

A large, stylized graphic of a green leaf or plant branch, composed of several overlapping, curved segments in various shades of green (dark, medium, and light). The segments are separated by white gaps, creating a layered, organic shape. In the top left corner, there is a small, solid dark green circle.

PlanetGoals

*Capacity Building Course
for Professionals*

PlanetGo

MODULE 5: SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY – PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES THROUGH FOOTBALL

- The link between football and physical activity and health
- Strategies for promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing sedentary behavior
- How can Football-related Entities can support physical activity for all, including under-represented groups
- Engagement & giving back to the community by offering awareness raising opportunities of the benefits of healthy and active lifestyles
- Future trends in football and health

FOOTBALL BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

Research interest on physical activity and health dates back all the way to 1950s, the breakthrough in the scientific evidence on health benefits of physical activity largely took place during the 1980s and 1990s. There is a great amount of scientific evidence on the positive effects of sport and physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. The positive, direct effects of engaging in regular physical activity are particularly apparent in the prevention of multiple chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis.

The benefits of football for well-being and health are enormous. In addition to improvements in bone health, muscle strength, coordination, cognitive skills and confidence building, football also affects impressively to mental health. Participation in football regularly has been shown to improve mental health by lowering stress, easing anxiety and reducing feelings of loneliness. Football brings people together: regardless of different backgrounds.

FOOTBALL HELPS TO STAY ACTIVE

Practicing football regularly provides people, male and female, of all ages and conditions, including persons with disability with wide range of physical health benefits. It interacts positively with strategies improve diet, discourage the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, helps reduce violence, enhances functional capacity and promotes social interaction and integration. Physical activity is for an individual: a strong means for prevention of diseases and for nations a cost-effective method to improve public health across the population.



STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND REDUCING SEDENTARY BEHAVIOR

With sufficient and versatile exercise, one can overcome the disadvantages of sedentary behavior. It is necessary to make people aware of the health benefits of physical activity. Promoting a healthy lifestyle and reducing sedentary behavior involves a combination of strategies aimed at increasing physical activity, improving dietary habits, and encouraging overall wellness. The key strategies are:

1. PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

- Use media, social platforms and community programs to spread awareness about the benefits of physical activity and the risks associated with sedentary behavior. Promote stories and testimonials of individuals or public figures (e.g. role models) who have adopted healthier lifestyles. Communicate simple, actionable advice, for example “Move more, sit less” or “30 minutes of activity a day”

2. CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Ensure that parks, gyms and recreational facilities are easily accessible and affordable. Develop urban spaces that encourage walking, cycling and other forms of active transportation. Introduce standing desks, walking meetings and active breaks in workplaces.

3. POLICY AND REGULATION

- Implement physical education and active play in schools as a mandatory part of the curriculum. Encourage or mandate regular breaks or movement in the workplace.

4. INCORPORATING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTO DAILY LIFE

- Promote walking or cycling to work instead of driving. Encourage people to take stairs instead of the elevator or to walk short distances instead of driving. Provide resources and guidance for home-based exercises for those who cannot access gyms.

5. TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

- Use apps that track activity levels, set goals and provide reminders to move. Encourage the use of fitness trackers and smartwatches that monitor physical activity and provide feedback. Offer virtual exercise classes to make exercise accessible at home.

6. COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS

- Organize community events for example fun runs, group fitness classes or dance lessons to make exercise social and enjoyable. Create or join support networks that encourage accountability and motivation. Partner with local organizations to develop programs tailored to the community's needs such as walking clubs or family fitness challenges.

