

An **action research case study** to  
examine coaches' implementation of  
**sport-based trauma-sensitive practices**  
in a nationally-run community program

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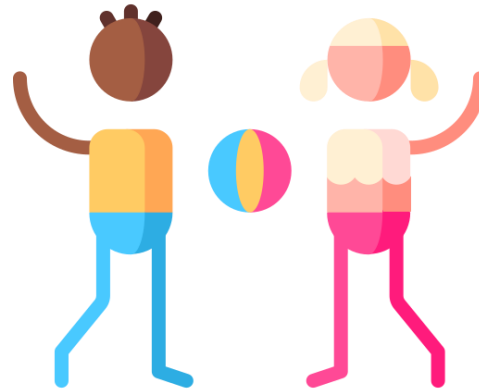
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# Sport as context for healing



Trauma is highly **prevalent**<sup>1</sup>



Sport can offer escape, control, and self-regulation opportunities<sup>2</sup>



Trauma-sensitive sport can help **all** children thrive<sup>4</sup>

# Trauma-sensitive sport programs



**Train** staff in trauma education and program design



Support children in times of **dysregulation**

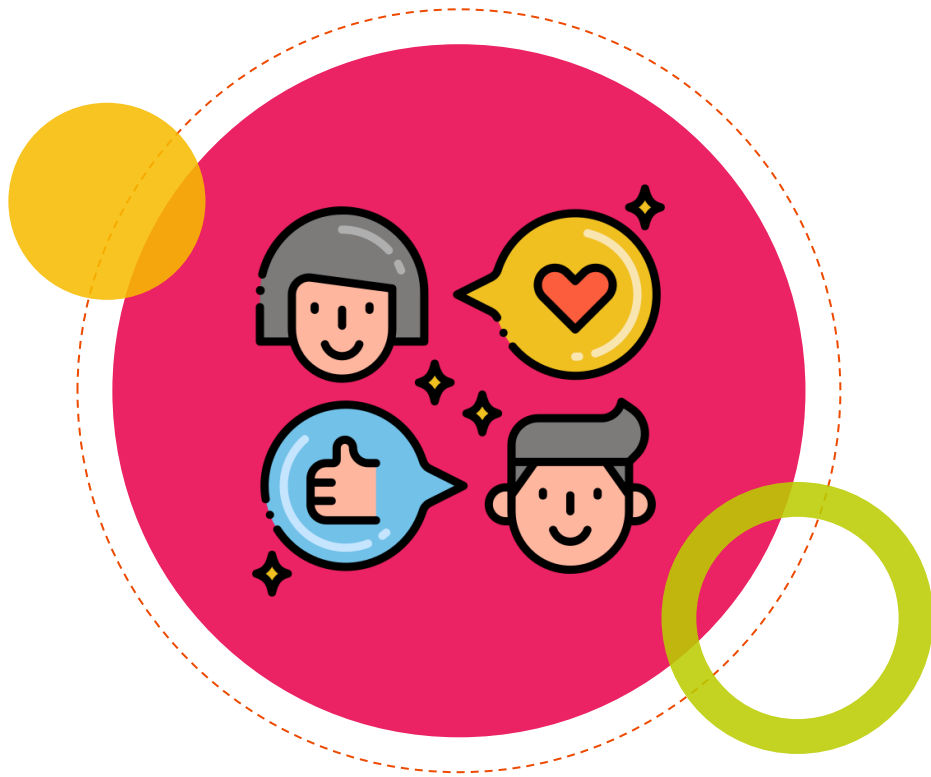


**Design** sport programs to leverage benefits



Teach **resilience**-related life skills

# Purpose



To explore coaches' implementation of sport-based trauma-sensitive practices

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**Action research<sup>7</sup>:** to improve coaching context and participants' served



**Case study<sup>8</sup>:** In-depth understanding of a specific program

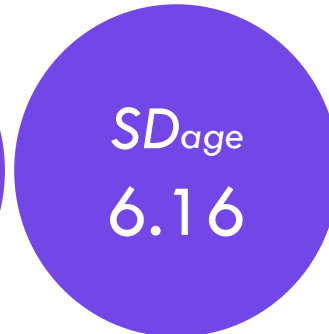
<sup>4</sup> Clark et al. 2020; <sup>5</sup> Yin, 2014



## Context

- ◎ Bounce Back League (BBL)  
Hosted by BGC Canada
- ◎ Open for ALL children
  - ◎ No screening of trauma history
  - ◎ Any child can benefit from resilience-building opp's
- ◎ Six clubs, 2-3 coaches per club
- ◎ Weekly 1.5-hour sessions
- ◎ 20-25 club members attended (aged 8-12 years old)

# Participants



# Data Collection



Pre-session  
focus groups  
(~60 mins each)



Observe and  
take field notes  
of program  
sessions



Post-session  
debriefs  
(~30 mins each)

# Data Analysis



Promising  
Practices  
Rating  
System

- A. Supportive relations with adults
- B. Supportive relations with peers
- C. Level of engagement
- D. Opportunities for cognitive growth
- E. Appropriate structure
- F. **Over-control**
- G. **Chaos**
- H. Mastery orientation



Deductive-  
Inductive  
thematic  
analysis

# Supportive adult and peer relationships

## Observed:

- Club members' were comfortable around coaches
- Coaches were warm, interacted directly, made eye contact, used names
  - Coaches allowed club members to engage in dialogue
  - Club members engaged in prosocial (helping) behaviours

I would say to a large extent, because we know most of the kids personally as well... So we understand different children and how competitive they are, how they feel, we kind of know them so it makes it easier.

Every child here is expressive, [with] whatever they're feeling or whatever they want to talk about. That's been my observation that kids feel safe enough to talk to any staff member about anything.

# Managing dysregulated or challenging behaviours

## Observed:

- Coaches worked closely with club members who were facing difficulties
- Coaches were challenged with children's disruptions or lack of motivation

The [BBL] has taught coaches to be that very empathetic and understanding person to give [club members] the time of day to voice their thoughts or their frustrations and **have someone listen to them** and possibly **help them come up with a solution** to it... I think that has a lot to do with the role models and the coaches and staff members are around them.

Being able to deescalate... and have those conversations - let's get them stable. **Let's chat with them, figure it out, resolve that and get back in...** the [club members] have gotten a lot better about, like just taking breaks when they need it... And then rejoin.

# Higher quality engagement and cognitive growth opportunities led by trained coaches

## Observed:

- Trained coaches were better able to maximize club members' engagement, interactions, and movement
- Untrained coaches struggled with integrating explicit life skill development teachings

All these kids are on the bench, and [the coaches] are all with them and talking with them, interacting with them so that the kids not only are paying attention a little bit to the game, but they're also not phasing out and being bored... and so there was a lot of **“coach the bench, praise the play”**, where you're coaching the bench and they're having good interactions... And then the kids on the floor are playing the game, and they're not getting criticized or anything. They're just being praised.

# Conclusions

- ◎ Gained insight into how trauma-sensitive sport philosophies are applied in practice
- ◎ Gained insight into existing capacities of BGC<sup>6</sup>
- ◎ The value of **structured training**<sup>6,7</sup>
- ◎ Use insights to inform how we train coaches in the BBL

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