

Rock Climbing, Boys and Nature

I have spoken on many occasions about the need for boys (and girls) to connect with nature, be active and move. Connection with natural pastimes builds character, self esteem and taps into the hunter-gatherer instinct still present in males.

My recommendation number 2 talks of the need to move with males if we are to find out what is really going on in their lives and bond with them. Rock climbing is becoming increasingly popular and used to assist communication between boys and their friends, fathers and sons etc, but it also has many more advantages...

"Rock climbing is becoming increasingly used in schools, at school camps and by individuals and families to improve physical strength, social interaction and mental health.

Physical Benefits:

- Weight loss
- A low impact aerobic workout
- Strengthening of hands and fingers
- Strengthening of shoulders, neck and upper back
- Improves endurance and core muscles
- Assists the cardiovascular system
- Strengthening of forearms and upper arms

Examples:

- **AFL, Rugby and Soccer** - Hand strength for grip on the ball.
- **Racquet or bat sports like Tennis, Squash or Cricket** - Hand strength for holding onto the bat, arms for a mean smash and agility.
- **Running, cycling and Swimming** - Builds the upper body and improves flexibility.

Mental Benefits:

- Improved decision making
- Assists with goal setting and planning
- Improves determination and self confidence
- Increases spatial awareness
- Helps in problem solving and visualization
- Aids concentration
- Aids in stress relief

Social Benefits:

- Belonging to a community of climbers
- Improved communication, trust & listening skills
- It is healthy and builds character
- Opportunities for networking and friendships
- Improved leadership skills

Rock climbing can also be an excellent activity for children and adults with physical or mental disabilities. It has been shown to increase spatial perception, hand-eye coordination and balance. It also teaches communication, problem solving and planning for children and adults who need to overcome gross and fine motor difficulties.”

Adapted from: www.climbingnaturaliste.com.au

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I believe that fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, teachers and students, employers and employees, work colleagues and (particularly) families, can reap real benefit from doing such activities together. They have a medium for talking incidentally about the world, local and family issues and growing closer together as a result.