Lessons for Life
These weekly nutrition, fitness, and wellness lessons will help your athletes learn about their physical health and improve their health literacy. Lessons can be adapted and changed to fit the unique needs of your club!

The icon indicates a great opportunity to incorporate your Unified Pairs in the Lessons for Life. Have each Unified Pair help present a topic or have multiple Unified Pairs work together to present. These lessons are highly customizable, so do what works best for your club and participants!
Lessons for Life

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Today we are talking about sun safety. Practicing sun safety is important to prevent sunburns and skin cancer. If we are in the sun for too long, we can be at risk for heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Our bodies make vitamin D from sun exposure, but too much sun exposure is not good.

Discussion:

How do you stay safe in the sun?

Using more than one sun safety method is best for protecting our skin. Try using multiple ways to protect your skin:

- Wear a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing to keep the sun off your skin and out of your eyes
- Use sunscreen that is at least SPF 15
- Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours, or after swimming, sweating, or toweling off
- Make sure sunscreen is not expired
- Choose waterproof or water resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen
- You can get a sunburn even when it is cloudy
- Exercise in the shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun is the strongest
- Avoid tanning beds
- Listen to your body. If you are too hot, it’s time to get out of the sun and cool down
Discussion:

How can our club practice sun safety?

Tips:
- Make sure sunscreen is not expired
- Choose waterproof or water resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen
- You can get a sunburn even when it is cloudy
- Exercise in the shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun is the strongest
- Avoid tanning beds
- Listen to your body. If you are too hot, it's time to get out of the sun and cool down

Activity:
Bring different bottles of sunscreen to show athletes. Give each Unified Pair a bottle and ask them to find the expiration date, whether it is waterproof/resistant, and the SPF number. Have each Unified Pair share this information with the group.

Items needed: 2-5 different bottles or cans of sunscreen

Key Takeaways:
- Too much sun exposure is not good for our skin
- Use broad spectrum, 15+ SPF, waterproof sunscreen that is at least 15 SPF.
- Use more than one sun safety method to get the most sun protection
Today we will be talking about fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables give us vitamins and minerals that our bodies need. Vitamins and minerals help our bodies stay healthy, grow, heal cuts and scrapes, and build muscle. The USDA recommends eating 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day.

**Discussion:**

**What is your favorite fruit?**

**What is your favorite vegetable?**

Fruits and vegetables taste good! They make a great snack that can fuel us during exercise and keep us moving! They give us water that can help keep us stay hydrated, and fiber that can help us feel full longer.

**Discussion:**

**How can you eat more fruits and vegetables?**

**Tips to eat more fruits and vegetables:**

- Make half of every plate vegetables and fruits.
- Include fruits at breakfast. Add berries to oatmeal, or make a smoothie!
- Add vegetables like carrots, cucumber, or peppers to salad to give it some crunch.
- Add lettuce, tomato slices, and other veggies to sandwiches.
- Pack cut up fruits and veggies for snacks on the go.
Activity:
Break into Unified Pairs to set a nutrition goal and keep each other accountable for the week. Good goals are specific, have a time frame, and are achievable.

Sample goals might include:
- Eat fruit with breakfast 3 days this week
- Try 1 new fruit and 1 new vegetable this week
- Eat a salad with dinner 2 times this week

Items needed: Paper/something to write with

Key Takeaways:
- Vegetables give your body vitamins, minerals, and energy.
- Eat fruits and vegetables at every meal.
- Pack fruits and vegetables to eat during physical activity.
Hydration

Water is important for our bodies to work. We lose water when we sweat and when we breathe. It is important that we replace the water we lose, especially while exercising. Not having enough water in our bodies is called dehydration. Drinking water before, during, and after exercise can prevent dehydration.

**Discussion:**

**How do you feel when you don’t drink enough water?**

**Some symptoms of dehydration include:**

- Feeling thirsty
- Feeling tired or sluggish
- Having a dry mouth
- Headaches
- Having dark yellow or brown urine

**Discussion:**

**How can we drink more water during exercise?**

**Tips:**

- Try to drink at least one water bottle during exercise
- Get a reusable water bottle
- Encourage friends and teammates to drink water during fitness activities and sports
- Avoid drinking too much water at once during exercise. This can cause stomach aches. Drink sips throughout exercise instead of drinking large amounts at once.
- Water can come from foods too! Foods with a lot of water include fruits, vegetables, soups, and smoothies.
Activity:
Have Unified Pairs come up with ways to incorporate more water into their day. Have each pair share what they came up with. Some ideas include:
- Water with meals
- Eating foods with higher water content (fruits, vegetables, etc.)
- Keeping a water log, etc.

