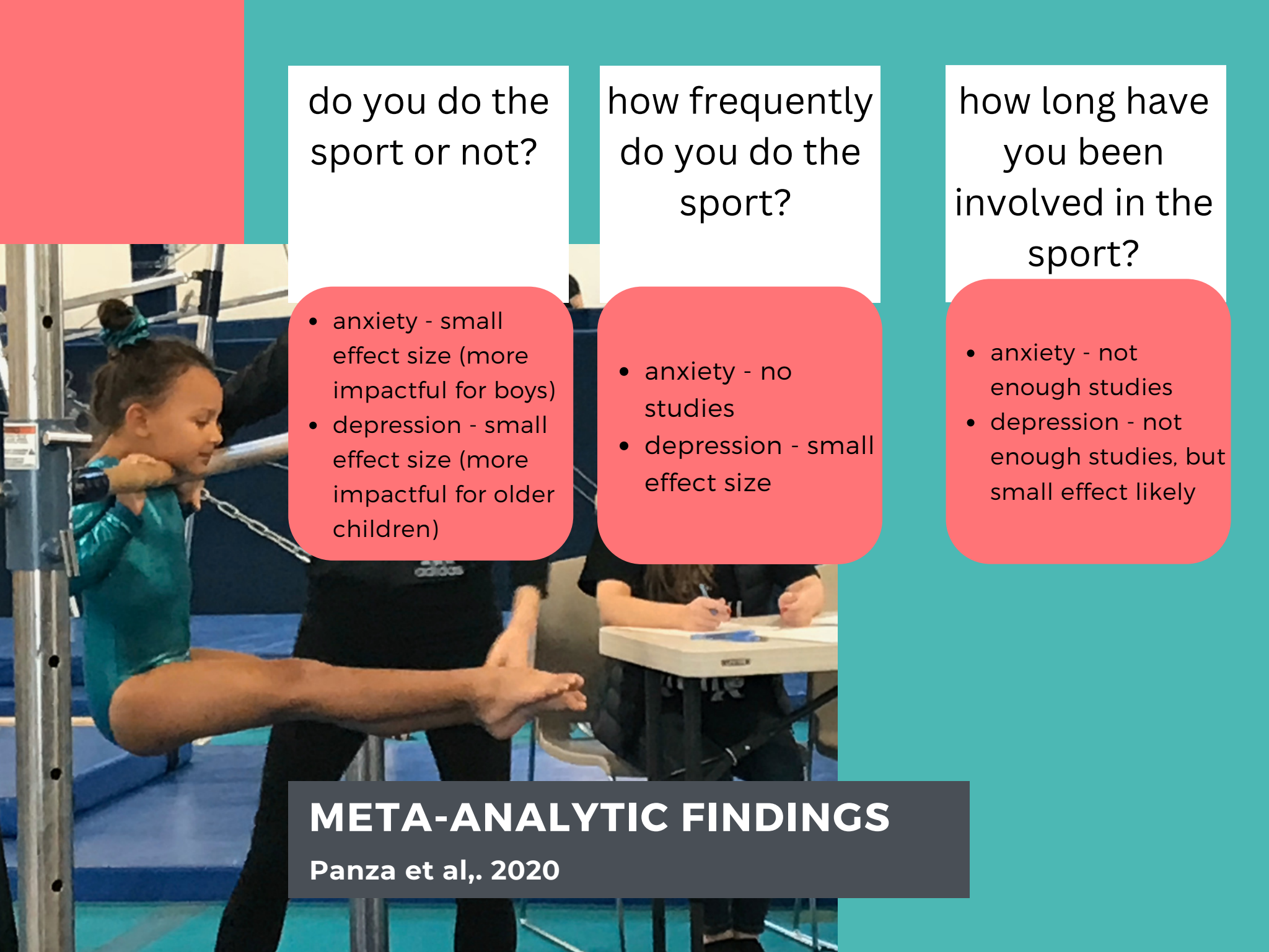
Age matters - older age more risk for depression; younger age more risk for anxiety.

Hawes et al., 2021

Depression and anxiety in girls increased during the pandemic

Hawes et al., 2021





do you do the
sport or not?

- anxiety - small effect size (more impactful for boys)
- depression - small effect size (more impactful for older children)

how frequently
do you do the
sport?

- anxiety - no studies
- depression - small effect size

how long have
you been
involved in the
sport?

- anxiety - not enough studies
- depression - not enough studies, but small effect likely

META-ANALYTIC FINDINGS

Panza et al., 2020

Which kids benefit the most from what type of sport involvement at what stage of life?



