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Family Friendly  
**SPORT**

# GUIDE FOR INTRODUCING FAMILY FRIENDLY SPORT



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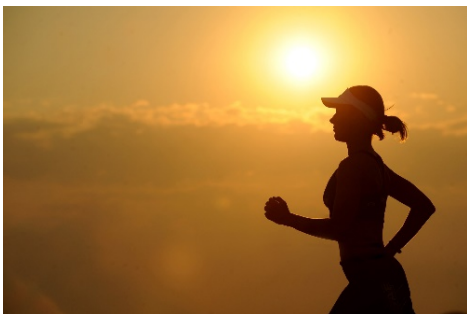
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## Chapter 1

### *A few words to start with...*

#### A. Self-confidence Power Openness Respect Team-Spirit



Sports...one of mankind's most ancient inventions and one of the basic aspects in the lives of many of us...An instinct that offers joy, physical exercise and a unique feeling of self-confidence. People of all ages and backgrounds practice sports to improve their physique and mental resilience, socialize, get involved in healthy

competition and nurture athletic ethos. Undeniably, exercise is essential for many reasons – and this is a fact according to the WHO<sup>1</sup>, as physical activity:

- has significant health benefits for hearts and bodies;
- reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety;
- enhances thinking, learning, and judgment skills;
- ensures healthy growth and development in young people;
- improves overall well-being.

So, who can doubt the uncountable benefits of participating in some physical activity?

However, provided that everyday life becomes more and more pressing and stressful in the modern days, the lack of time often pushes people away from exercise. Although the majority of children's guardians support the idea of having their child involved in sports, they themselves appear quite distant from this beneficial habit.

#### *And here comes THE challenge!*

How can we persuade guardians to avoid their comfortable sedentary life habits and start moving their body? Could this be somehow linked to their children's sport activities which are already ongoing? In fact, are we sure that the real benefits of sports are limited to those

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>

related to mental and physical health? Or is there any room there to gain even more, and...in multiple unexplored levels that bring families together?

As a response to this challenge, there is this new, innovative and alternative concept of exercise which comes to revolutionize the idea of athleticism and to make sports safer and more accessible to families as a whole and can be concluded in three single words:

## **Family Friendly Sports**

*FFS reflects the idea of creating a “family-friendly” framework of exercise, in which families can train together, bond and raise their awareness about a series of matters through sports!*

### **B. FFS: a huge (+) for everyone**

So...thinking of FFS, an early question that comes to one’s mind is...who might benefit from it, after all? Of course, the name is quite-explanatory: FAMILIES stand proudly on one side of the scale. And of course, this includes GUARDIANS (parents, relatives, friends, carers or any other guardian of a child) and –who else? - CHILDREN, the main protagonists of the FFS idea!

However, this is not all! The other side of the scale welcomes the most important actors in the sports fields, the primary service providers, those who offer facilities, those who have the required knowledge and skills, those who are leading the process of learning and practicing any kind of sport: sports clubs and their staff! Trainers, coaches, facilitators, educators – any individual involved in the process under the capacity of the knowledge provider and the capacities trainer.

But how could sports clubs and sports organizations be actually benefitted by such an idea? How could FFS be of their interest and what kind of advantages could appear there?



***Let’s take a closer look!***



### (a) FFS – F for FAMILIES



In FFS, families have the chance to access a more **flexible in regards of time**, and thus more sustainable form of training. Via overcoming the barrier of having to attend trainings in different times and venues, FFS becomes more **accessible and attractive**. By training together as a team, family members have opportunity to **bond** and **improve their collaboration capacities**, while at the same time they are offered the opportunity to jointly **improve their emotional stability and growth**. In fact, practicing sports under a safe family environment brings together family members through their common goal and in a spirit of good mood, joy and satisfaction. This environment per se, provides space to **express emotions, release tension, resolve misunderstanding and improve their family relations** in the long term. Additionally, the basic concept of FFS is the combination of sports with learning and awareness raising; as athleticism has to do primarily with ethos and values, FFS shall also be a mean of **nurturing healthy competition** and **improving social behavior**, through **raising awareness** for a series of sociopolitical matters also reflected to sports: hooliganism, violence, fanaticism, doping etc. All in all, FFS is the creation of an ideal environment for families to **evolve physically, mentally and socially**.

### (b) FFS – S for SPORTS CLUBS

Sports clubs and sports organizations are far from left out of this game! On the contrary, the decision to become “family friendly” gives access to a vast range of advantages. To start with, this new, fresh and modern profile immediately increases the club’s **recognition** and **popularity** among families, as it creates a brand-new perspective, a new way to look through and into sports targeting multiple interlinked groups: children (who are already active in sports) and their guardians (who probably aren’t). This adds extra value to their profile, as they appear **more attractive and interesting to the public** and they **win over the competition** against other clubs and organizations who do not involve such activities in their regular programs. This **holistic and well-rounded approach** to sport immediately raises the **quality standards** of their services



as they appear **more attractive and interesting to the public** and they **win over the competition** against other clubs and organizations who do not involve such activities in their regular programs. This **holistic and well-rounded approach** to sport immediately raises the **quality standards** of their services

and also improve their **educational character**. Of course, the more people they involve from different target groups (here – age groups) the **merrier people they attract** in the long term: athletes, spectators etc., let alone the **variety of opportunities** they provide to those target groups, which consequently lead to high **reputation and acknowledgement**. Last but not least, the wide **social impact** they bring to their community may create **space for relevant stakeholders**, including authorities relevant to sport, to express more interest in supporting these initiatives.

\* \* \*

For sure the list can grow long, but let's hold for a moment and see how all of this is reflected in numbers!

## C. Let's play with numbers!

Despite all the self-evident fact that sports in general, and FFS even more, have numerous benefits and a wide positive influence to everyone involved in it, the results on a global level are not as encouraging as expected.

In fact, according to the WHO, 1 in 4 adults globally do not meet the global recommended levels of physical activity. Despite the scientific data warning us that people who are insufficiently active have a 20 % to 30 % increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active, more than 80 % of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active.



And what about sports clubs and organizations? Do they involve FFS in their regular programs and if yes...how often is that? What is the reaction of their target groups in such initiatives – do they welcome and exploit such opportunities or are they still project hesitations and indifference? What kind of challenges do they face along the way and which are the voids that still need to be covered in order for FFS to become integral part of their work?

In an effort to provide a valid response to those questions we conducted the “FFS Research” which involved a quantitative online survey targeting sports clubs and organizations with no or limited experience in FFS, as well as relevant stakeholders, and a qualitative phase of interviews towards representatives of sports clubs and organizations



who identified as practitioners of family-friendly approaches and thus having certain experience, coming from five (5) countries around Europe: Spain, Belgium, North Macedonia, Serbia and Greece. According to the research results, the respondents showed great interest for organizing and participating in more family-friendly activities. Around 45% of them rate this interest with the highest grade on the scale, while 48% shows moderate to high interest.

So, it is rather obvious the idea of FFS is here to stay and make a huge change in the lives of everyone involved. Let's see how we can make this happen!

## D. Turning FFS – how hard can it be?

Well, it might seem too much for the power of one single sports club to make huge changes and transform into an FFS club? Well...relax! This Curriculum is here to analyze all the aspects of FFS and guide the sports clubs and organizations step by step in applying FFS in their regular programs!

To start with, let's define what exactly a family friendly sports club needs to do. The answer is easy and not too complicated: it is supposed ***to provide opportunities for families to train together and enjoy some fun, educational and bonding time through sports activities!***

To start with, you don't need to exaggerate, neither is it obligatory to make huge changes in the functioning, infrastructure and annual planning of your club. One step at a time! If you are a beginner, then this very Curriculum is the best tool you can use for your FFS transformation! In fact, you can start your new page by including in your annual plan some occasional family days with activities that involve the interaction of your young athletes with their parents (ex. games between opposing teams of children and their parents), or educational family days (ex. parents and children being trained on the rules of your sport) etc.

A few concrete examples of such activities you may find in the end of this Curriculum, which -of course- you can adjust to the needs of your own sports club!

In any case, building the family friendly profile of your sports club requires a holistic approach and involves the following important aspects that are crucial in such a turn:

- to ensure the active involvement of carers in practicing sport activities together with their children, which should be regular, consistent and long term. This requires that the FFS activities are well planned in advance and quite deliberately, in the exact same way as we would be planning the development of the child in the process.
- to invite carers to be actively involved not only in the implementation of these activities, but also in the general program planning of the work of the club and its strategic development, in order to ensure that the needs and views of them as important actors of FFS are listened to and integrated in the functioning of the club.

Anyway, it is very important to keep this in mind: when deciding to transform your club into a FFS one you need to build the team-spirit within your target groups. It is not only you (staff, trainers, representatives etc.) and your young athletes anymore...Your team is getting bigger and carers should be considered part of it! The whole family is your team and carers and young athletes are your team members! Be the first ones to acknowledge it and help your members understand it and build up their team spirit!



