

# Gymnastics Builds Self-Esteem!

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There is little doubt in my mind, Kids First exists today because of my personal experience with sports, in particular, gymnastics. As an elementary student, I was socially sheltered, as my mom did not drive or get out much and my dad was busy running his business. We virtually never traveled and a trip to a restaurant was a once a year occurrence. I lacked confidence in myself and was awkward in new situations and, therefore, avoided them as well as other risks.

Gymnastics altered my perception of myself and absolutely changed the course of my life. Facing the challenges of training my body to learn gymnastics gave me the courage to face life's social, intellectual and other challenges. In gymnastics, I learned to equate a challenge with fun and excitement rather than trepidation and anxiety. My confidence and love of life grew.

It was at my first teaching job instructing tumbling at Mary Ann

Pearman's School of Dance that I realized my passion was helping kids receive the same benefits from gymnastics that I did. To this day I define myself first and foremost as a teacher, even though my energy is now devoted to leadership in the adult world. (I believe there are few differences between teaching and leadership.)

Why is skillful gymnastics instruction uniquely beneficial for young children? I have thought about this for decades and have come to this conclusion:

Very young human beings experience life in the physical realm. It is a huge event in the life of a child when s/he learns to walk, jump, skip or turn a cartwheel. These events have far more impact on a person's psychological makeup than does learning to conjugate a verb or solving for X. To this day, I remember as a very young child the feeling of frustration and later the feeling of achievement learning to skip on both feet. Perhaps I

invented the chase!

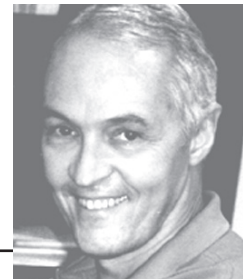
Good, bad, right or wrong, very young children tend to form a perception of their competency as a person based on how well they stack up physically compared to their peers. It is more important to a 3 year old to be able to keep up on the playground than it is to conjugate a verb. For young children, feeling competent physically reinforces a general belief that "I am capable," a foundational component of a healthy self-esteem. Other components are: "I am lovable," "I belong," "my views count," "I am in control of myself." A healthy self-esteem is a requisite for inner peace and happiness and is a worthy goal for us all, a thought that brings us full circle back to the title and central focus of this article, "gymnastics builds self-esteem." I am very thankful I found gymnastics at a young age and my life is richer because of it!

Make it a great month! ✨

Metzger

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