7. HEALTHY EATING INITIATIVES

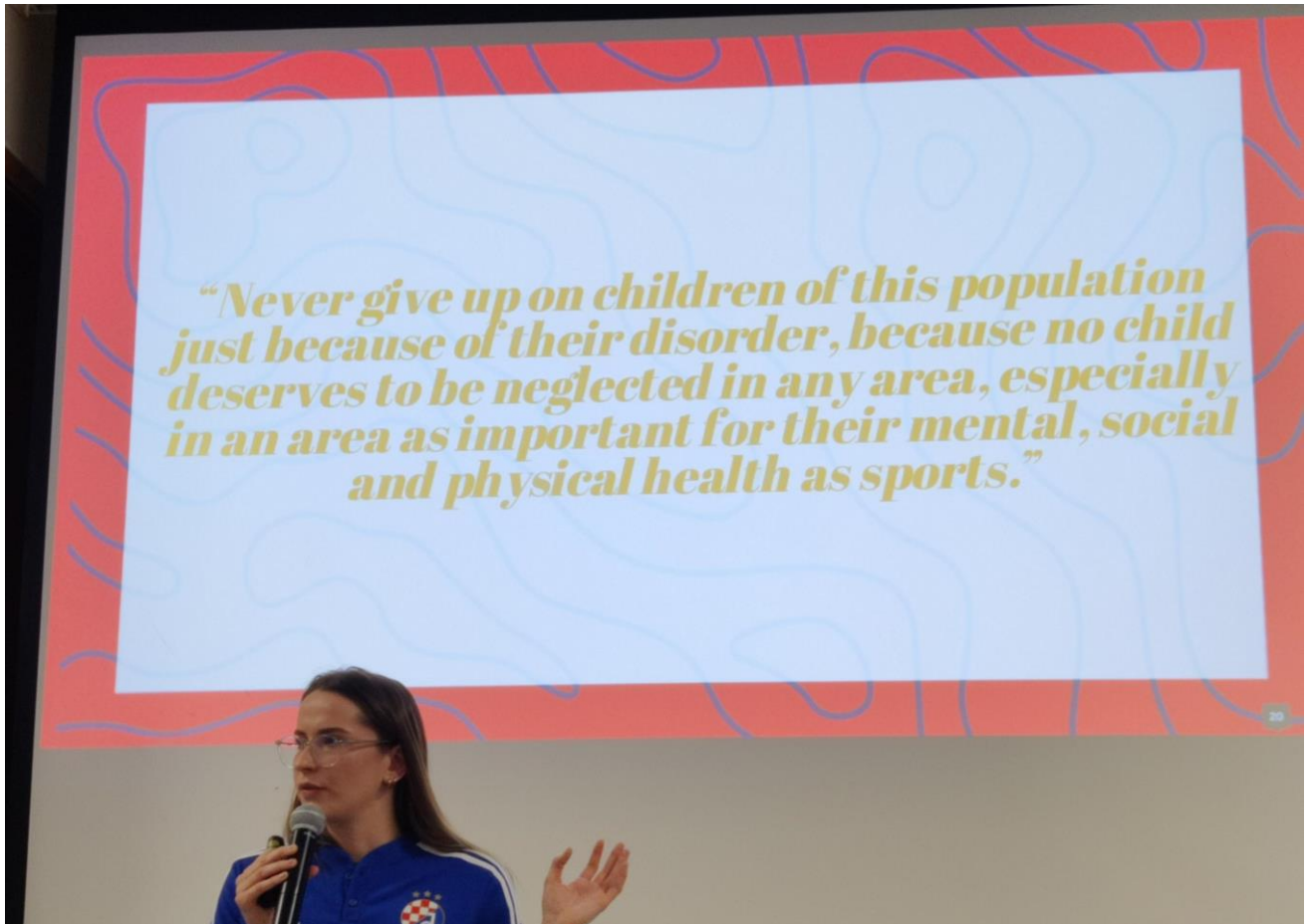
- Teach the importance of balanced diets and how to make healthy food choices. Increase access to fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables in all communities, particularly in food deserts. Provide workshops on preparing healthy meals at home.

8. TARGETING SPECIFIC GROUPS

- Children and adolescents: focus on reducing screen time and increasing outdoor play.
- Elderly: Promote low-impact activities like walking, swimming or yoga that improves mobility and overall health. At-risk populations: Tailor interventions to groups with higher risks of sedentary lifestyles, such as those with chronic conditions or those living in urban areas.

SUMMARY

- Encourage incorporating physical activity into daily life, create supportive environments, be supportive and encourage the whole community to participate in making better choices for their health. Spread awareness, in this area it is impossible to be too loud.



SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Football-related entities, such as clubs, leagues, associations, and community organizations, have a significant role in promoting physical activity for all, including under-represented groups. This is how football-related entities can ensure that physical activity through football is accessible to everyone, regardless of background or ability, thereby fostering a more inclusive and active society.

- **Grassroots programs:** Develop and fund grassroots football programs that are aimed at all age groups, genders and abilities. These programs should be accessible and affordable, especially in underprivileged areas.



- **Targeted outreach:** Create specific initiatives aimed at under-represented groups such as women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged communities. For example, women's football leagues, walking football for older adults, or adaptive football for people with disabilities.

- **Cultural sensitivity:** Design programs that respect and incorporate cultural differences. This includes offering women-only sessions in communities where cultural norms may restrict mixed-gender activities.
- **Adapted facilities:** Ensure that football facilities are accessible to also people with disabilities. This includes wheelchair-accessible changing rooms, pitches, and viewing areas.
- **Representation in Decision-Making:** Ensure that under-represented groups are included in decision-making processes within foot-ball related entities. This can be achieved through advisory boards, committees or direct consultation.
- **Anti-Discrimination Policies:** Enforce strict anti-discrimination policies within all football-related activities, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all participants.
- **Social media:** Use media platforms to showcase stories and successes of under-represented groups in football, challenging stereotypes and encouraging wide participation. Ensure that promotional materials are inclusive in both language and imagery, representing a diverse range of participants. Utilize social media to reach and engage with under-represented groups, using platforms they are active to share opportunities and success stories.
- **Events and tournaments:** Organize football events that are specifically designed to include under-represented groups, such as women’s tournaments, disability-friendly matches, or community festivals. Break down barriers and promote inclusivity by hosting events that encourage mixed-gender or mixed-age participants to participate. Integrate football activities into broader cultural festivals that celebrate diversity, using the sport as a tool for community building.

EXAMPLES

SOURCES

Health Life Academy

<https://healthlifeacademy.com/#>

World Health Organization and FIFA

<https://www.who.int/news/item/04-10-2019-who-and-fifa-team-up-for-health>

FIFA Grassroots Program and Forward Program

<https://www.safa.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Grassroots.pdf>

