Zars Sports

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Kunashni Parikh is a Sport Psychologist and Counselor who helps professional athletes boost their performance through mental training. She was the Vice-Captain and Goalkeeper for the Junior Indian Football Team and the Goalkeeper of Vancouver United Football Club in Canada. She is a Neuroscience Research Scholar from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver where she the received the International Leader of Tomorrow Award on a Full Scholarship. She uses an understanding of the mind-body relationship to integrate mental health with physical health in sport as a place of holistic development.

**The Science behind Cognitive and Developmental Changes in the Brain**

**through Playing Sports**

So you might be wondering why to put your kid into Sports which is a completely physical activity. Aren’t there other things they can be doing to enhance their skills or mind? Well, that’s the misconception we got and luckily science has it all figured out. Playing sports like football, basketball, and physical exercise causes impactful and permanent changes in a child’s brain that directly impacts their brain development and mental and emotional growth. Science shows that playing a sport leads to improvements in mood, decision-making, inter-personal skills, and overall personality development.

Let’s look at it in detail. Besides the well-known physical benefits, children who play sports from a young age gain emotional, cognitive, and social benefits in three separate domains.

**Emotional Benefits –** Playing sports leads to fewer tantrums, better control over impulsivity and anger outburst, fewer mood swings, and a calm state of mind. The amygdala which is the region of emotional salience in the brain is positively controlled which leads to positive changes in the child’s emotions and behaviour.

**Cognitive Benefits –** Sports and Physical Exercise lead to improvements in a child’s decision making, planning, time-management, self-awareness, and overall intelligence. These cognitive enhancements occur because during exercise the brain is stimulated to produce more neural brain cells which leads to stronger connections in the frontal region of the brain. This stimulation also causes positive developmental changes where the child’s brain develops sharper, faster, and stronger in terms of the connections between the cells.

**Social Benefits –** Playing a Sport is a Social Experience where the child has to learn to communicate and interact effectively with other teammates and the coach. This improves the child’s emotional intelligence, communication skills, team-work, and develops a sense of leadership in the child from a young age.

So as you can see, Sports changes the Brain! And Makes a Child sharper, faster, and more mentally and emotionally resilient. So when you think of whether you should enroll in Zars Session or not, remember all that the brain would miss out on: overall cognitive, social, and emotional development needed to be ahead of the game of life from a tender start.