BENEFITS FOR SHY CHILDREN

Findlay & Coplan,
2008



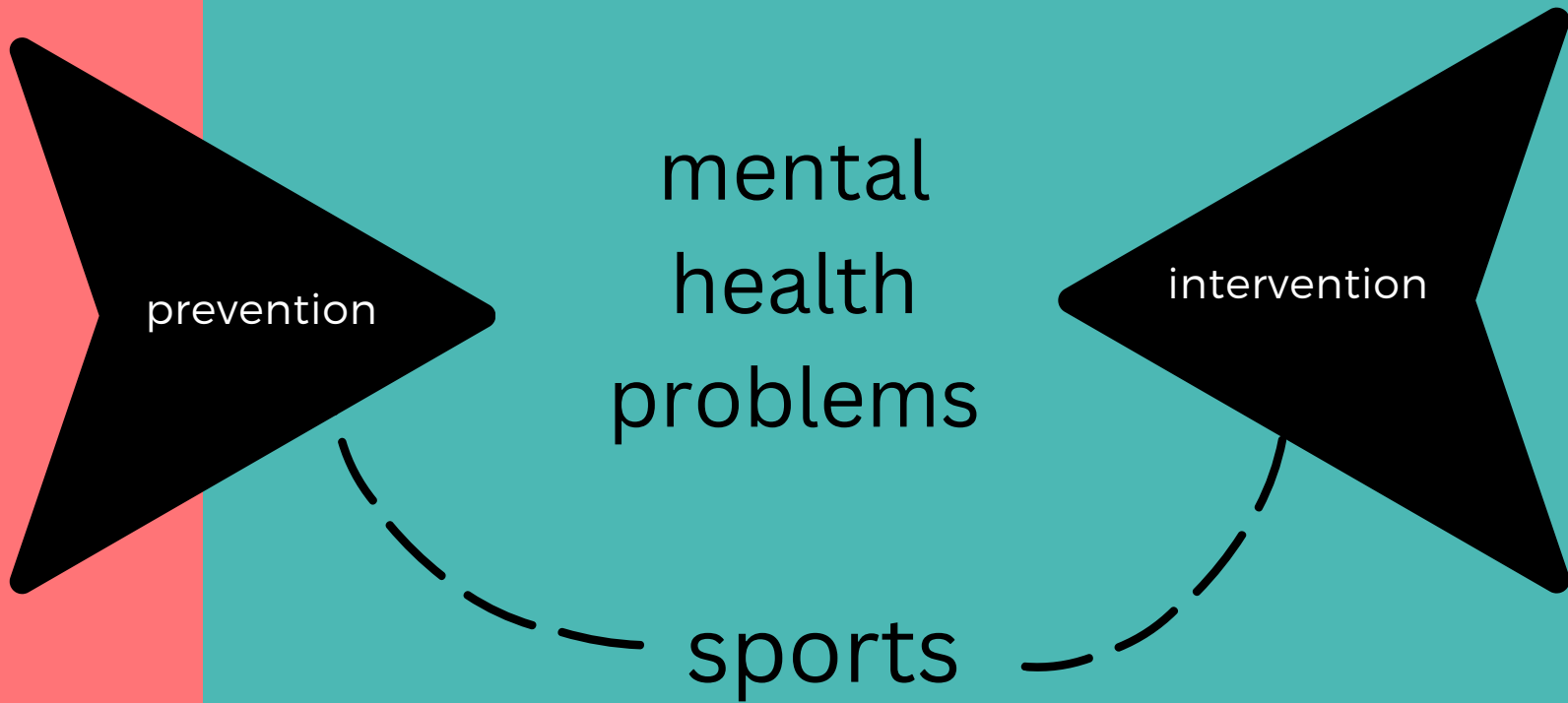
TEAM SPORTS

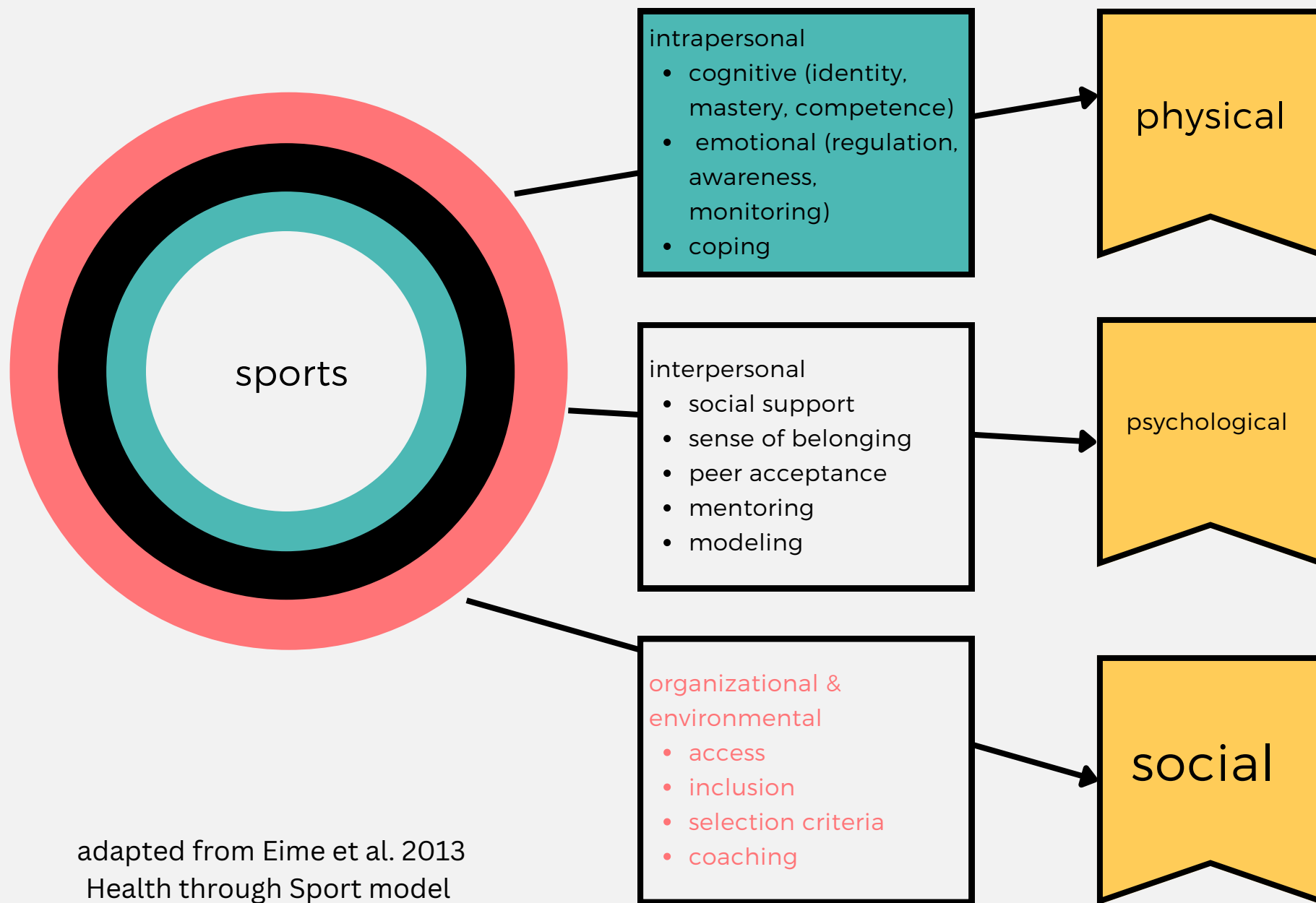
lower social anxiety
lower social isolation
better social self-concept
improved self-esteem
Hofmman et al., 2020



DEPRESSION BENEFITS FOR GIRLS OVER TIME

Core et al., 2001





adapted from Eime et al. 2013
Health through Sport model

mental health interventions for sports



1. **knowledge about mental health and mental illness**
2. **connections between players and services**
3. **reduce stigma toward people with mental illness**



how does mental health show up?

depression

sadness, irritability,
anhedonia, distraction,
sleep, weight, eating, motor
changes, suicidal thoughts

anxiety

worry, fear, re-experiencing, easily fatigued,
distracted, tension, sleep problems, somatic
symptoms (headache, stomachache)

Mandy is in 11th grade. She is a good student, a member of the basketball team, and hopes to work as a travel agent once she leaves high school. She has had a number of boyfriends over the past 2 years. Four days ago Daniel, her boyfriend of 8 months, broke up with her. Daniel told Mandy that he had met another girl who he liked more than her. She has been a wreck for the past 3 days – she is crying all the time and can't concentrate on her schoolwork. She keeps asking her teammates "What is wrong with me that Daniel doesn't love me anymore?" She is especially upset because she and Daniel had been planning to go to the Homecoming dance together and she won't have anyone to go with. Mandy has been arriving at practice late for the past three days and missed the last game.



1. How worried are you about Mandy's mental health?
2. What do you think is wrong with Mandy?
3. How long do you think it will take for her to start "feeling better"?
4. Do you think she needs help from another person? If so, who? What kind of help does she need?

Sapphire is in 9th grade. Her parents recently separated after an extended period of fighting. Sapphire's school counselor called a meeting with her mother to discuss her school progress. Over the past 9 months there had been deterioration in Sapphires's school grades, and she was often late getting to school. Sapphire explained that she had been feeling constantly tired lately, and was finding it difficult to get to sleep at nights – that was why she was not able to get out of bed in the mornings. Her mother said that she thought she was just not eating enough – in fact she thought she had lost quite a bit of weight over the last few months. In relation to school grades, Sapphire said that although she wanted to do well, she found that she just couldn't concentrate or think as well as before. The guidance counselor said he thought it would be good for Sapphire to start playing in the school soccer team again, as she had always enjoyed it so much. Sapphire said that she just wasn't interested in soccer or anything too much lately.