Not in any case should this overview scare you, though! Exaggeration is not our thing here, remember? Yes – consistency, regularity and long-term processing we definitely need! This doesn't mean we are talking about every-single-day work though! A couple times a week or a few times per month could be enough, as long as they happen **every** week of **every** month!



**Now, let's see what challenges we need to overcome and how we can build our capacities for becoming an FFS club!**





## Chapter 2

### Life is a challenge...let's deal with it!

It is totally human, understandable and acceptable that any unconventional or just unusual idea brings along challenges, difficulties and obstacles – not only literally, but also metaphorically speaking. And FFS is definitely not an exception, especially since it refers to and involves humans! Fears, hesitations and even anxiety sometimes, might be a negative reason to abstain from such activities, whereas practicalities do not make it any easier. But who says that anything cannot be overcome? Let's take a quick look.

#### A. Put your GUARD(ian) down!

Sometimes guardians are looked up to as super heroes and we all have the tendency to forget that they have the right to have their own weak points or insecurities. And the sports field can definitely serve as the best place to help those tiny weaknesses rise up to the surface. So, when guardians (parents, relatives, friends, carers or any other guardian of a child) are invited to join some co-activity with their children, it is quite likely that they might have to deal with certain obstacles:

- **Lack of motivation:** the more adults grow old the merrier they appear to distance themselves from any kind of physical activity. Sometimes this may be a conscious choice, but most of the times it is because of the pace of everyday life, the workload and the huge number of responsibilities and tasks they are asked to deliver in order to survive and support their families. This gradual removal from the active lifestyle, immediately leaves a lot of room for new life habits that seem to be rather comfortable after a hard day at work. Rings a bell? Well, sedentary life turns to become adults' best friend and any kind of exercise – let alone real sports activities turn into a thing of the past.



**The magic antidote - PROMOTE THE BENEFITS:** The cure here is one and easy – MEMORY! Remind them of the joy and happiness, the boosted self-confidence and the feeling of satisfaction, the positive effects of being in a team, keeping one's body healthy, and...why not? Some levels of physical transformation! At the end of the day...who wouldn't like to feel younger, energized and happy at the same time?

- **Physical condition:** let's agree that we have somehow managed to overcome the previous obstacle and eventually drag a child's guardian to be involved in some sport activity or exercise. Would they be able to make it?



Logically, good habits are not the only ones to abandon us the moment we leave them behind, but so do stamina and –even basic- sports skills. Our body forgets how to be fit and is rather cumbersome, our muscles become stiff and our breath is quite easily lost. And of course, no one feels good and safe if this is the case. The fear of injury or long and complex rehabilitation seem to prevail and create extra reasons to abstain from such activities.

**The magic antidote – ENSURE SAFE EXERCISE:** Wait a minute! Who said that we should turn from couch-pillows to Olympic stars in one day? Following the instructions of adequately educated and experienced trainers or coaches, good warm-ups and post-exercise stretches, and a gradual increase of the exercise's difficulty level, will ensure that getting back into the game is a smooth and safe process, while regular exercise and persistence will bring us closer to our old good selves!

- **Fear of failure:** No doubt everything would be much easier if it was only physical. Though our body is not the only thing that urges us to stop or remain at pause. It's our inside tiny voice, this small little devil dancing in our mind, screaming in our head that failure is an option. What if we don't make it? What if we are not good enough? What if others are better than us? What if we are exposed to the eyes of our children? But honestly...what if our ego is hurt?



**The magic antidote – DEBUNK SPORTS:** Take a second to breathe and think...is it all about winning? Is being the best of the group a self-serving objective? And what does "doing sports" really mean? No, it's not falling in the arena and fighting for a prize! Neither is it the win, the first place or the high performance! Sports do not equal winning anyway! It's the joy, it's the entertainment, it's doing something positive for us, becoming better human beings, enjoying the team!

- **Social anxiety:** Though this internal struggle does not stop with ourselves. It's also about others. Hesitation may have many roots and the fear to expose ourselves is always playing a key-role in our decisions. How people see us, how they judge our decisions, how they criticize our performance and our external behavior, sometimes might even define who we are, what we choose, and how we build



our lives. In our sports-case, the closest circle of people is the most “concerning” audience: other adult members of the team, coaches and trainers, spectators, even our very own children – a very realistic depiction of society and real-life environment. And this social pressure may stand before us as an unreachable wall that blocks our path to joy and health.

**The magic antidote – ENHANCE THE TEAM SPIRIT:** Stop! Turn your head around and change your focus point! Yes, fears and reservations are always there and we shall embrace them as they are part of ourselves. Never should we drown in them, though! Let’s not forget the most important key-word of the previous paragraph: TEAM! Team: a group of people who perform interdependent tasks to work toward accomplishing a common mission or specific objective. Team means respect, honesty, cooperation, accountability, mutual support, understanding and openness; team means being together and enjoying a relationship of trust and inclusion, feeling safe and comfortable. Team is exactly what the Three Musketeers have taught us: all for one and one for all!

➤ **Practical obstacles:** Of course, self-insecurities and body challenges are not always the sole problem. Practical issues of everyday life with its hectic and stressful pace, as well as realistic struggles of every family appear to make our come back even harder. Any activity that is not related to our household or our profession, can be acknowledges as time-consuming. And who has the luxury to spend additional hours during our already hectic everyday schedule? And even if one did...do we live in times when adding extra costs in our family budget is affordable?



**The magic antidote – BE PRACTICAL:** Yes, these can be real difficulties. But not to the level that cannot be defeated. Taking our children to practice their sport activity gives us a great opportunity to also take advantage of this spare time in the waiting room and use it for ourselves! Train with them instead of having a simple coffee moment in the cafeteria and being bored! Join programs that offer additional discounts for joint activities of guardians and children – this is the moment and the stock to invest your precious time and money!



## B. Reveal the CHILD you hide in you!



Unfortunately, though, insecurities and fears is not exclusively a privilege of adult guardians. Children are also human beings and –in fact- quite vulnerable and dependent on their protector’s character and behavioral approaches. Consequently, the prospect of cooperating with their guardians in some sport activity might be a little scary and

bring up multiple troubling issues, such as:

- **Expectations:** We’ve all been there. Childhood is definitely a great period of one’s life, when minors are being protected, supported and discharge of major responsibilities and tasks. They are supposed to focus on developing their body and mind, forming their personalities and building their characters. So, is it always light and carefree? Well, the answer is no! Children are often burdened with a lot of stress and the sense of responsibility to serve the expectations of their guardians who monitor and observe their progress, to present satisfying –if not magnificent! - results and receive their approval. And having a good performance in the sports field belongs to the exact same category and becomes even more stressful when the guardian is not only present, but actually involved in the activity. What a nightmare for a child’s mind!



***The magic antidote – PROMOTE SUPPORT:*** Once again it is time to change the focus point and deflect any negative feelings or fears. It is important to use the joint sport activity to promote mutual support between children and their guardians, to make them both understand that any outcome is the result of their joint effort and the only expectation they should both have is to enjoy their time together, build their bond even stronger and appreciate the benefits of sports in their physical and mental health. Acceptance, understanding and respect should be their flags and disappointment and failure should be sent knock-out!

- **Excessive intervention:** How bossy guardians can be and who hasn't experienced this when being a child? Now, imagine that this excessive power of guardians is transferred in the safe environment of a sports activity, especially with the guardians playing an almost equal role with their children and they are invited to cooperate in the same team or for the same goal. Being figures of authority, guardians usually fail to set limits in their behavior and tend to overrule their children's choices, become judgmental and patronizing. They don't save their opinion and might at occasions even try to impose it over the weak party – the child. This pressure inevitably causes additional stress to the child who ends up suffering instead of enjoying their time.



**The magic antidote – SET BOUNDARIES:** Here comes the real authority in the game, who is no other than the coach, the trainer or any other sports person in charge of the activity. That person is expected to define the roles of everyone involved, maintain some balance among them and ensure that a safe, free and unhindered playful environment is created for everyone. With respect and consideration, they should not only counter any form of pressure that might cause some frustration to the child (fear, anxiety, pressure, dissatisfaction), but also to prevent these incidents to the highest possible extent.

- **Behavioral reflection:** We are brought up with the idea that as children we are the reflection of our guardians, their image in the mirror. This idea might sometimes burden us with anxiety (or even guilt) when our guardians behave in a certain way that is –to say the least- not flattering. And that CAN be an issue when talking about FFS. Being used to authority and power, cooperating with their children in a relaxed and non-formal environment while practicing some sport activity, as well as competing with the real authority of this context (namely the coach or the trainer), guardians might fall into inconvenient judgmental behaviors towards the rest actors: children, coach, other guardians etc. How should the child react? Should they support their guardian (who is their protector, their carer, their source and target of love and dependence)? Or should they object and expose their guardian? What do we really expect from them? How can we release them of this anxiety?



