Hi Alice,

So here’s my question: As a child, I always stayed away from team sports. I considered them a waste of time and energy. As a result, I missed a lot of the bonding with other guys that comes out of playing sports. I feel inferior to other guys who are able to play team sports, and I feel it’s keeping me from having a good sense of self-esteem.

I’d love to do something about it, but I'm much older now, and though there are many teams around for people to play, I don't think most people expect a 25-year-old to know nothing about basketball or football and want to learn. And I don't think I'd be very good at it either, so I couldn't just "pick it up."

What to do?

Longingly yours,
Sports Shy Guy

Answer

Dear Sports Shy Guy,

Whether you're a beginning player or a perfect pitcher, getting involved in a new team sport may be intimidating. Thankfully, there are a lot of resources out there for both learning and playing team sports — no matter your experience level. Plus, once you get involved, team sports can bring tons of awesome perks: friends, fitness, and fun!

You're in luck — there are plenty of team sports other than football and basketball. Many other team sports have become popular with adult sports leagues, including Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, baseball or softball, volleyball, and even a few playground favorites such as kickball and wiffle ball! All of these sports could be played at all ages and ability levels, with many leagues playing for fun, rather than focusing on competition.

So how do you get your foot in the door when you have no experience? Consider checking out these options:

- Your local department of parks and recreation. They may offer sports lessons or amateur sports leagues where you could learn to play the sport.
- Your local YMCA or gym may also offer sports lessons or recreational teams.
ZogSports is an organization that brings young professionals together to play sports, get social, and support charities. Several chapters can be found in major metropolitan areas, but the list of locations seems to be growing.

If you're unable to find a group or organization in your neck of the woods, Meetup may be another helpful resource to find others with similar interests. You might try joining an existing sports group or start one of your own. As a bonus, Meetup isn't only for sports nuts; there are lots of other non-athletic interest groups to explore and join on the site, too.

If you've learned the basics but don't feel ready to play on a team yet, you might try asking a trusted friend to be a ball-game buddy. They may be able to offer you some pointers or practice time so that you can get the basic idea and feel for the sport before you try playing in a group setting. It may also help you feel more confident getting out there.

Another option may be to try other kinds of sports if you're looking for the bonding opportunities but still aren't keen on team sports. For example, many areas have running groups that meet regularly. Being physically active with others may provide the camaraderie you're looking for without being limited to the traditional team sports. After trying some of these options, you may find that physical activity isn't the way you like to create bonds with others. If that's the case, check out Where to meet new people over the summer in the Relationships archives for ideas of places to meet and bond with others that don't revolve around sports.

Sounds like it's time to get the ball rolling!

Alice!

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Published date:
Oct 10, 2014
Last reviewed on:
Jan 26, 2018