

Mental developmental of 6-12 year olds

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Mental Development for the 6 year olds and under

the key issue for children under six is positive self-esteem. Children will play the game longer; try harder and overcome obstacles if the environment is conducive to building self esteem. The concept of "self" is learned, not by winning games, but by facing progressively difficult challenges. Earning success promotes higher levels of self-awareness, stronger self-image and self-confidence. The child up to the age of 6 is focused primary upon developing the self. At this stage all experiences should allow the child to fully engage the physical domain within the child. It would be destructive to make tactical demands on a six year old when they don't have the cognitive ability to comprehend the concept. "The make believe" ability of the child's mind is dominant at this stage. Most interactions of the make believe world can be unitized successfully in the very small sided game. Every touch can be a resounding success. Youngsters have very short attention spans and can't stand hearing verbal descriptions of observations from a coach. Too much verbiage and the moment are lost. Players like to move and require constant opportunity to be successful. The under six player is developing a central nervous system that requires general movement with little refined skill. It's OK if a six year old cannot bend a ball at 40 yards; it's not in their abilities to master such a demand. If we try to teach this demand we waste time and destroy the child's motivation. The world of a six year old revolves around the imaginary victories they create in their realities. This is a normal phase and should be encouraged with corrections and criticisms held to a minimum. Given the correct environment the children will find a way to play. When levels of demand are too abstract in the full 11 v 11 games (tactics) or the physical demands too challenging the result is anger, helplessness and ultimately dropout.

Mental Development for the 7-12 year olds

the next phase in development is the cognitive period of operational thought. At this stage, age 7-12 the child is moving away from self-centeredness and becomes aware of others in the world. The larger sided games that require more complex variations and tactics can start to be introduced. We have to be aware that there is a very small progression from the previous stage and that a sudden transition to a formal full game with 11 v 11 tactics will destroy confidence if introduced at this stage. Therefore, the progression should move gradually to a larger sided game. The simple progression from a 6 v 6 to a 7 v 7 games is warranted here. A longer attention span and the ability to understand co-operation will contribute to playing small side tactics. The ability to understand rule formation is beginning in this stage and therefore the coach can begin to describe simple logic. Again, a word of caution that a full sided game is beyond the comprehension of a nine year old. I often hear of parents that indicate that a child at age nine is already competently playing full sided games with older children. Playing and understanding the game are different ideas. It is necessary to both understand and be successful to achieve higher levels of enjoyment. One of the quickest ways to lose a child joy is to make the demands of the game too difficult and to lose contact with their friends. At this stage the person's self-concept is forming along the lines of how they compare to other people. While this comparison is inevitable within the context of society we must emphasize the needs of the child. Soccer by its nature can indicate a

winner and loser very quickly and can initiate gross feelings of guilt and inferiority if the constant focus on winning is stressed rather than development.