**The magic antidote – SET APART THE INDIVIDUALS:** Once again this lies in the hands of the person in charge. It is crucial to deal with such a situation in a way that

reassures the child that there is no consequence against them because of somebody else's actions. That the coach's/trainer's behavior towards the child or the child's role in the team is not negatively affected by their guardian's false step. Put the guardian in their place, set your limits within the team and continue the interaction with everyone –especially with the child involved- as if no one else has been affected by the incident. For sure this would be a good and useful lesson for both sides: adults and children!

## C. Join the (sports) CLUB!

Last but not least, we should definitely explore a little bit the obstacles and hardships that sports clubs and sport organizations may face while implanting FFS activities at a regular basis. Of course, the challenges may be plenty, though now we will dive a little bit more in those which appear to affect the majority of the clubs:

- **Lack of knowledge and training:** Normally sports activities refer to a certain target group with a certain limited age range: it can be children, young people, adults or seniors. But what happens when we try to combine more of them, exactly as FFS does (children and adults)? Is the sports staff prepared to facilitate such activities in a quality manner that does not abolish the very core of sports? It is totally clear that the majority of sports staff members has received certain education and has raised their skills and capacities for a specific sports field (or even multiple) and has gained their experience in dealing with one age group at a time. However, it is totally understandable that this knowledge or skills are not enough to support the specificities of more complex forms of practicing sports, such as FFS. How do we cover this void?



***The magic antidote – KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE:*** As in all life chapters, there is one panacea for such gaps: *sharing is caring!* Try to exploit the capacities, knowledge and experience of your network, focusing in sports clubs and organizations which already have some experience in FFS activities and can share their know-how and support you in your first steps. You can even seek for cooperation opportunities, where they can invest their knowledge and you will be the new comers to learn by doing. Anyway, you don't need to jump deep right from the start, as a more gradual introduction to the

field of FFS activities would be preferable in order to ensure certain quality levels. Finally, make sure you receive feedback by your participants, you self-evaluate, and at the end you integrate this information to your future efforts.

- **Inadequate resources:** Well, for sure FFS is not the only field that the lack of appropriate facilities, the insufficient equipment and the financial constraints in general create serious problems in the functioning of sports clubs and organizations. Let alone in this case of FFS, where everything is new, plus there is need for additional equipment, more space, better trained staff and more financial resources, in order to support activities with more people and (inevitably) more challenges. And the well expected question comes up: how are clubs and organizations supposed to fulfill these explicit FFS requirements since they hardly survive with their regular sports programs?



**The magic antidote – ADJUST:** Good news! The solution is far easier than anticipated! A D J U S T ! Yes! You don't need to invent the wheel all over again! We don't have to double our expenses, run an errand or make any other fundamental changes. You already have enough and you only need to adapt to the new circumstances and your mixed group's needs. Be creative, use your imagination and the imagination of your participants, be innovative and think out of the box. Plan your activities ahead and make the best possible use of the resources you already have. It's not about money; it's about flexibility and wild imagination! However, you are not alone in this! There are certain resources you can use to financially support your FFS reform, such as:

- a) **local sponsors** – luckily, the importance of sports and its benefits are generally acknowledged by everyone, including the relevant stakeholders, who are usually more willing to invest in innovative initiatives that will support and benefit the local community. This can involve your municipality, your sports federation, a local sports union etc. Don't hesitate to approach them, present your idea and the expected outcomes for the community and persuade them to come along in this journey and make a change!
- b) **crowdfunding** – your power is your people! Improve your public profile by sharing your idea and explaining to the general crowd WHY this initiative is important for you and your target group. The biggest things in life happen when simple individuals join their forces and why not go after this for your FFS plan? Organize

an event to collect some support, launch an online crowdfunding initiative and make this dream come through by letting your community support you!

- c) **EU projects** – EU is a great supporter of innovative and well-promising initiatives and your FFS transformation can definitely be one of them! Search for EU funding opportunities, develop your own small or big project and make it come true!

➤ **Methodologies:** Let's agree that you managed to figure out a way to resolve the previous two challenges: you received some knowledge and you found the resources you need to finally start your FFS programs. Now, what? How can you break the barriers of conventional sport activities and switch to family friendly sports ideas? How can you make them interesting and attractive to your target groups and how will you manage to engage them in the process? Are there any guidelines or concrete methodologies, any best practices or specific examples to use in your work?



**The magic antidote – THIS IS US!** Well, you are in the right place at the right time as THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THIS CURRICULUM IS ALL ABOUT! You have already been introduced to some aspects of FFS, you have learned some important tips and tricks and you are totally ready to go deeper and explore this new idea in depth.

*Let's do this together!*





## Chapter 3

### Soft skills are never too soft!



As every new concept or idea, FFS is also covered with a veil of mystery and unknown. The more you practice it the merrier you learn about it and the more confident you will feel along the way. Before dealing with the specificities of this



idea though, it is important to equip yourself and your staff members with certain skills and capacities which will set the foundations for your evolution and will safeguard the smooth, safe and quality implementation of such activities. Some of



them may be quite popular, others not so much. However, it is definitely worth it to explore them, self-evaluate and discover the areas where you can improve and become even better!

### A. Communication

Of course, it's a matter of interpretation. Communication is as wide as any such term can be and it covers a lot of aspects in FFS. Here we will discuss about the two (2) most relevant forms of communication in the framework of FFS:

#### 1. Internal communication: *how to handle and manage your team members*

If one would try to attach a definition to the phrase “*internal communication*” that would probably be “*the process by which information is exchanged within a group of people working as a team towards a common goal through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior*”. Nevertheless, especially provided that there is a variety of people involved, who belong to different age groups, have different roles and positions, this exchange of information in FFS may not always be done effectively and several challenges may arise. In this case, miscommunication could probably lead:



- team members to make assumptions and develop expectations based on wrong or misinterpreted information;

- to the creation of closed loops that would exclude and leave out some team members;
- to conflicts among team members and create an environment of insecurity and instability.

First and foremost, we need to recognize the specificity of FFS in order to choose the right communication approach towards the participants. FFS provides an informal or non-formal environment to the participants, with fewer formalities and based on building personal relationships and close interaction among team members and team leaders.

In that sense, the communication approach can be more effective if it has a **personal style** that allows interaction through the lens of emotion and personal connection and involves not only verbal articulation of one's desires, but also non-verbal communication. This way, along with the sense of trust within the team, can more easily lead to diplomatic and effective internal communication.

But, how can we ensure that effective communication is ensured within the team in FFS? Here are a few tips and tricks that could be really useful:

#### ***(a) Identify and resolve conflicts early on***



Although it sounds quite logical and somehow self-evident, realizing that **THERE IS** a problem is the beginning of the end for any inconvenient situation. Some issues might start from simple misunderstandings, but if they are not defined and dealt early enough, they might become real problems with unexpected consequences. In other words, not only the team leader but also the team members themselves should be encouraged to detect any problematic issues as soon as possible and resolve them before they escalate and seriously affect other team members or even the whole team.

#### ***(b) Define the roles and responsibilities***

As any other group, your FFS team involves people with different personalities and behavioral tendencies. Though in FFS there is some extra complexity, since it is not only the different age groups that need to compromise and cooperate, but also the tight personal relationships between the team members (guardians and their children), which could more easily lead to undesired interactions between them due to lose boundaries. And who should be the maestro of this mixed and colorful orchestra? Well...this should be you! Right from the start you need to



fee and evaluate the team dynamic and make sure that both groups (adults and children) understand that it is *your* rules and *your* decisions they should respect, as your role is to be the leader of this group, while all other roles they might carry, should be left out of the sports field. Make sure they understand their rights and responsibilities and that they should approach you for any issues and not resolve them on their own due to their family relationship.

### **(c) Display confidence and seriousness**



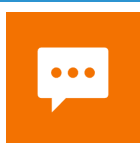
In order to achieve the previous step though, it is important to also present yourself as the leading figure within the team. It is important to define your role as well and make sure that everyone understands and acknowledges it. Of course, it is not only what you say, but also how you say it. Make sure you upscale your presentation skills by speaking in a clear and firm voice, keeping eye contact and carefully listening to anything that your team members want to say. But far and foremost, be ready to respond to their questions, lead them through the FFS process and feel confident in your role within the team. You should not only be the leader, but also look like one!

### **(d) Create a safe, open and inclusive environment**

It is important for any team to feel that they are interacting in a receptive environment that allows them to express themselves openly, address their issues and be listened to. Building trust and respect is of outmost importance, as members are more likely to be engaged and enjoy the process of FFS. Keeping in mind that FFS is everything but a formal way of learning and interacting, try to actively involved your members in different processes, listen to their needs and allow them to express themselves with no fear of judgment or criticism. This way you will safeguard inclusion and respect in your team and any communication effort will be far easier and more effective.