1. How worried are you about Sapphire's mental health?
2. What do you think is wrong with Sapphire?
3. How long do you think it will take for her to start "feeling better"?
4. Do you think she needs help from another person? If so, who? What kind of help does she need?
5. What would help her as she re-joins the soccer team?

Validate to connect.

1. Actively listen.
2. Be mindful of both nonverbal and verbal reactions.
3. Observe what the other person is feeling in the moment. Look for a word that describes this.
4. Reflect the feeling back without judgement. It makes sense that you're angry.
5. Show tolerance even if you don't approve of the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors.
6. Respond in a way that shows you are taking the other person seriously.

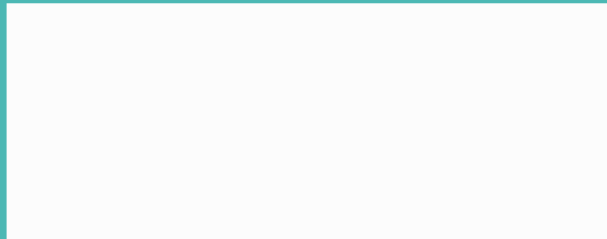
thoughts

feelings

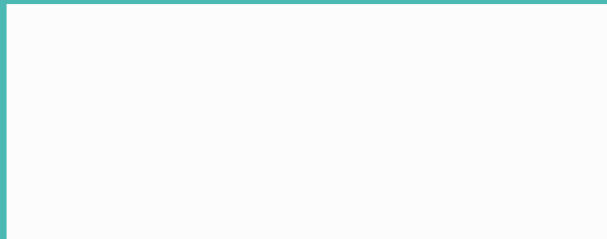
behaviors



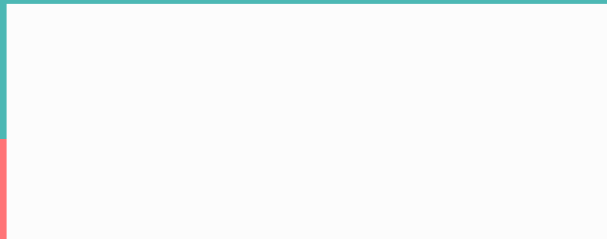
I always mess up in these situations.



Worried



Passing the ball to teammate rather than shooting



sports build resilie nce



"I can handle mistakes and negative emotions."

" I can't handle mistakes and negative motions. Everything has to be going my way all the time."



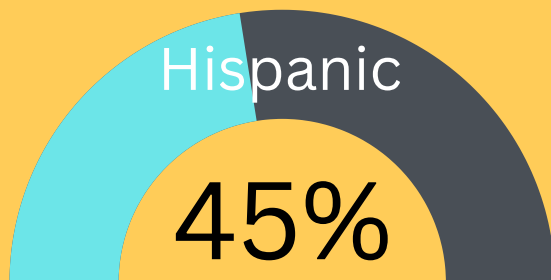
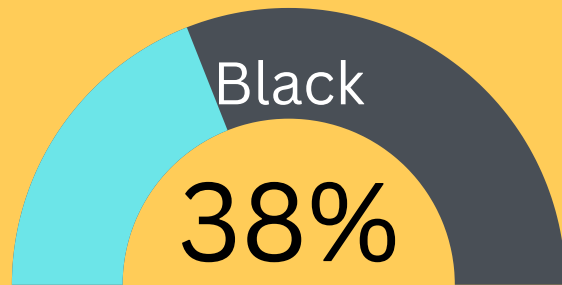
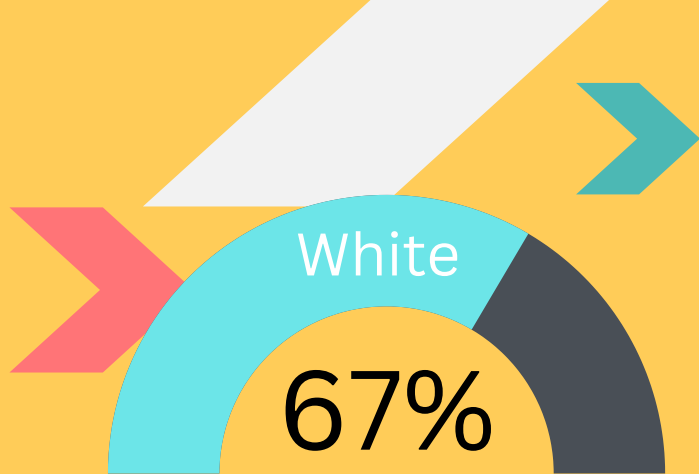
increased access



improved climate



more play and better
mental health



6-9 year olds,
differences in sports
participation by
race/ethnicity starts
young

Hyde et al., 2020

