

A negative phys ed teacher can cause a lifetime of inactivity

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Humiliation in physical education class as a child can turn people off fitness for good, according to a University of Alberta researcher.

Billy Strean, a professor in the U of A's Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, says a negative lifelong [attitude](#) towards [physical activity](#) can be determined by either a good or a bad experience, based on the personal characteristics of the coach or instructor. For example, negative experiences may come from a teacher who has low energy, is unfair and/or someone who embarrasses students.

During his research, Strean heard from individuals who opened up about negative experiences with coaches and instructors, some from many years ago.

One study participant wrote, "I am a 51-year-old-woman whose childhood experiences with sports, particularly as handled in school, were so negative that even as I write this my hands are sweating and I feel on the verge of tears. I have never experienced the humiliation nor felt the antipathy toward any other aspect of life as I do toward sports."

Strean hopes to raise awareness of such experiences so those who instruct [children](#) in sport will realize they have the ability to create either a fun and playful experience or an experience of humiliation.

Strean has tips for coaches and teachers, including putting attention on fun, connecting with friends and learning, and, until kids enter their

teens, minimizing attention on outcomes.

Strean also found study participants had better experiences from minimally organized games such as street hockey, compared to the more organized activities. He suggests adults try not to over-organize [sports](#) and allow the children to explore sporting activities on their own, with minimal rules and no scorekeeping.

Strean's research was recently published in *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*.

Provided by University of Alberta

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