### **(e) Encourage feedback**



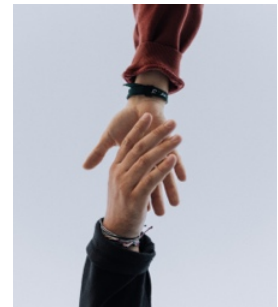
Listen, listen, LISTEN! Listening to what your participants have to say about how the team is operating and functioning is important for different reasons. To start with, reassuring them that their opinion matters keep them more engaged, gives a feeling of appreciation and creates a sense of trust and belonging. Also, it makes your team members feel appreciated and that their opinion matters, so inevitably they will give back to you respect and attention when required. But above all, it is the only way that all problematic



issues or deficiencies in the functioning of your team reach your ears from the inside, even when you have accidentally overlooked some details along the way. Feedback is the most direct way to receive some “on the ground” perspective of what is *really* happening and will help you improve your work and make any necessary changes.

### **(f) Acknowledge the effort**

A simple “well done”, “good job”, “congratulations”, a kind tap on the back, a “give me five” or any internal team sign or gesture is important to reassure your team that their efforts are recognized and acknowledged. This simple tip will make your team members feel appreciated and encourage them to stay focused and engaged in your FFS process, but also will strengthen the team spirit and their personal satisfaction.



### **(g) Reevaluate and make changes**



Even if you choose the most appropriate communication style for your team and even though it appears effective in the beginning, things change along the way.

The best solution to avoid any uncomfortable consequences of such a change is never to rest on this idea! Reevaluate your style, reflect on everything that is happening and invite your team members to participate in this process as well. At the end of the day...this is no different from any post-game analysis, and for sure THIS you can do perfectly well! 😊

## **2. External communication: how to attract and engage**

Well, in order to reach the point to search for your internal communication style, you first need to attract and engage your target groups in order to build an FFS team! Yes, it is a quite new concept. Yes, there are quite a few challenges as also described in the previous chapters of this guide. And yes, it is not always easy. But how can you build an effective external communication strategy to support your goal? Let’s find out a few tips!

### **(a) Reach out to your target group**



First things first and it is rather logical that we always start our effort with what we’ve already got there! As a sports club or sports organization you probably already have a number of young athletes, children who are attending your training academies and guardians who are regularly bringing them to the field for their training.

So...the good news is that your candidates are already in the house! You have them there, bringing their children, picking them up and –most of the times- watching their training from the stands or hanging around in the field’s canteen. There you go! Attract them by offering an opportunity to spend their time with quality and have fun along with their children instead of waiting for the time to pass in boredom!

### ***(b) Use your network***

Remember what we were saying about networking? Well, it is time to use your connections and reach out to other sports clubs and organizations to join effort and work together in some FFS initiatives. It is logical that if this concept is introduced to your club for the very first time, your target groups might be a little hesitant and –at least in the beginning- not enough people will be willing to jump in right away! A very easy solution for this is to work with other clubs of your community, merge your “human resources” and successfully implement some FFS activities as a first step. After that...let the word-to-mouth trick do its magic!



### ***(c) Pilot activities***



As mentioned previously, it is quite understandable and expected that your target groups may be somehow hesitating and –in some occasions- even reluctant to be involved. In the majority of the cases though, this does not equal lack of interest or honest unwillingness to participate, but it is rather some fear that keeps them distant (remember what we said previously about the children’s and guardians’ challenges?). However, it is proven that people are more likely to join in some new challenge if they first see others trying it and –to say the least- surviving! In our case, it will definitely not be about survival, but about entertainment, satisfaction and positive change! So, the secret here is to implement some short pilot activities and invite your candidate FFS team members to attend the events as spectators to see with their own eyes the benefits of such involvement and even have the opportunity to discuss and exchange opinions with the existing team members.

### (d) Social media

No need to say how modern life works, neither explain the importance of social media and the digital world. Therefore, it is obvious that a well-designed communication strategy to promote your FFS initiatives and disseminate the results of your pilot activities will definitely attract new members. Develop a social media campaign that reflects the profile of your sports club or organization, addresses the specific needs of your target groups, explains the benefits of FFS and invites people to try this new experience in a safe and inclusive environment.



Even if such a campaign might not be enough on its own, for sure it will spread the word and intrigue the curiosity and interest of your target groups. At the end of the day, it is all about bringing them to the field (even only to observe) and you can take it from there!

### (e) Exploit your facilities



No matter how technologically advanced our world is nowadays, the traditional means of disseminating a message will always prevail. You don't need to go far – you already have the space and the first-line audience to transfer your message.

Start by making some posters to present the FFS concept and your club's initiative to start including it in your regular program, and invite guardians to get involved. Use your facilities to hang these posters and –once again- exploit the wasted time of those parents waiting for their children to finish their training sessions. It's only about catching their attention and the rest will follow! At the same time, you can print fliers to distribute to your young athletes and they will definitely pass it to their guardians and there you go! The message is passed right away! Last but not least you can organize some info sessions with guardians or link it to some post game or progress meeting for their children.



## B. Conflict management

Sometimes no matter how hard one tries to prevent uncomfortable situations and act proactively; conflict cannot be avoided. In FFS this might occur in various situations and involve one or more target groups. It can arise within the same target group (guardian to guardian, child to child), or between different target groups (guardian to child, guardian to team leader, child to team leader). On these occasions some conflict management skills are more than imperative. “Conflict management is the process of handling disputes and disagreements between two or multiple parties. The goal of this system is to minimize the negative factors that are influencing the conflict and encourage all participants to come to an agreement. Successful conflict management results in a mutually beneficial outcome that’s agreed upon by each party.”<sup>2</sup> In simple words, it is the process of handling some disagreement by trying to minimize its negative and increase its positive aspects, resulting in a win-win situation.



**Before trying to deal with any such case, it is important to try to respond to three crucial questions:**

- **What is the mentality and the individual characteristics of the people involved in this conflict?** It is obvious that each person has their own personality and requires different treatment. Of course, we cannot enter in the process of deep psychological analysis of every individual, though a general overview of who they are is more than enough. First of all, you need to take into consideration the age of the person: are we talking about adults here or are there also children involved? And of which age? What is the relationship between the two parties and how well do they know each other? Is it the first time the two parties are involved in such a situation or is it a repeating phenomenon? All of these answers –and any other you might consider important and applicable in your case- will help you develop an approach that will be effective and will hopefully bring the desired results.
- **How sensitive is the conflicting issue?** Of course, not every issue can be dealt with in the same manner and you, as trainers or coaches have the responsibility to evaluate the situation and address it in the most appropriate and effective way. Some conflicts

<sup>2</sup> <https://minutemediation.com/>

might be totally superficial and arise due to the tension of the game, competitiveness, minor misunderstandings or just a bad mood. Some others though might have deeper roots and could be linked to sensitive reasons that need far more delicate handling. Especially those which affect the mental state, personality, health issues, morals or personal values, or other sensitive personal matters. In this case you need to ensure that both parties are protected and handled with discretion and respect. For example, in the first scenario the conflict could probably be dealt with in front and also serve as a lesson to other team members or set the grounds for some new rules within the team. In the second scenario though the issue might need to be addressed in private or with the support of some expert.

- **What are the consequences of this conflict?** It is important to be well prepared and understand exactly what could be put at stake not only due to the conflict per se, but also after its resolution. Explore the potential risks, overview of all the positive and negative consequences, evaluate them in advance and try to ensure that the way you will choose to manage the situation will have the best possible results. You should always keep in mind that a conflict is never only about the parties directly involved – it might affect the rest of the team, unbalance the team dynamic or even shake the trust and the coherence of your group. Better be prepared and have a plan B, than be surprised with unexpected and unpleasant circumstances.



Having thought about these aspects and having the answers in your pocket, you are now ready to start dealing with the core of this conflict. Having always in mind that we are talking about an FFS environment that aims at entertaining, educating, bonding, and generally speaking positively affecting the participants, you should always abstain from any harsh, extremely strict or dogmatic resolutions. You are there to safeguard the safety and respect towards your team members, as well as to ensure that the beneficial goal of your FFS activity remains intact. And this is how to do it:

**(a) Communicate:** yes, we've talked about it before, but here it is again! Open communication is a key to any dispute. Arrange some meeting with both parties and give them space to present their arguments in a well-behaved and respectful way. Encourage reasonable dialogue and try to suppress conflict-provoking behaviors especially when the role of the parties is more likely to bring it to the table (ex. guardian –



child conflict) or the personality of one party is stronger and more dominant than the other. As the mediator, you need to project calmness and firmness, and by all means remain impartial and objective. Be patient while the parties present their point of view, invite them to explain their perspective and try to separate yourself from the conflict and have a positive and peaceful attitude.

