

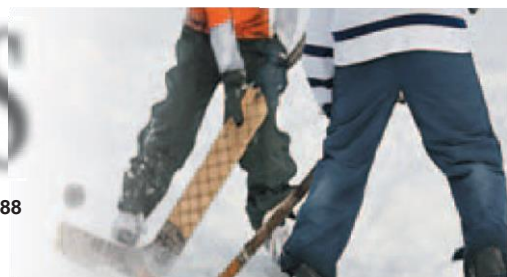


# SPORTS

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## Sports development programmer pushes to ‘bring back boredom’



### Tara Chisholm Training Matters



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This weekend, our course instructor from the Medicine Hat College Be Fit For Life Centre said what might be the strangest thing I’ve ever heard from someone in the physical literacy movement.

Her words, which originated from a researcher she listened to in Calgary, were to “bring back boredom.”

Kayla Hammel, the rural sport development programmer at the Alberta Sport Development Centre Southeast, was not trying to start a riot (or at least I don’t think she was) with her passion-filled, physical activity-loving students, but rather getting us to think about a concept that is so simple to imagine, yet so difficult to carry out.

After a bit of research after the class was done I learned that Kayla was not the only person who toyed with the idea of this boredom movement. There are a growing number of researchers who believe that allowing children the time to think, be bored, sit with their head in their hands yelling out “Mom/dad, I am bored!” is actually one of the best things we can do for their developing minds.

What comes out of that boredom? A few things actually. What I am most concerned about as a coach of young athletes is creativity and play!

When I started my coaching career I was very fortunate to have some amazing mentors along the way. One of these mentors was Howie Draper, who holds the title for most wins of any coach in Canadian university history for female hockey. While I was up at the University of Alberta with Howie I noticed that he gave his players a lot of free time on the ice.

I will admit, we did have the luxury of being a university team with four practices per week so the time was there. However, even if it was not, my belief is that Howie valued his players’ free time as much as he did the time spent trying to teach them everything he knew about systems and skills.

This free time was where players tried things without the fear of being corrected. They made up games or drills with their teammates of things they wanted to get better at. It was also this free time, with no directions or coach’s intentions, that brought players’ own personal skills and creativity to the next level to keep the U of A Pandas at the top of the league.

The other piece as a coach that I desperately wish to see more in children and youth is boredom at home. When I was a teenager my best friend and I would routinely sit on her couch and complain that we had nothing to do. We’d usually go back and forth tossing out ideas of things to do and then settle on getting our butts off the couch and going over to Central Park outdoor rink and passing the puck around. This may have also been influenced by her mother’s sarcastic (but what I now see as motivating) remarks that we could help her with chores if we were bored.

As an adult, I know I am guilty of the technology trap and find it easy to get caught up on my iPad, just the same as my young athletes. It makes us feel as though we are being productive or busy. For me, I know better. I’ve had six years of post-secondary education telling me exactly why I should know better. For kids, the technology trap is what they’ve grown up on.

So, as someone responsible for children’s physical activity, who knows the values of free play and creativity, I am making it my mission, and my hope is you will too, to bring back boredom!