Supplies needed: Water bottle as visual

Key Takeaways:
- Water is important for our bodies to work.
- Drink water during the day to avoid dehydration.
- It is important to drink water before, during, and after exercise.
Did you know that people who don’t use tobacco have more oxygen in their bodies? Today we are talking about tobacco avoidance. Tobacco is also expensive! In Seattle, Washington, one pack of cigarettes costs around $10! Secondhand smoke means inhaling smoke from other’s cigarettes. It is also important to do our best to avoid secondhand smoke. By avoiding tobacco, you can walk or run faster and further.

**Discussion:**  
**Have you ever experienced secondhand smoke?**  
Where were you and how did it make you feel?

**Tobacco products increase your risk for:**
- Heart and lung disease
- Tooth loss and decay
- Cancer
- Bone fracture

**Discussion:**
**What are some ways you can avoid smoking and secondhand smoke?**

**Tips:**
- Decide to have a smoke-free home and car.
- Choose to go to parks and places that are smoke-free.
- Leave the room if someone is smoking. Say “I am an athlete and fresh air helps me perform my best”
- Talk to your doctor about quitting tobacco products if you use them
- Support friends and family as they try to quit smoking
Activity:
Show participants pictures of different tobacco products. They might be surprised to know that vapes and juuls are considered tobacco products! Share that all tobacco products are addictive, bad for their lungs, and should be avoided.

Key Takeaways:
- People who do not use tobacco products can live more active lives.
- Avoid tobacco products and secondhand smoke to stay healthy.
- Know what to say when someone offers tobacco products.
Today we are talking about bone health. Bone health is important to have strong bones to participate in physical activity. There are many ways to build strong bones, and we will talk about some of them today.

**Discussion:**

**How can we keep our bones strong?**

Getting enough vitamin D is a great way to keep bones healthy. Vitamin D comes from the sun or from supplements. Many people take a multivitamin or calcium supplements to keep their bones healthy. Talk to your doctor about which vitamins you should be taking.

Calcium and vitamin D can also be found in foods. Cow’s milk and some milk alternatives are great sources! Calcium and vitamin D are also found in dark leafy greens, cheese, yogurt, sardines, beans, legumes, and fortified orange juice.

**Discussion:**

**What are some foods you like to eat that are high in calcium and vitamin D?**

Another way to build strong bones is to participate in physical activity regularly. Activities like jumping, running, and weight bearing exercises are especially important for strengthening bones. The more you participate in physical activity, the stronger your bones become!
Activity:
Bring in empty containers of milk, milk alternatives, and other fortified drinks or foods. Have small groups or Unified Pairs find the amount of calcium and vitamin D on each. Have each small groups or Unified Pairs share how much calcium, vitamin D, and other vitamins and minerals are in their product.

Items needed: 2-3 calcium/vitamin D containing packaged foods.

Key Takeaways:
- Calcium and Vitamin D can help strengthen bones.
- Milk, milk alternatives, and dark leafy greens have calcium and vitamin D.
- Physical activity helps strengthen bones.
What does having a strong mind mean? During difficult times, it’s more important than ever to take care of our minds and our bodies. Today’s lesson for life will help you check in with your feelings and give you tips on how to relieve stress and stay connected to the important people in your life. We can keep a strong mind by thinking positive thoughts, deep breathing and connecting with others.

**Discussion:**

What are some ways you feel stress?

**Tips to Share:**

You can feel stress all over your body:

- Trouble Concentrating
- Lack Of Interest
- Headache
- Teeth Grinding
- Skin Irritation
- Muscle Tension
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Upset Stomach
Discussion:

What are different activities we can do to have a strong mind if we feel stressed?