**(b) Active listening:** hearing is one thing, listening is another, and *active* listening is something totally different! It involves offering the space to the speaker to express themselves in their own manner, paying attention to the conversation and avoid interrupting. And this should not be linked only to your attitude towards the parties, but also to the latter towards each other. Invite them to engage in constructive dialogue and take some time to understand what the opposite party is trying to explain. Your role in this situation is to try to summarize what is being said, repeat it if need be so it is really understood by everyone and also support the party if they have difficulty in articulating their arguments properly (especially in conflicts between guardians and children). At the same time keep an eye on their body language and receive any “signs” that might help you figure out your next steps.



**(c) Review options:** there might be multiple solutions to every conflict and you as a mediator should be flexible with that. Invite the parties to be involved in the process of figuring out the best solution to their conflict and engage them in brainstorming and exchanging ideas. This will help you to not only release the tension and bring them back to the team-work style, but also to end up with a solution that is satisfactory to both parties. Open a discussion about the options that are applicable in this particular situation and search for something that would be beneficial for everyone. This indirect collaboration will build up again the team spirit and lead faster to the honest resolution of this conflict.



**(d) Win-win solution:** any punishment or sanction is out of the concept of FFS and any non-formal education environment. The goal is to peacefully resolve the conflict and ensure that the parties agree that this is a fair resolution to their issue. There is no urge to have a “winner” and a “loser”, neither this is the message you need to send to your team. Of course, on some occasions there can be a victim and an offender, but this does not mean that the latter should be stoned! Encourage apologetic behaviors if it is





required as apologizing, accepting and forgiving is the cathartic tripled that brings peace to both the victim and the offender. Add a sense of humor after the conflict is resolved to make thing lighter and give your team members the sense that everything is ok, the problem is solved and this was a positive lesson for the whole team with a happy ending. Finally, do not forget to keep an eye on the post-conflicted parties for future incidents or repeating behaviors that might occur.

## C. Flexibility



Flexibility, adjustment, adaptability – concept that are quite similar and definitely interlinked. Someone who is flexible has the capacity of adapting quickly and effectively to changing conditions and environments, addressing the arising challenges with calmness and stability, having alternative options when things do not go as expected and also being persistent before difficulties that come up abruptly. In any environment shared with multiple people unpredictable demands or unexpected events might occur. In such occasions, being versatile, resilient and responsive to change – in other words...being flexible is imperative! But this is one side of the coin. If you flip it to the other side, flexibility is equally important to your FFS team as well. Your members need to be able to adjust quickly and successfully in new circumstances and short-term changes and it is –once again! - your role to encourage that. Don't worry! There is a way to do it - take a look!

### 1. How to become flexible

When leading an FFS team you have to deal with several challenges: it is a rather new concept, so you need to really get familiar with it; there are different target groups involved, so you need to adjust your approach and your behavior accordingly; there are different training methods for each target group, so you need to enhance your knowledge and raise your skills to deliver them in an effective way. Therefore, being flexible and having strong adjustment skills will make your life much easier, and this is how:

### **(a) Keep your core values intact**



Every individual has their own principles and personal values, which build their character and personality. No matter how fast or how much things change, it is important that we stay focused in these core values, because at the end of the day...this is who we are! These anchor points of one's personality hold them grounded in times of change and offer a sense of internal stability and safety. For instance, if you receive an unexpected demand, these key attributes will help you figure out if you can approve it or not or help you decide to what extent it can be accepted.

### **(b) Be broad-minded**

Any change can be scary, but this doesn't mean we should reject it right from the start. The unknown might hide challenges and risks and also bring us out of our comfort zone, though it also brings evolution, improvement and personal growth.



There will be a lot of individuals in your FFS team – some of them super young, others adults, some might even be older than you! Open your mind to different perspectives, listen to the various voices in the team and try to understand where they come from – for sure you can learn from anyone and the benefits will not only affect you but also the rest of your team.

### **(c) Be positive and keep calm**



When coming close to a change or some unexpected incident occurs fear and anxiety are the most common human reactions. It might be hard to remain optimistic and keep a cool head, but stress and panic were never good allies to success. Address any challenge with a positive attitude, look at the bright side and try to reason out the negative aspects as much as possible. Anyway, every challenge is a new opportunity for learning and becoming better, and this is exactly how you should perceive it.

### **(d) Be proactive**

For sure, there are things that happen unexpectedly and others you could never foresee. But evolution is a fact and we all know that nothing stays the same for long. What is the answer to the unknown future? Planning ahead! Try to envision the things that might change in the near future, "listen" to the signs, develop a risk plan and prepare your responses to upcoming incidents. Even if those exact predictions never occur, this process will help you feel more confident and will boost your readiness to address any future change.





## 2. How to make your team flexible

As a team leader yourself is no longer the only priority, you have a whole FFS team to support – but you know that already, right? It is important to encourage your team's flexibility as well, so that they are also resilient and adaptive to change, especially with their own challenges in this kind of mixed teams. Developing a team culture and maintaining balance within the team are important tasks in your effort to provide successful FFS experiences. Here are a few tips:

### (a) *Wear down resistance*



Don't forget that your team members are human beings and are experiencing the same instincts as you have, before building up your flexibility skills. However, you are their leader and they definitely look up to you for support and guidance (yes, don't question that even for the adult members of your team!). When circumstances are changing, it will be quite challenging for them to immediately adapt and be happy with it! It is up to you to encourage them to embrace this change, to explain to them the reasons for this change, as well as the benefits they will enjoy. Respond to their questions, discuss about it openly and honestly and lead by example: if you are flexible, they will too!

### (b) *Be a team*

People tend to adapt more easily in circumstances where they feel trust and safe. Having in mind that they can easily ask for support and this support will be provided to them, created a feeling of security and supports their self-confidence.



Peer support and team spirit is also important here as the positive attitude of some members and the good results that came out of it are always boosters for other members to follow. Try to eliminate any sense of fear of failure by promoting mutual support and team spirit as precondition of a safe environment.

### (c) *Involve and engage*



People tend to feel more comfortable in the face of a new circumstance or an unexpected event when they have the opportunity to eliminate or define its consequences. In other words, it is very helpful for someone to adapt and accept the change if they can somehow form the new situation and become part of it. This is not hard to accomplish! Discuss openly with your team about the new conditions and invite them

to brainstorm on how it could be adjusted to their needs, how they would feel more comfortable and what they would like to avoid. Encourage them to be creative, receive their suggestions and try to integrate them to some extent in real life.

#### ***(d) Accept and understand***

There are multiple ways that people may respond to the unexpected. Some people are bolder and willing to jump into adventure, while others feel more insecure and prefer to avoid any involvement. And having an FFS team with such a multidimensional dynamic requires that you to listen to the needs of each and every individual. Of course, for the first group any change will be easier, while the second will probably struggle and be pressured a lot. Embrace their differences, accept them and help the “weaker” members by offering your support, providing additional training or asking a more confident member to support them as well.



## **D. Organizational skills**

Proper organization is a key to success. Especially in demanding projects, such as an FFS initiative. Of course, this is no different than any other project, but it is imperative that you are adequately prepared in order to keep up with the quality standards of your sports club or organization. Here are a few tips to make your life easier:

### **1. Preparation**

For sure this is nothing new, but it is always worth repeating! Adequate preparation is the first step to success and you need to invest a lot of effort in this process.

#### ***(a) Participant's profile***



Devote some time in exploring the profile of your FFS participants. List down their characteristics, try to understand their needs and sense the dynamic of your team. This step is important not only to adjust your training process according to this information, but also for you to prepare yourself and know what to expect.

### ***(b) The training process***

The FFS concept for sure has a very specific nature and unique characteristics. Your regular training methods might not be appropriate in their previous form so you need to adjust them to the new circumstances. Make the necessary changes, enrich your training process with everything required to support your work and customize the training structure according to your team's needs. In the end of this process, make sure that you are confident to deliver the new training program and deal with anything that might come up.



## **2. Implementation**

Time to put your plan into action! In the beginning this might be a little stressful, as it appears as an experiment, and this is why organizing everything in advance and having a concrete plan can be lifesaving.

### ***(a) Adjustment period***

As new as the FFS concept might be to you, it is quite likely that your target group is experiencing this for the first time as well. It is better to keep the ball low and not raise your expectations too high for the first period. Give some space to your team to adjust in this new form of training, let them explore their own boundaries and roles within the team and find their team balance under your guidance.



### ***(b) Team building***

This form of interaction between family members in the sports field is introducing new roles and a totally unknown environment for your team members. For sure they are not familiar with this kind of activities and it might take some time to relax, get to know each other under these new circumstances, bond as a team and be able to cooperate smoothly and enjoy the process. Therefore, it is important to invest some time in team building activities that will make everyone relax and feel comfortable. Prepare these activities in advance and insist in performing them and repeating them if need be.



### 3. Follow up

After every training session the work is not over yet for you! Post-game analysis is equally – if not more- important than the game itself and FFS trainings are no exception to that!

#### (a) Receive feedback



Invite your team members to share their feelings about the training session. How was it for them and what would they change? What did they enjoy the most and what made them feel uncomfortable? Keep their feedback in mind and also take some time to reflect as well. Were there any moments you felt uneasy or you struggled with? Which moments seem to stand out and bring the best results during your training session?