UEFA Grassroots Charter and Women's Football Development Program

<https://www.uefa.com/development/grassroots/>

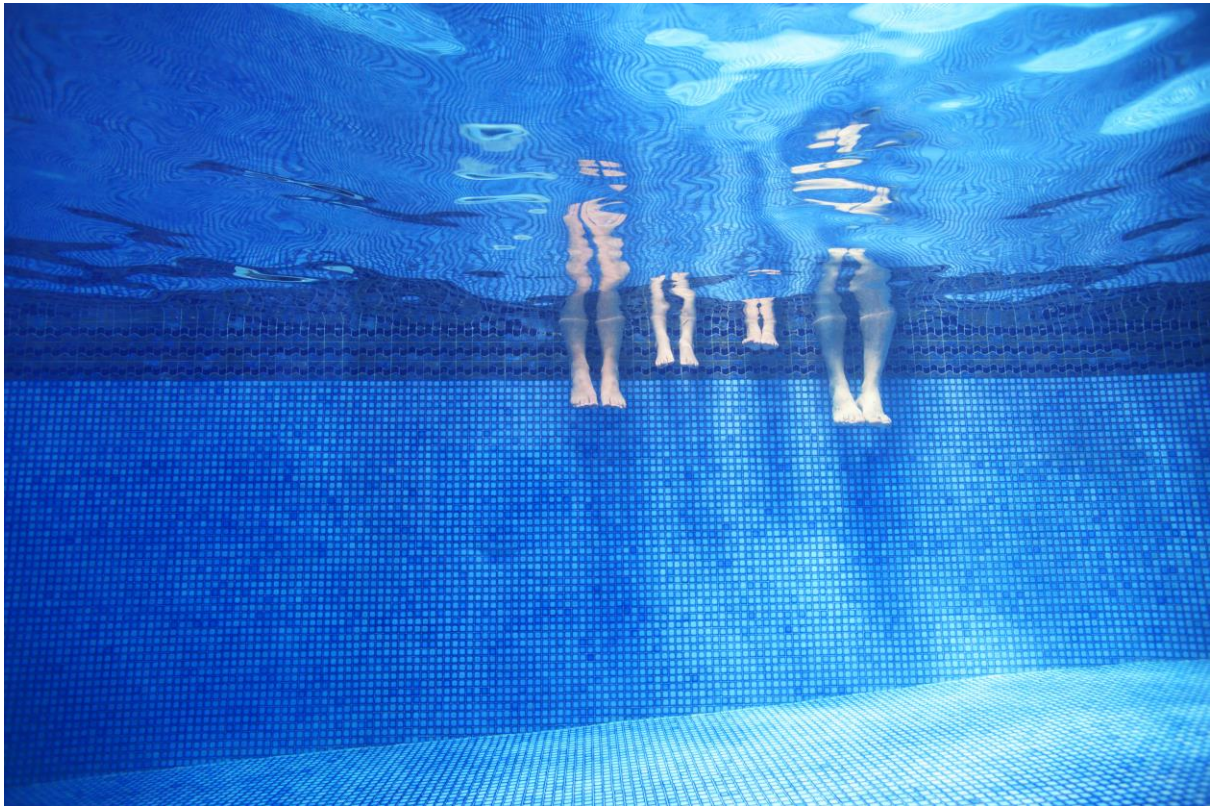
Special Olympics

<https://www.specialolympics.org/>

ENGAGEMENT

Engage the community by being active and make the actions visible, so they will be remembered. Don't take anything for granted and remember to keep up with today's changing world.

Arrange a wide range of activities that aim to different age groups, fitness levels and interests such as walking clubs, yoga classes, dance lessons and sports leagues. Variety ensures that there is something for everyone. Also, create programs that involve the whole family, such as family exercise days or parent-child classes. This encourages participation across generations and builds a culture of physical activity within households. Ensure that these programs are inclusive of all abilities and backgrounds. This includes offering adaptive sports for people with disabilities and culturally sensitive programs that respect the traditions and preferences of different ethnic groups.



Community needs assessment. Conduct surveys and focus groups to understand the community's current level of physical activity, interests, and barriers to a healthy lifestyle. Remember to involve community members in this process to ensure that the programs are relevant and tailored to their needs. Engage local leaders, including religious leaders, teachers and community organizers to gain insights into the community's need and to build trust.

Partner with schools, local businesses, healthcare providers, and non-profits to create a network of support for healthy living initiatives. For example, local businesses can sponsor community fitness events. Also, work with health agencies to align community programs with broader public health goals and to access resources, such as funding, training, and educational materials. Collaborate with local sports clubs and gyms to offer discounted or free access to facilities and classes. They can also provide expertise in designing effective physical activity programs.

Spark the interest of the audience. For example, run campaigns that educate the community about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of physical activity. Use various platforms, such as social media, newspapers, radio and community bulletin boards to reach different demographics. Share success stories of community members who have improved their health through physical activity. These stories can serve as powerful motivators and show that change is possible.

Track participation and progress: use sign-ups, attendance records and participant feedback to track the success of programs and identify areas for improvement. Regularly check what is working and what is not and be willing to adapt programs based on this feedback. Involve the community on how programs can be improved or expanded.

When designing programs, keep sustainability in mind. Ensure that they can continue beyond initial funding or enthusiasm. This might include training local volunteers to lead activities or establishing partnerships that can provide ongoing support. Encourage community members to take ownership of programs by involving them in leadership roles, decision-making and volunteer opportunities. When they feel involved, they are more likely to stay engaged and promote the program to others.

EXAMPLES

SOURCES

Nike: Free app with variety of workouts	https://www.nike.com/hr/ntc-app
Coca-Cola Foundation's Healthy Active Living Programs, Get active programs	https://www.coca-colacompany.com/media-center/healthy-fun-in-the-summer-sun-coke-supports-active-healthy-lifestyles-and-military-heroes
YMCA: Health and Fitness Programs, Chronic Disease Prevention Programs	https://www.ymca.org/what-we-do/healthy-living/fitness
Aktivna Hrvatska (Active Croatia)	https://www.aktivnahrvatska.hr/
Finnish Schools on the Move	https://schoolsonthemove.fi/about-us/
UKK Institute	https://ukkinstituutti.fi/en/

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

It is important to give back to the community of their volunteering, free time or participation. When they feel seen and heard they more likely will stay engaged. Giving back to the community helps to unite the community and bridge some of the social, economic and political gaps.

