



Eleven reasons why everyone should wrestle

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Wrestling is the greatest and the oldest sport dating as far back as 20,000 years ago. I believe, and I hold it in my heart, that nothing can compare to it when developing young men and women. I understand that I have an extreme bias toward wrestling. I have been in the sport for 36 consecutive years as a competitor and a coach. I have dedicated much of my life to wrestling because of the benefits I and many others have received from the sport.

Why is wrestling so great? Wrestling offers people so many positive benefits to its participants. I played other sports growing up. Football, baseball, and one year of basketball. I have coached youth soccer, lacrosse, and wrestling. I have taught thousands of teenagers who have played practically every sport possible, at least those available in the U.S. I would rival some of those sports to



wrestling for their work ethic, commitment, and discipline. Some of them, not many. I would put cross-country, boxing, gymnastics, and hockey up there as sports that teach its participants similar lessons. Don't get me wrong, I loved baseball and football when I was a kid. They were both enjoyable and fun sports to play, and I believe they, along with most sports, teach many valuable lessons. I just know wrestling is the best to educate people about life.

I will admit of all the sports I played as a kid, wrestling was the least fun of them. Wrestling is hard. It is hard physically, mentally, and emotionally. Your body gets beat up and your ego gets damaged often. Each day your mind toggles between feelings of confidence, doubt, and insecurity during a wrestling season.

So why then should every person wrestle?

1. Wrestling teaches people to deal with adversity

According to Merriam-Webster.com, adversity is defined as "a state or instance of serious or continued difficulty or misfortune." The definition perfectly sums of a wrestling season. Each day presents difficulty and challenges. The sport of wrestling is filled with adversity, and a person can only become more resilient by it.

2. Wrestling teaches people a strong work ethic

As I said, I have worked with thousands of athletes over my 22-year teaching career. I would rival any wrestler's work ethic to the hardest working athlete in any other sport. Not the hardest working wrestlers, I mean all wrestlers. It's inevitable that if a person sticks with wrestling, they will do things physically that most people will never do. Most people will never go 100% in live combat with another person. Most people's success will never be measured in the center of a ring against another opponent. You either win or fail. That alone teaches a wrestler the value of working hard and pushing themselves. To be successful in wrestling, you have to work hard.

3. Wrestling teaches people to struggle

I value struggling when accomplishing a task. It is a trait that I learned as a wrestler. Wrestling is a struggle. Everyone needs to learn how to fight, grind, and continue to move forward. Being OK with struggling (and pain), toughens us up and allows us to work through times when things are not going well. The average person usually quits when situations get difficult.

4. Wrestling teaches people to sacrifice

I know people will say that losing weight, "starving" yourself and working out while famished is unhealthy or dumb. However, you can learn a lot from all three. When I wrestled, I lost a significant



amount of weight. Twenty-five years ago it was more the norm and widespread. I DO NOT ADVOCATE SIGNIFICANT OR UNHEALTHY WEIGHT LOSS, but I learned a lot from doing it myself. I learned the value of sacrifice due to a weight management program. I learned how to go without. I learned how to be conscious of my body weight and what I can and cannot put into it. I took that learning experience of sacrifice and have applied it to nearly every area of my life. Sacrifice means to do things that you do not always want to do, but you do it anyway regardless of the difficulty or challenge. It also means that sometimes you have to deal with things that suck to get better.

Note: The National Federation of High School athletics has put in place numerous rules and procedures to safe guard student-athletes from significant weight loss. While it still happens at the high school level, significant weight loss has decreased tremendously since the early 2000's.

5. Wrestling teaches discipline

Losing weight or maintaining a certain weight requires discipline even for someone who is wrestling at their natural weight. Our body weight fluctuates daily. Some days you weigh 150 pounds and others 153 or 154 pounds without changing a thing. Wrestling requires you to weigh a certain weight each contest. Right there is discipline in knowing that you have to be alert to your diet and fluid consumption. But the more considerable discipline is the daily grind of the sport. It is competing when you are tired, sore, and not 100%. Most wrestlers hardly ever compete at a pure 100%. It's almost impossible due to live combat in practice, conditioning exercises, and competition.

6. Wrestling teaches self-reliance

Being an individual sport in nature, you learn to rely on yourself. It is a team sport, though, and you need teammates to be successful. No great wrestler can do it without teammates. However, when it comes to competition, it is you and that other person. You learn a lot in those situations. Beating a tough opponent is exhilarating, and losing can be devastating. Those six minutes (the length of a high school wrestling match) ultimately teach you how to rely on yourself. You have coaches and teammates supporting you from the bench, but it is you and only you. Many times in life it is you and only you. Do you see the similarity?

7. Wrestling makes you stronger, more balanced and develops kinesthetic awareness

Wrestling will make you stronger, lower your body fat, and improve your cardiovascular endurance. From wrestling, you learn how to use and move your body effectively. The skills you learn in wrestling are transferable to every other sport. You see many successful professional athletes with wrestling backgrounds.



8. Wrestling teaches mental toughness

Although this is redundant to all the other reasons thus far, it needs explicitly stated. By default, a person will get mentally tougher from wrestling. The practices and competition alone will build mental toughness.

9. Wrestling's rewards are readily apparent

In many team sports, only the star player or skill players are recognized and rewarded for their efforts. In wrestling, it is easy to see success as a participant. When you win a wrestling match, it is you who won not a great quarterback or hitter that won the game for a team.

10. Wrestlers are ALL shapes and sizes

Wrestling is one of the few sports that anyone can compete due to weight classes. The shortest kid can compete. The slowest kid can compete. How many short, slow kids are on a high school basketball team? How many 110-pound kids are on the football team? Wrestling doesn't discriminate due to size or speed. With 14 weight classes at the high school level, anyone can wrestle and be successful.

11. Wrestling changes your mindset

Call it mental toughness or positive thinking, but after you have wrestled, your mind changes, and it changes for the better. You see life differently. You view situations that were once difficult as just another common event. I can't explain it, but wrestling has made me into a person who sees challenges as opportunities, tough times as things to be embraced, and hard work as the standard to be successful. Because of this, a wrestler develops a certain air of confidence and self-esteem that makes them feel that all things are possible with time, perseverance, and working hard.

The points above are why all kids should wrestle. Please reach out to me if you have questions about the sport of wrestling. It is hard. It will be challenging, especially when a child starts out. There is a lot to learn to be successful. Most kids lose much more than they win in the beginning. However, it is never too late to start. I have been fortunate to have coached hundreds, if not thousands, of students who only started wrestling in 9th grade. The overwhelming majority who stuck with it for four years had success in terms of winning percentages. More importantly though, they ALL learned many life skills that will take them great places as adults. Wrestling is school. The lessons all wrestlers have learned stay with them for a lifetime.

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