#### (b) Evaluate and improve

After defining the weak and the strong points of your training session try to incorporate the comments you received from your team, as well as your own reflection points, into organizing the next training session. Make the necessary adjustments and try to improve you plan in a way that will at least minimize the weak points and strengthen the positive ones.



## E. Skills for providing education in/through FFS

Trying to implement FFS activities immediately turns the sports leader to something more than a simple trainer or coach. They become real educators as their interaction with their team is not only limited to raising their skills in that specific sport, but also using sports as a means to contribute to their personal development and sustainable social transformation. Therefore, it is important to have always in mind that FFS is a process where sport itself becomes a secondary goal to the educational purpose. The skills required to provide education in and through FFS involve a variety of soft skills and competencies:

#### (a) Understanding the values of FFS:



sports in general are promoting core values and principles that are vital for the personal growth and social development of individuals. Fairness, inclusion, equality, discipline, team work, perseverance, respect, mental and physical health

are the foundation of any sport, while FFS additionally enhances mutual support, family bonding, understanding, emotional stability and growth. Therefore, it is important for a sports leader to understand and acknowledge these values and be ready to help their team members recognize and appreciate them. You need to believe in this idea first, before persuading others to believe in it too!

### **(b) Behavioral capacities:**

some of them have been analyzed in details in the previous chapter, but it is definitely worth repeating them here. Effective communication lies once again on the top of the list but that is not all! In order to be able to apply an educational approach to an FFS activity, it is important to be highly motivated and have the capacities to entice your team members into engaging full force into this effort. Of course, this cannot be done without the required leadership skills which will transform you into the authoritative figure in charge of the team's journey in FFS.



### **(c) Cognitive skills:**

the challenges are not few and we have talked quite a lot about them before. Anything can be overcome though if the person in charge has the skills and strength to make effective decisions and resolve any incidents that could hinder the learning process. It is just as important though to have a clear strategic vision for your educational efforts and this is directly linked to your organizational skills as well: you need to know why you do this, how you do it and what exactly you want to achieve in the end of this journey.



### **(d) Interpersonal competencies:**

this is no news for you...Your FFS team involved different target groups of different age, different role in the family, different backgrounds and –for sure- different characters. You have young and older people, children and adults, guardians and their children, bold or hesitating members, with more or less skills in sports, more or less motivated and engaged. It is important to be able to deal effectively with each one of them and maintain the team's balance and cohesion. Managing conflicts and resolving misunderstandings is very important and will significantly ease your educational process.



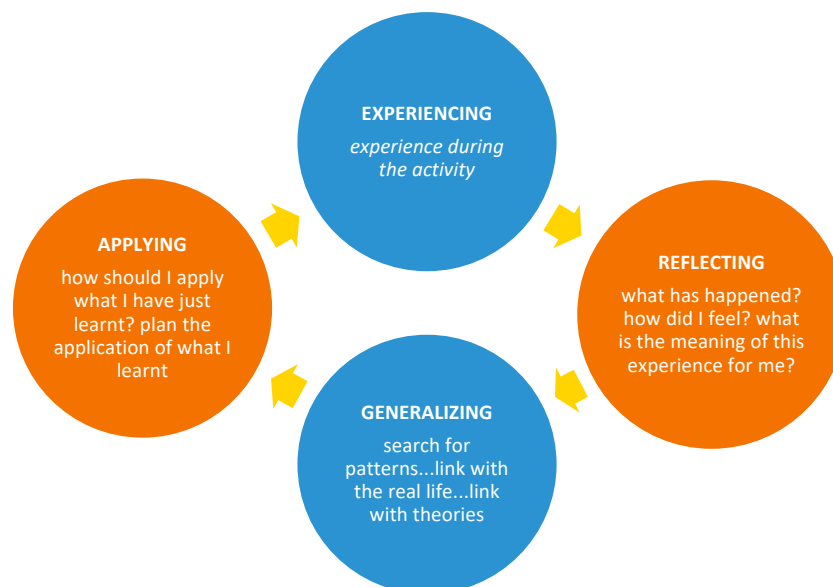
### (e) Teaching competencies:



Ah, the complex role of a teacher! You need to combine multiple skills: to assess and coach; to enhance team's collaboration and support teamwork; to care about your members and ensure inclusion and tolerance; to provide a safe environment for your FFS activities, where "safety" includes physical, mental and psychological security; to be able to pass on the message through your sport activities, explain and support the learning process of your participants.

### (f) NFE skills:

education in and through sports limits out any formal and stereotypical style of learning. Sports activities embrace non-formal education which is defined by the CoE as "*planned, structured programs and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum*"<sup>3</sup>. In simple words, NFE methods are learner-centered, enhance experiential learning, boost creativity, are based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach, and are organized on the basis if the needs of the participants. Therefore, in order to be able to provide education through sports, one should develop an organized process with educational objectives. In order to understand how NFE methods work, let's see how A. Huxley defines experiential learning: "*Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you!*". This experiential learning cycle can be presented in the following diagram:



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/definitions>

## Chapter 4

### Individual VS Collective sports – THE BATTLE



The term “sports” includes a large variety of activities and forms of exercise and each one of them carries their own specificities. We are talking about **individual** sports - such as tennis, track and field, swimming, ping-pong, martial arts etc., **collective** sports such as volleyball, basketball, football, handball, water polo, and those which can be practiced in **both forms**, such as gymnastics or synchronized swimming. Although they all share certain similarities and common points, they also have significant differences that requires a different approach in FFS. By no means, though, do these differences exclude the family friendly concept from any of those sports categories. Let’s explore some of the strong and weak points of individual and collective sports under the prism of FFS activities:

#### 1. Individual sports

##### (a) Strong points

- **Self-motivation**: one of the most integral aspects of sports is for the athlete to be highly motivated to be engaged in the training and perform well. Provided that all individual sports athletes are trained to rely on themselves and enjoy the outcomes of their own effort, self-motivation can easily be found there. The same happens with the athlete’s family members, who are also used in this concept through their children and are also familiar with the concept of relying on oneself and focusing in one’s own performance. In terms of FFS this can be considered as a strong point, provided that it will be easy for the sports leader to build up the –already existing- motivation of the athletes (guardians-children) and guide them through the FFS process more easily and effectively.



**Tip!** *Try to boost their motivation and broaden it by showing them how valuable it is to support each other and draw upon the energy of each other!*

- **Determination**: this is again one important characteristic of individual sports, as athletes have the tendency to focus more on their goal and are willing to work hard to achieve them. In an FFS environment now, this can be turned into a quite beneficial aspect both for guardians and children, as the latter can lure their guardians in engaging more in the activity, handling this initiative with the required seriousness and gravity, and overcoming their reservations and reluctance.



**Tip! Let the young athletes play their role and become the leaders of this process, persuading their guardians to commit further by leading by example!**

- **Discipline**: provided that there is no other team member to replace or substitute individual players, they are required to show strict discipline when exercising this sport. This is probably also reflected in their family environment, as usually the rules and the behavioral habits of young athletes do not exist only in the sports field but are also transferred to their personal lives and the family –inevitably- follows them as well. Use this attribute to your FFS team’s benefit, as it will definitely make your job easier – rules will be met, roles will be respected and balance will be much more achievable within your small team.



**Tip! Remember not to turn your FFS activity into some strict and dry “military” process. Allow your team players some freedom and lose entertainment opportunities, as the aim of FFS is not high performance per se, but learning and bonding through sports!**

## (b) Weak points

- **Self-focus**: although self-motivation is considered a strong point, it hides a weak side as well. Individual sports athletes – or “solo athletes” as they are usually called, have a really strong personal aspect in their involvement, as they normally compete with themselves. Athletes do not share the effort with anyone, neither can they rely on other team players, which immediately leads to lower levels of team spirit. In FFS activities this creates a few difficulties as athletes need to learn from scratch how to coexist with other members – even if it is their own guardians we are talking about!





**Tip! Invest some more time in team-building activities even though it is a really small two-members team! Offer your participants the opportunity to experience and understand the benefits of cooperation and team work!**

- **Lack of interaction:** being solo players also provides less social opportunity for your athletes. They are not used to interaction with other team members during their training and this might make them feel uncomfortable and uneasy. Especially in FFS, where the “other members” come from their family, personal issues might come to surface and lead to aggression and tension.



**Tip! Introduce them gradually to the process and start by making small steps. Try to act proactively to avoid any conflict and make it clear to both sides that they are there with the role of the athlete and not solely their family role.**

- **Lack of adaptation skills:** provided that in individual sports everything is built upon the solo athlete’s personality and needs, it is harder for them to be flexible adjust in new circumstances where the needs of another individual also need to be addressed. In the FFS case, athletes might have a hard time accepting and engaging in the new environment and therefore conflict or lack of motivation is more likely to occur.



