

ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: From Surviving to Thriving: Understanding Youth Trauma and How to Effectively Use Sport to Heal

STUDENT: Kendi Zvokel

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Childhood trauma can cause lasting problems that effect health and well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019), 61% of adults have had at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE) in their lifetime. Despite this effecting more than half of the population, few athletic practitioners are trained to deal with youth trauma or are aware of its prevalence. Numbers suggest every coach and youth sport worker will encounter a child who has experienced trauma. This training was developed to educate coaches and youth sport program staff and volunteers.

Often, coaches are trained in first aid or how to spot concussions, but not in trauma and how it may present in a child's ability to regulate, process emotions, and function cognitively. Coaches need tools to work with youth through their trauma and any behaviors that may present as a result. This training compiled existing research and training materials to educate coaches on the benefits sports and recreation can provide for youth who have experienced trauma, as well as help them to leverage their positive relationship with the youth to create a positive change. Many youth experience hardships at home and in their community, which are not always visible to coaches. At times, these challenges present as behavior problems. Further implementation of this training will help coaches to look at behavior in a trauma

informed way, rather than only seeing what is on the surface – the youth’s challenging behaviors. These adults have a huge impact on the youth they work with, so the necessary education in this area is critical. Additionally, sport can be used to help alleviate stress and other symptoms of trauma for youth, making it an important tool for helping kids.