



TAG in Action: Let Me Run

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

Let Me Run combines exercise with fun activities and lessons to help boys learn teamwork, build relationship skills, create friendships, grow emotionally, amplify their self-esteem, empower themselves and others, and live an active lifestyle.

The Game Plan

Let Me Run is a holistic health program for 4th through 8th grade boys. Using running as the vehicle to inspire, teach, and reach boys, the Let Me Run curriculum breaks down destructive male stereotypes that often stand in the way of positive futures for boys. Twice a week for seven weeks, trained coaches guide teams of six to fourteen boys through lessons about wellness and well-being such as respect, positive competition, and nutrition. The lesson plans, including “Real Men Show their Feelings,” “Everyday Heroes,” and “Getting to Know You,” encourage boys to fully express their individual feelings. Boys are also instructed on proper running form and correct stretching techniques, and each season culminates in a 5-kilometer race that celebrates the boys’ emotional, social, and physical growth.

A 2016 study by the Institute to Promote Athlete Health & Wellness at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro examined the impact of Let Me Run on participants. The study found that, among other things, participation in the program improved attitudes and behaviors associated with healthy masculinity to a significant degree, improved social competence, increased vigorous physical activity, and reduced sedentary behaviors on school days.

The Winning Plays

Ashley Armistead, Let Me Run’s founder and director of programming, shared why their program is successful. “It’s the training of the coaches. We educate the coaches on healthy masculinity and how to challenge the boy code. Coaches learn how to create a safe space where boys can be themselves. Too often, boys feel like they have to act a certain way. This program may be the first time some of these boys can share feelings other than anger. There is a 5k race at the end and we promote competition, but we have whole lessons devoted to healthy competition and we stress improving over winning. We often have kids who finish the race and go back to find their teammates and cheer them on. They are excited for the boys who have improved the most. In the end, we’re just giving boys permission to be who they are. Those positive, caring traits are there. We don’t have to create or teach them, we just have to uncover them.”

Learn More

Let Me Run
<http://www.letmerun.org>