**Tip! You don’t have to change everything from scratch! Make small changes that both of your participants can adapt to, find some common grounds that makes them both feel at ease and give extra support to the individual who is struggling the most to adjust!**

## 2. Collective sports

### (a) Strong points

- **Team spirit:** collective sports ensure exactly this. It is all about engaging with the team members, encourage and being encouraged by your teammates, coexist in balance, commit in team work and socialize. Therefore, speaking of FFS, this is the easy part! Players are already used to group conditions and adding a few more members will not be a hard task.



**Tip! Always keep in mind that the new “family additions” in your group do not share exactly the same characteristics with your old members. Make sure you make the necessary efforts to maintain some level of cohesion within your team and always listen to the needs of all team members.**

- **Inclusion and tolerance:** players of collective sports tend to be more tolerant and accepting to others and show selflessness and understanding in their team. Your existing players have different backgrounds and personalities and they have already managed to coexist and find their balance. In the same prism, your FFS additions are once again new and different personalities, though your team is already used to inclusion and tolerance.



**Tip! For sure this is the rule, but exceptions always exist! Keep your eyes open and make sure that no one is excluded and left out of the team and everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and mutual support.**

- **Flexibility:** the variety in the teammates’ personalities and the need to maintain the group’s cohesion inevitably makes the members be more flexible and adaptive to changes. This flexible approach to changes is very important for FFS as for sure the newcomers will somehow rock the boat.



**Tip! Flexibility is one thing, and tuning things totally around is another! Make sure that the changes happening in the team are manageable and smooth, or else your effort will sink!**

## (b) Weak points

- **Dependence:** being supported by the team can sometimes lead to becoming dependent. Especially when we talk about FFS, where we are merging young children with adults (and also authoritative figures within the family), it is likely that the weaker players (children) may be misled and carried by the experienced ones (guardians).



**Tip! Define the roles of each member right from the beginning and make sure that everyone knows and understands their limits. Develop a training structure that allows everyone to equally participate according to their capacities, age and skills.**

- **Competitiveness:** it is a characteristic of all collective sports and it is addressed not only towards other teams, but also among teammates. Especially when family members are involved and mingle, competitiveness and tension might bring things upside down and ruin completely the team cohesion.



**Tip! Focus in the educational aspect of your FFS activities and keep reminding your team that the goal of this process is to learn, bond and entertain themselves.**

- **Crowdie environment:** a regular team of any collective sport is already quite crowdie and it is sometimes challenging to handle this group of people. So what happens when the members double or triple in number, as for sure happens in FFS? It is a fact that sports leaders will have less time to focus on individual training, while individuals who require special attention or different learning methods may not receive them.



**Tip! Prepare your training structure in advance and take into consideration the number of people you will involve, their existing capacities and their needs. Remember to explore your participants' profile and prepare yourself for the expected. Also, create a safe environment where everyone will feel free to approach and ask for your support, even if you don't realize the issue on your own.**



## Chapter 5

### Show me how to do it!



After going through all aspects of FFS for each and every target group involved, it is now time to dive into deep waters. In this chapter we will explore how the FFS concept can be integrated into sports clubs and organizations, how to effectively work with adults and children in and through sports and what kind of educational approaches we can implement during Family Days, while simple examples in the shape of short study cases will give you a concrete and realistic perspective of these matters. Let's begin!

### 1. Introducing the FFS concept in your club/organization

Yes, it is new. Yes, it sounds complex and somehow unclear. Where should you start from and which steps should you follow as beginners in this concept?

#### STEP 1: Make the decision

**1** You and your colleagues know exactly the needs of your target group and the capacities of your club. You have a clear picture of the amount of time you can invest, the facilities that can host your FFS activities, the benefits your club will gain and the challenges you are going to face. Before jumping into this project, though, it is important to make the final decision that will signal the beginning of the new era, by following the regular decision-making process:

- ✓ Identify the goal
- ✓ Involve carers in the process
- ✓ Collect the details and weigh your options
- ✓ Define the consequences
- ✓ Jointly develop a program – follow the path of developing your regular strategic plan: set the objectives, define the activities, plan the resources etc.
- ✓ Evaluate and adjust

**CASE STUDY:** You are a local club and you run training academies with two groups of 30 children each. You don't have your own facilities and you rent the local sports hall for certain training hours per week. You want to include some FFS activities but you have no experience with this concept so far.

Your available hours are limited as you don't want to make any discounts on the quality of the trainings of your academies. Also, your finances cannot afford extra expenses to rent the sports hall for additional hours. However, FFS is something you really want and luckily the number of children you want to engage is not that big. Use your network and contact other sports clubs, with a little more experience, to join your initiative! This way, you will share the expenses, save some time and have support from someone with more advanced skills.

## STEP 2: Build your branding

2

Building a strong branding is not just a marketing trick. It also ensures that you know exactly what you are doing and why you are doing it and helps you stay focused to your goals. It is the only way to safeguard that your efforts reflect your target group's needs and thus your participants will be attracted and motivated to be involved.

Building your brand means:

- ✓ Profile your target group
- ✓ Define your own profile
- ✓ Create a representative brand

**CASE STUDY:** You are one of many medium size local sports clubs in your area and you share your target group with them. However, you are quite popular in your community as you are famous for the success stories of many athletes that started from your club and thrived later on national level. Your club's style is cozier, you promote a family environment and your work is based in inter- & intra-personal relationships with your target group and their families.

Your target group comes from a local context and is prefer the home-environment. Due to your athlete's success stories, they probably dream of becoming a star one day as well. Your brand should be approachable, friendly and look familiar to them. The slogan "Be your family hero!" featuring an adult and a child figure in a form of a superhero, dressed up in your team's favorite colors will definitely grab the attention of your target audience.

### STEP 3: Train your staff

3

You can never be prepared for an FFS initiative unless you have staff members who can efficiently facilitate such activities and have adequate knowledge and skills to deliver them in an appropriate and quality manner. Of course, by “training” we don’t solely refer to acquiring the theoretical knowledge to implement the activity, but also to raise the skills and capacities of your staff in multiple levels:

- ✓ Offer the required knowledge
- ✓ Train them on the FFS and NFE methodologies. To learn more about how you can apply NFE methods in and through sports, take a look at the platform developed within the project „[IN/ThROugh – power of cross-sectoral synergy between education and sport](#)“!
- ✓ Improve their educational capacities
- ✓ Build their soft skills
- ✓ Involve them in experiential learning processes

**CASE STUDY:** You have decided to include some FFS activities in your regular training program. Your staff members have never been involved in such initiatives and are familiar only with the traditional training methods they apply on children, but they don’t have any particular experience in adult learning.

To start with...ASK THEM TO READ THIS GUIDE! 😊 It contains all the information they need to understand the important aspects of FFS, realize the challenges of their target groups and prepare themselves for the challenges they might face as sports leaders in such activities. Introduce them in NFE methodologies by hiring an expert to provide some sessions or attend a seminar for training of trainers. Finally, organize a simulation of FFS activity and ask them to take the role of both the guardian and the child in order to experience in practice the process. Invest some time in debriefing, reflection and evaluation, discuss about this experience and share your conclusions as a team.

### STEP 4: Spread the news

4

You are almost there! You are ready to start your communication efforts, share the news with your target group and invite them to join your FFS initiative. Undoubtedly, the most effective way to achieve this is by combining both the traditional and the modern ways of communication:

- ✓ Exploit your club’s facilities



- ✓ Exploit the human power
- ✓ Use digital tools
- ✓ Create communication opportunities

**CASE STUDY:** Your club has certain communication tools with families to share the training schedule and other important information, as well as organize regular events and progress meetings with the trainers. Also, your activities are held in your own sports field, which also has a canteen for guardians to spend their time while their children are training.

You already have a lot you can use! Use these communication platforms and applications for direct contact with families. Print posters to hang in your facilities and fliers to distribute in the canteen. Invite guardians for some special event or meeting to inform them for your initiative or (if you are not sure if they would actually attend) link it to some progress meeting with the trainers. Give the fliers to your young athletes to bring them home – for sure the first message will pass on to their guardians! Use the social media power to launch an online campaign to promote your initiative and your brand. After your very first pilot FFS activity, take some participants' testimonies and let them become your real messengers!

Do you need practical assistance for this process? It's already there! In the end of this Curriculum you will find your own check-list to track our transformation process and make sure that you don't miss any steps along the way! 😊

## 2. How to work with adults and children together through individual and collective sports



There is so much that can be said under this chapter! Although it might sound as a very broad and wide topic to discuss, we will try to explore some key-points that can be useful for your work:

### (a) How to engage and increase motivation

**SCENARIO:** you have tried your best, but things don't seem to work very well. Guardians seem reluctant to seriously engage in your FFS activity and children have lost their motivation as well.