Tips to Share:

We can work on having a strong mind by:
- Learn something new: a new instrument, a new hobby, a new dance, or a new sport!
- Deep breathing
- Do a puzzle or read a book
- Yoga or stretching

We can feel stress all over our bodies. Having a strong mind is important for our overall health. We can use strong minds techniques to help us reduce stress and feel calmer.

Activity:

Deep breathing can help us feel better when we are nervous or stressed. You can use these techniques anytime, and anywhere: before bed, on the bus, on a walk, or during a Special Olympics practice.

*Set a timer for 1 minute* instruct participants to “breathe in slowly through your nose like you are smelling a flower. Slowly release your breath as if you are blowing out a candle.” Repeat until timer goes off.

Talk with a teammate, friend or family member
Write down positive messages
Draw, paint, sketch or garden
Listen to music
Try a new exercise

Key Takeaways:

- We can feel stress all over our bodies.
- Having a strong mind is important for our overall health.
- We can use strong minds techniques to help us reduce stress and feel calmer.
Having good personal hygiene is an important part of our overall health. Hygiene is anything we do to stay healthy and prevent sickness. Some germs can make us sick. Hygiene can prevent disease by washing germs off our bodies. This helps us stay healthy.

**Discussion:**

**How do you practice good hygiene?**

- **There are many components to hygiene:**
  - Washing your hands
  - Bathing or showering regularly
  - Trimming your nails
  - Brushing and flossing your teeth
  - Shampooing your hair
  - Wearing deodorant every day

- **Make sure to wash your hands:**
  - After using the toilet
  - Before preparing, touching, or eating food
  - After playing with animals
  - After physical activity or sports practice
  - After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose

- **Follow these steps to thoroughly wash your hands:**
  1. Turn on the faucet and wet your hands
  2. Apply Soap
  3. Wash hands for 20 seconds. Sing “happy birthday” twice or the alphabet song once
  4. Rinse well
  5. Dry your hands
  6. Turn off water with a paper towel

Washing your hands is especially important to good hygiene. We touch a lot of things during the day, so it is important to wash your hands regularly.
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**Activity:**
As a group, come up with a checklist of personal hygiene items participants should pack to school & to a Special Olympics competition. Identify important personal hygiene habits after a sports practice or exercise.

**Items needed:** examples of soap, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, nail clippers

**Key Takeaways:**

- Personal Hygiene is important to stay healthy.
- Personal hygiene can help prevent sickness and disease.
- Wash your hands often during the day.

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**Personal Hygiene is important to stay healthy.**

**Personal hygiene can help prevent sickness and disease.**

**Wash your hands often during the day.**
6 EASY STEPS TO CLEAN HANDS

1. WET YOUR HANDS
2. APPLY SOAP
3. WASH YOUR HANDS FOR 20 SECONDS
4. RINSE WELL
5. DRY YOUR HANDS
6. TURN OFF WATER WITH PAPER TOWEL
Sleep is a very important part of staying healthy. When we sleep, our bodies and minds can rest and prepare us for the next day. Getting enough sleep can also protect us from getting sick. Sleep can reduce stress, improve memory, and may help weight management.

**Discussion:**

**What are some things that help you get enough sleep?**

**Tips to Share:** Sometimes, we might have a hard time falling or staying asleep. Here are some helpful tips to get a more restful night’s sleep:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Have a bedtime routine. Doing yoga, taking a warm shower, or breathing exercises can help get your body ready for sleep.
- Avoid looking at screens in bed. This includes TV, laptops, and cell phones.
- Create a good sleep environment. Weighted blanket, essential oils, soft music, or a dark and quiet room can help some people sleep.
- Avoid naps during the day if you are having a hard time sleeping at night.
- Avoid caffeine and vigorous exercise before bed. If you drink caffeine, try to use it only before noon.

If you are still having a hard time sleeping after trying these techniques, it might be time to talk to your doctor. They can give you even more tips to help you sleep.
Discussion:

How will you change your sleep routine after participating in this lesson?

Activity:
Do a group bedtime yoga session. Yoga is a great way to get ready for bed because it moves the body without being too vigorous. Some ideas for yoga poses are downward dog (hands and feet on the floor with hips up to the sky), tree pose (standing on one leg or two with hands in prayer position), mountain pose (standing with both feet planted firmly on the ground, arms at sides).

