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Being Popular is on the Muscles

Tough kid life

We may call ourselves Homo sapiens ("wise human"), but for a kid it is more important to be able to kick the ball or to be a good basketball partner. Athletic skills seem to be the key for social acceptance among school children: kids dislike Dexters, which are prone to sadness, isolation and social rejection in school environment, as revealed by the team at the University of Alberta in Edmonton in a research published in The Journal of Sport Behavior. Children perceived as athletic by their classmates are more popular, while unathletic children will have an opposite fate. "For both boys and girls, we found that popular children reported less loneliness and received higher athletic ability ratings from their peers than rejected children. Conversely, the kids who reported higher levels of loneliness tended to receive lower athletic ability ratings and lower social acceptance ratings from their peers." said lead researcher Janice Causgrove Dunn, from the Faculty of Physical & Recreation at the University of Alberta. Prolonged loneliness and social rejection in childhood and adolescence are connected to various psychosocial and emotional issues and they even affect the overall health, physical development, fitness and level of activity. These individuals experience a lot of stress and anxiety compared to their socially accepted counterparts and these make them in adolescence and early adulthood more prone to cigarette smoking, marijuana consumption, school abandon and depression. "Given the proven negative impact of loneliness on a child's well being, this kind of research is an important endeavor. It's important to identify and understand the factors that might increase a child's likelihood of being accepted by the peer group, because this, in turn, decreases the likelihood of that child experiencing the destructive psychosocial and emotional problems that often come with rejection." said Causgrove Dunn. The research is a first of its type and was made on 208 children (99 boys and 109 girls) in Grades 4 through 6 at 7 various Canadian elementary schools. The completed tests assessed children's school loneliness, self-perceived athletic ability and perceived athletic ability of their classmates. The subjects pointed the classmates whose company they enjoyed or not, as a measure of social rejection or acceptance.