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TWEEN



Exercise inside the box(ing)

By Marylene Vestergom

ParticipACTION recently launched “Build Your Best Day.” And for kids between the ages of 5 – 18, it means getting them away from their electronic devices and getting that heart pumping by being active.

ParticipACTION recommends “at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity involving a variety of aerobic activities. And when it comes to vigorous physical, and muscle and bone strengthening activities, these should each be incorporated at least three days per week.”

For the kids that go to Wayne Bourque’s Centre Ring for boxercise, the classes are based on training concepts boxers use to keep fit. The classes are non-contact, and the boxers are taken through their paces, learning the various boxing punches like the jab, hook and uppercut. Boxing is also mixed with strength exercises that target the upper and lower body, along with exercises to strengthen the core.

The workouts are tough and in a 60-minute session, these kids get one of the best full-body workouts they’ve ever experienced. When the kids are hitting the bag, they are getting muscle and bone strengthening benefits, and as an added bonus, boxercise helps to push their aerobic threshold. “By the end of the class these kids are energized, and you can actually see how their self-esteem and confidence has been reshaped,” says Bourque. “They walk taller and seem more self-aware.”

It’s no surprise to see girls attending the boxercise classes. Andrea, 18, was introduced to the

classes through her father, who had been attending the classes for many years. At 14, she was working out side-by-side with an older group. “In the beginning I was less confident and I did find the classes a bit intimidating. It was tough for me to keep up, but after getting the hang of the different punches, I was hooked. Boxing allows each person to find their own strength—it’s you against the bag. I’ve been surprised at how strong I feel and how much more I can achieve than I would have thought possible. Even at the point of exhaustion, when you don’t even think you can lift an arm, somehow you find the mental and physical strength for those last 40 hooks or the last 10 push-ups.” Andrea’s love of boxing gives her an incredible sense of achievement and power at the end of each class. “There’s nothing else like it,” she says.

Bourque also knows that as a cross-training activity, boxercise gives young people a great fitness edge.

“It’s demanding and challenging, but kids want and need a challenge, and it gives them that vote of confidence some desperately seek. These kids transform in front of you. Along with feeling better about themselves, they see improvements in their level of fitness.”

“Wayne’s great with the kids,” says Chris DePiero, Director of Athletics, St. Michael’s College School. DePiero took some of the hockey players from the St. Mike’s Buzzers to one of Wayne’s classes. “Not only did the kids benefit from the physical conditioning but they benefited mentally as well. As a coach, the cross-fit approach really resonated with me, and the kids really embraced it.”

At Centre Ring, it’s about the kids, and Bourque has a few trainers whose focus is on the development of these junior boxers. Jordan, 25, has been coaching for a few years and loves training these kids. “Not only are they getting fit, but it’s an activity that requires discipline. A lot of people look at boxing purely as a physical activity but there’s more to it. They learn how to overcome things, like when you’re tired and you don’t think you could hit the bag one more time or you can’t do one more pushup. Instead of giving up, you learn what it means to dig deep for that second reserve of energy and push yourself to the end. This dedication and understanding of what it means to be successful is something they will have with them for the rest of their lives; it’s a true transferrable skill. Boxercise is a two-punch hit – physically and mentally.”

Alex, 15, loves working out at Centre Ring. “It’s a tough training program but the trainers really push you. It’s an amazing feeling knowing you didn’t give up.” Ibrahim, 17, agrees: “You’re working all of your muscles and if you do other sports, it’s perfect for cross-training. It’s also really easy to progress and you do see the difference in your fitness.” As for Andrea, there is no question that the hour spent boxing is hard work, but it’s also a great way to let off a little steam and be completely unplugged from the world. “I love it and I would definitely tell other girls to try out the classes at Centre Ring, not only because they’re great workouts, but because they make you feel empowered and strong in a world where girls—despite immense progress—are still considered weaker.”

Bourque knows these kids need an outlet, and the physical education program at the school isn’t enough. When the kids arrive, they leave their electronic devices behind, and for 60 minutes they’re no longer thinking about who’s tweeting them. In fact, when the class ends, the kids aren’t running to their phones, they’re actually talking to one another — laughing and making jokes, even looking at each other eye to eye – without the interruption of their electronic devices.

ParticipACTION points out the proven benefits of being active. When children are active for at least 60 minutes and limit time spent being sedentary to less than two hours per day, they:

- Improve their health
- Do better in school
- Improve self-esteem and confidence
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Improve their fitness
- Grow stronger
- Have fun playing with friends
- Feel happier
- Learn new skills.

So what are you waiting for? “Build Your Best Day” for your kids.

For more information on how you and your kids can Build Your Best Day, visit buildyourbestday.com

For more information on Centre Ring, visit centrerings.com

Obesity linked to lack of sleep

Children who get less than the recommended amount of sleep for their age are at a higher risk of developing obesity.

Research at the University of Warwick has found that children and adolescents who regularly sleep less than others of the same age gain more weight when they grow older and are more likely to become overweight or obese.

One of the co-authors, Dr Michelle Miller, Reader of Biochemical Medicine, Health Sciences, Warwick Medical School said: “Being overweight can lead to cardiovascular disease and type-2-diabetes which is also on the increase in children. The findings of the study indicate that sleep may be an important potentially modifiable risk factor (or marker) of future obesity.”

The paper, “Sleep duration and incidence of obesity in infants, children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies”, has been published in the journal “Sleep”. The paper’s authors reviewed the results of 42 population studies of infants, children and adolescents aged 0 to 18 years, which included a total of 75,499 participants. Their average sleep duration was assessed through a variety of methods, from questionnaires to wearable technology.

The participants were grouped into two classifications: short sleeper and regular sleepers. Short sleepers were defined as having less sleep than the reference category for their age. This was based on the most recent National Sleep Foundation guidelines in the U.S. which recommends that infants (4 to 11 months) get between 12-15 hours of nightly sleep, that toddlers (1-2 years) get 11-14 hours of sleep, children in pre-school (3-5 years) get 10-13 hours and school aged children (6-13 years) between 9 and 11 hours. Teenagers (14-17 years) are advised to get 8-10 hours.

Participants were followed up for a median period of three years and changes in BMI and incidences of overweight and/or obesity were recorded over time. At all ages short sleepers gained more weight and overall were 58 per cent more likely to become overweight or obese.

Dr Miller said: “The results showed a consistent relationship across all ages indicating that the increased risk is present in both younger and older children. The study also reinforces the concept that sleep deprivation is an important risk factor for obesity, detectable very early on in life.”