

What are the social
values and life
lessons learned
through youth sport
participa...

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What are the social values and life lessons learned through youth sport participation? Social values and life lessons develop "character." Character is associated with a host of sport values such as teamwork, loyalty, self sacrifice, perseverance, work ethic, and mental toughness. Two sets of values define character; social values and moral values. Social values are usually defined by coaches, administrators, and players. North American society seems to associate character more with social values rather than moral values. Coaches often define character socially due to the strong connection between the types of values that are cultivated in sport and what is valued in American culture (Rudd, 2005). Social values include teamwork, loyalty, self sacrifice, and perseverance. On the other hand, moral values include honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and respect.

Individuals with strong moral character can apply a set of moral values with a strong understanding of its worth despite surrounding peer or societal pressures. Also, moral individuals have the ability to act honestly when peers act dishonestly or when no one is around. Strong morals discourage conformity and promote a thought process. Both social and moral values have their place in society. First, social values are those deemed by society as being vital in reaching a desired end state; winning. Parents often believe a winner in sports will be a winner in life (Eitzen, 2001). Most research does not support that success in sports translates into work success or happiness in one's personal life (Sabo, 1985). Second, moral values are vital to creating a fair and safe competition. Moral values are not fostered to achieve a specific end point. They are a thoughtful reasoning process; knowing, valuing, and doing, while social values are more about conformity (Rudd,

2005). Both values are important aspects of developing a well rounded character. Both can be learned through playing youth sports. Generally, the social values are enforced and given greater merit in sports, but the field is a great place to learn moral values. As a parent it is important to find a sport, team, coach, and other parents that believe in implementing each set of values. Sports are more than just about developing a winner. They are an avenue for a child to develop and implement compassion, competition, and be themselves. References Eitzen, S. D. (2001). *Sport in contemporary society: An anthology* (6th ed.). New York: Worth. Rudd, A. (2005). Which "character" should sport develop? *Physical Educator*, 62(4), 205-211. Sabo, D. (1985). Sport patriarchy and male identity: new questions about men and sports. *Arena Review*, 9(2).