Rewarding is a great way to show gratitude for choosing healthier lifestyles. Implement reward programs where participants can earn points or receive incentives for engaging in physical activity or attending health-related activities or events. For example, rewards could be discounts at local stores, free fitness gear, or vouchers for healthy meals. Organize celebration days like community runs, sports tournaments or fitness challenges to celebrate the community's commitment to a healthy lifestyle. These events can be combined with awards and recognition for participants.

Use health-related events to raise funds for local causes, such as building new recreational facilities, supporting local schools, or helping community members in need. This connects the idea of health with broader community well-being. Also use your time to volunteer at local events even if the program is finished. Offer your time and expertise to support local health and wellness events, such as marathons, health fairs or school wellness days. Your involvement can help ensure these events are successful and impactful.



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Partner with mental health organizations to offer free or subsidized counseling services, stress management workshops or mindfulness classes in the community. Remember to promote mental health awareness: organize campaigns that raise awareness about mental health and encourage open discussions. Host events or create materials that educate people on the importance of mental well-being alongside physical health.

EXAMPLES

Ben & Jerrys, Social Justice and Environmental cause

Johnson & Johnson, Global Health and Wellness

New Balance, Youth Fitness and Community Health

The North Face: Outdoor Exploration and Environmental Conservation

Podravka, Food and Nutrition

Polarv Health and Fitness Technology

SOURCES

<https://www.benjerry.com/values/issues-we-care-about>

<https://www.jnj.com/global-health-equity>

<https://www.newbalance.co.uk/nbgivesback/>

<https://www.thenorthface.com/en-us/sustainability>

<https://www.podravka.hr/>

<https://support.polar.com/welcome>

FUTURE TRENDS IN FOOTBALL AND HEALTH

As previously mentioned, football has multiple positive effects to mental health. There is likely to be an increasing emphasis on mental health in football, with clubs investing in mental wellness programs, mindfulness training and psychological support. Mental resilience and emotional intelligence may become as important as physical fitness in player development. As a part of this holistic approach future football programs might integrate education on nutrition, sleep, and overall lifestyle management, ensuring that players maintain health beyond their careers.

International collaborations may grow with football being used as a tool for promoting health and well-being in underserved communities worldwide. These efforts might include building facilities in remote areas, providing coaching resources, and integrating football into public health campaigns.

Focus will be on youth and grassroots programs. The future may see a stronger focus on integrating football into curriculums and youth development programs to instill healthy habits from a young age. Programs will emphasize fun, participation, and long-term

engagement over competition. Grassroots football clubs could partner with local health organizations to deliver community-based health initiatives, using football as a vehicle to promote physical activity, healthy eating and mental well-being.

Handball tournament in Rovinj

International Youth Sport Camp Rovinj



GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AND FOOTBALL'S ROLE

Football will be seen as a health ambassador. Clubs or players will take greater roles as ambassadors for health, using their platforms to advocate for healthy living, vaccination campaigns and global health awareness. Football can be used to educate people about global health challenges such as pandemics, climate change and health inequalities. Schools and youth programs can incorporate football-based curricula that teach both the importance of physical activity and broader health concepts. As the sport continues to evolve, its role in global health will likely expand, offering new opportunities to impact communities worldwide positively.

SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS PRACTICES

Football clubs may increasingly adopt sustainable practices, from building eco-friendly stadiums that use renewable energy to implementing waste reduction and recycling programs. This could also encourage fans to adopt more sustainable behaviors. Football-related entities might promote active transportation options such as walking or cycling to matches as part of broader efforts to reduce carbon footprints and encourage physical activity among fans.



Special Power League Rovinj 2024



EXAMPLES

Mateo Kovačić Foundation,
Football ambassador

Juventus – Juventus Academy

StreetFootballWorld

SOURCES

<https://healthlifeacademy.com/ambassadors/>

<https://www.juventus.com/en/academy/>

<https://www.sportanddev.org/network/organisation-directory/streetfootballworld-0>

