

Boot camp battles boredom

Create a boot camp in your own backyard

Rob Williams

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Attention! If there are days when you feel like sending your kids off to bootcamp, you're not alone. In fact, why not encourage your kids to start their own backyard bootcamp? Just like in the military, your little recruits will gain valuable physical and mental benefits from this popular form of functional training -- and stay out of trouble at the same time.

On a physical level, agility, co-ordination, speed and cardiovascular fitness will be improved while your kids challenge themselves with a variety of calisthenics.

Backyard bootcamp will also help your kids to develop better focus, communication and self-respect. Setting goals, following directions and co-operating are all necessary skills for healthy childhood development and will be sharpened during backyard boot camp exercises. These characteristics, along with a healthy lifestyle, will benefit them in school, work and play for the rest of their lives.

It's important to teach your kids that life is about compromise, give and take. There are times when they will play the role of giving a constructive set of directions and there are also times when they will need to listen to directions and execute them correctly. Encouraging your kids to create a backyard boot camp will help them to become comfortable with this concept.

Backyard boot camp can be a great family experience. Parents should get into the lineup and teach kids by example. Most importantly, keep the fun in functional exercise!

Ask your kids to take the lead in designing their backyard boot camp and plan the series of exercises that will be involved. Make sure you dress up and play the military role. When the whole family cooperates to achieve a healthier lifestyle, you will feel . . . well, "at ease!"

Improve co-ordination and cardio capacity

Basic calisthenics will provide the foundation for your backyard boot camp. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:



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Your little recruits will gain valuable physical and mental benefits during a backyard boot camp -- and make sure you dress up!

n **Jumping jacks:** Classic jumping jacks help to improve coordination and improve cardiovascular health.

n **Push-ups:** These can be performed traditionally (full body extended, toes resting on ground). If this is too challenging, have kids rest their knees on the ground. Both styles of push-ups provide excellent upper-body benefits.

n **Mountain climbers:** While in the push-up position, keep elbows locked and alternate legs as you bring one knee up while extending the opposite leg back (looks like running in place while supporting the body with your hands) this exercise will help with co-ordination and has excellent full body conditioning benefits.

n **Obstacles:** Use available household and backyard items to create an obstacle course to help develop running, quickness and agility.

n **Leg raises:** While on your back, keep feet together and raise both legs at the same time (legs and torso form a 90-degree angle), then lower the legs without letting them rest on the ground. Repeat. To make this exercise less challenging, raise one leg at a time in a scissor like motion. This exercise is great for core conditioning.

Let your kids have fun and use their imagination while developing their backyard boot camp. They are more likely to enjoy the experience and continue to participate in something that they are proud of. Be sure to give each family member a turn at being the leader, and stress the importance of showing respect and consideration to that person. Above all, keep it fun and positive.

Rob Williams is a Vancouver kinesiologist and posture specialist. He is the founder of Mixx Co-Fitness Studio and Performance Posture Clinic in Coal Harbour, and can be contacted at rob@mixxco.com

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