**PLAN B:** It is obvious that the team needs a reset. Stop your training program, gather the group together in a circle and ask them to brainstorm on a new game. They should define the goal, the rules and the prize for the winning team/person. Set a certain time frame for this activity. To make it fairer (and more entertaining!) set some obstacles to the adults (for ex. to run with closed eyes, jump in one leg, to carry some weight etc.). In the end of the game the winner will decide what kind of exercise the loser will do as a punishment for losing. Use this technique regularly and keep the score along the long-term training period. This tactic will boost the motivation of your participants without destroying your regular training process.

### (b) How to ensure mutual acceptance, inclusion and equal participation

**SCENARIO:** you have noticed that some of the members tend to be left out. Or - speaking for some individual sport- the guardian is constantly questioning and trying to overshadow the child.

**PLAN B:** It's time to take some action! If your sport involves some scoring, counting time, counting height or distance, in the role of the trainer start changing the numbers according to the number of "breaches" the "offenders" are falling to or count them randomly in favor of the weak party. For instance, cut down a few points in score without explaining, remove the score all together, give extra points to the "victim" without explanation, exclude the "offender" from some activity without reasoning, whistling a foul even when it is not. Of course, in the beginning there would be some protesting, but keep your cool and give no explanation. After some time, bring the team together and ask for their feelings and thoughts about what had just happened. Now it is time to reveal your plan and explain the real reasons behind it. Lesson learned!

### (c) How to avoid comparison with other guardians-children or between family members

**SCENARIO:** your group's dynamic is not very uniform. Some members are skillful and more experienced; some others are weaker and left behind. You sense that this is causing some disappointment and disturbs the team's cohesion and balance.

**PLAN B:** gather your team together and ask them to make random pairs. Each pair should involve one child and one guardian but not the guardian of that particular child

(in individual sports this step is not necessary). The pairs have a few minutes to discuss and come up with at least 3 things that their pair thrives in that particular sport but is a weak point of the other pair (ex. *I am not good at running fast, but my pair is really good at that*). The results are presented in the group, which then will discuss the variety of skills and competences within the team, the importance of this polyphony and how this can lead to a successful team.

#### (d) How to prevent excessive competitiveness among guardians-children or family members

**SCENARIO:** you realize that one guardian is excessively competitive not only with the other adults, but with their child as well. This makes the rest of the team and –of course- the child very uncomfortable and pauses their motivation to be involved.

**PLAN B:** once again setting boundaries is the way out. Introduce to your team the “time out” game: every time someone feels uncomfortable with some teammate’s competitive behavior, they can raise their hand requesting for a “foul” and explaining loudly how they felt and why. After a person collects 3 fouls, they are sent for a “time out” to reconsider their actions. After the time out is over, they have share with the group how they felt and how they have processed the situation during their penalty.

#### (e) How to counter conflict

**SCENARIO:** two members of your team (one adult and one child) have entered into a strong conflict about the rules of the game/sport. The adult has raised their voice and speaks fast and non-stop and the child is not able to react, so starts crying.

**PLAN B:** first of all, you need to calm everyone down. Remove one from the other with the support of other team members and give them a few minutes to relax. Use the sports equipment to help them release the tension and find their temper (*for example if there is a ball let them shoot a couple of times, or if it is track & field let them runs some short distance,*). Bring them back together and instead of entering the conflict discussion ask them to say 3 positive things for the other person. It might be hard in the beginning but the other team members can help. Let them reconcile and even pair them up in the next exercise.

## (f) How to reflect and evaluate

**SCENARIO:** your training session is over and your team/participants seem to have mixed feeling about how it went. However, it is important for you to listen to their feedback and be able to improve for the next time you meet.

**PLAN B:** line them up and ask them to exercise some of the sports' goals individually (*for example shoot the ball or jump as far as possible*). If the person scores or performs well (*in the previous example if the ball is IN or they jump is long enough*) they are allowed to share one positive comment for the training session. If they fail, they can share a negative one. Of course, they always have the option to fail on purpose, if they prefer to share something negative and you need to explain that this is totally ok. After everyone has shared their comments, you gather up as a team again, express your appreciation to one another, while you as the leader reassures them that everything is totally fine even if they have shared only negative things.



### 3. Educational approaches in Family Days



Family Days is the first step in introducing FFS in your regular training program. It is an event that brings together families to practice some sport and enjoy their time together, get familiar with the FFS concept, appreciate its benefits and raise their interest to be further engaged in the process.

Either the Family Days is just an annual even for your sports club/organization, or it is regularly there every week or every month, there is no doubt that it has high educational value and requires some special handling. Here are a few practical tips to make it worth it:

#### (a) How to teach cooperation

As said before, one of the most challenging tasks when implementing FFS activities is to help guardians undress their role and feel and behave as equal members of the team. Cooperation with a child starts with the instinctive approach that it cannot –or even SHOULD NOT- be equal, though this is not the case with FFS. Guardians need to leave their ego behind, accept the authority of the sports leader, acknowledge the children as equal team members and work for effective cooperation towards the common goal of the team.

**SCENARIO:** some guardians appear reluctant to let go of their authoritative role and present a rather bossy character towards the children. They constantly command them to do this or that, they try to take the lead and prefer to do everything on their own instead of sharing tasks with the children.

**PLAN B:** the first thing to do is to pair them up! Make sure you create mixed groups in the team, where both adults and children are members of the same group. Assign specific roles to each of the members and give them tasks that require cooperation, or else it is impossible to deliver. For example, in track and field, blindfold the adult, tie their hand to the child and ask the child to guide them towards the finish line. In a collective sport –let's use basketball as an example- blindfold the adult and ask the child to guide them in order to score.

## (b) How to teach mutual support

The only way for the team members to really connect and experience the real benefits of FFS is to enhance mutual support and trust to one another. It is important to make them feel that they can rely on their teammates and that they are all bonded, putting their best efforts towards a common goal: the team's success.

**SCENARIO:** some of your team members seem to be less skillful than others and this makes them feel insecure and disappointed. This affects the team dynamic and jeopardizes the very core of your FFS activity: exercising, education, bonding and entertainment.

**PLAN B:** ask your team to prepare a celebration both for winning and for losing occasions. Let them design it as they wish so that it reflects their spirit and personality. This is the first step to boost their motivation and team spirit at all times. Now focus in developing some internal support mechanisms. After each training session, ask them to name one thing they would like to receive extra training in order to improve and assign this task to a pair of teammates (one adult and one child) – this will be the beginning of your next session. Make sure that not always the same individuals train or are trained.

## (c) How to teach the approach towards winning/losing

People have different ways of dealing with a win or a loss – it's the character and personality, it's the ego or the low self-esteem, it's the time and effort that each one invests in the activity. However, there must be some balance as in FFS it's not about the outcome, it's about the journey!

**SCENARIO:** your FFS team has competed with an FFS team from another sports club and unfortunately, they have lost. After the game, guardians appeared to be quite angry for that result, while children started crying and being desperate about it.

**PLAN B:** gather your team for some post-game analysis. Though this time, the focus will not be on mistakes in playing and the strategic approach – anyway the goal of FFS is not about the athletic performance, but about learning, bonding and having fun! Give your team some time to cool down and even use some relaxing techniques: ask them to massage each others' shoulders or do some stretching exercises. Start by praising their effort and attitude in the game; the level of their cooperation and mutual support; the respect they have shown to their opponents and the referees; highlight the spectators cheering and satisfaction; tell them how proud you are for their performance. Then try to involve them in the conversation: ask them to mention their



favorite moment of the game, the lessons they have learned, the thing they enjoyed the most, or a good feeling they carry about this experience. To finish your conversation, ask them to make their regular celebration no matter the result!



After going through the chapters of this Guide, one would wonder – is that all? Have we exhausted all aspects of Family Friendly Sports in detail? The answer is one and easy to think: **OF COURSE NOT!** FFS is a spectacular concept with many chapters yet to discover. The more someone is involved in it, the merrier they will discover about it! However, we hope that this Guide will serve as a useful tool for sports clubs and organizations active in the field of sports to get familiar with this concept and make their first steps forward!

## TRANSFORM INTO A BRAND-NEW FFS CLUB!

### YOUR CHECK-LIST

TRANSFORM INTO A BRAND-NEW FFS CLUB!		
YOUR CHECK-LIST		
STEP 1	Make the decision	Identify the goal
		Discuss with carers
		Collect the details
		Weigh your options
		Define the consequences
		Set your objectives
		Develop the activities
		Agree on the frequency
		Plan the resources
		Evaluate and adjust
STEP 2	Build your branding	Profile your target group
		Research your competitors
		Define your own profile
		Create a representative brand
STEP 3	Train your staff	Offer the required knowledge
		Train them on the FFS and NFE methodologies
		Improve their educational capacities
		Build their soft skills
		Involve them in experiential learning processes
STEP 4	Spread the news	Exploit your club's facilities
		Exploit the human power
		Use digital tools
		Create communication opportunities
<b>READY TO GO!! GOOD LUCK!!</b>		

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