Key Takeaways:

- Sleep is an important part of overall health.
- Sleep can help our bodies rest and protect us from getting sick.
- Having a bedtime routine improves sleep.
Healthy Sleeping Tips

LESS SCREEN TIME
Try limiting the use of technology (like TV, smartphones, and computers) for at least 30 minutes before bed.

AVOID CAFFEINE BEFORE BED
Don’t eat or drink any caffeine for at least 4 hours before bed. Caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, chocolate, and cola.

SLEEP ROUTINE
Create a routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day and doing relaxing activities before bed (read a book, take a warm bath, do some stretches/yoga, listen to music, or meditate).

GOOD SLEEPING SPACE
Your sleeping space should be dark and be a comfortable temperature.

CALMING ACTIVITY
If you have trouble falling asleep, try a calming activity. For example: listen to music, meditate, think positive thoughts, deep breathing, or use a stress ball.

DAILY EXERCISE
Exercise is important, but not right before bed. Finish exercise at least 3 hours before bedtime to help you fall asleep faster.
Being a safe walker is very important. There are many ways that you can be a safer walker, or runner! Today we will be talking about some ideas to make sure that you stay safe, wherever you walk!

**Discussion:**

**Where do you run/walk?**

There are many different places to run and walk. Some people like walking on paved trails, or in their neighborhoods on the sidewalks, or in parks. There are ways to be safe in every walking or running environment:

**Check in:** Let a friend, family member, or caregiver know where you are going, or bring them with you!

**Headphones:** Don’t listen to music, podcasts, books, or anything while you walk. If you must listen to something, only listen with one ear.

**Know your route:** make sure you know where you will go before heading out the door. It can be easy to get lost, especially if you are taking a new route.

**Road walking:** Always try to walk a route that has sidewalks or designated walking paths. If a road doesn’t have a sidewalk, try to walk against traffic. This means walking on the left side of the road, facing traffic.

**Crossing:** Always cross at traffic lights and crosswalks. It is not safe to cross at other places, even if you think there are no cars are coming.

**Be visible:** Wear bright colors or a reflective vest or jacket.

**Be seen:** Make sure drivers see you by making eye contact or waving at them. This is especially important when crossing streets.

**Discussion:**

**How will you make your walking or running routine safer after participating in this lesson?**

**Tips to Share:** You can use this checklist to determine if a route or path is safe to walk or run on:

- Are there sidewalks or walking paths?
  - Yes
  - No
  - If no, where is the closest school? Does it have a track you can walk on?

- It is easy to cross streets? Are there a lot of crosswalks or traffic signals to cross at?
  - Yes
  - No
  - If no, pick a route that stays on one side of the street or find a different walking path.
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☐ Was you walk pleasant? (Some unpleasant things include: scary dogs, not well lit, dirty, lots of litter, busy streets with no sidewalks)
  Yes
  No
  If no, pick a route away from busy roads and remember unpleasant areas to avoid

Activity:
Walk around your community with your club while filling out the “walkability checklist” above. Note what could be changed in your community and what is already working. Brainstorm with your club to determine ways that walkability could be improved.

Wear visible clothes and make sure you are seen while walking.

Always let someone know where you are going.

Be alert while walking and pay attention to your surroundings.

Key Takeaways:
- Wear visible clothes and make sure you are seen while walking.
- Always let someone know where you are going.
- Be alert while walking and pay attention to your surroundings.
Biking is a great way to get outside and get exercise! When we bike, we strengthen our legs, hearts, and lungs. Biking can also be done on a stationary bike. Today we will be talking about bike safety. This is important when we ride our bikes outside.

**Discussion:**

*How do you stay safe on your bike?*

Biking is a great form of exercise. Make sure you stay safe while riding by following these safety tips. When in doubt, ask a parent, coach, or friend. They can help you find safe places to bike and make sure your equipment is safe. They can also bike with you! Below are some ways to be safe:

- Wear a helmet every time you ride, no matter how far you are going.
- Make sure your helmet fits. It should sit straight on your head and cover your forehead without slipping back.
- If your helmet gets damaged, get a new one.
- Make sure your bike has reflective gear. If it doesn’t, you can stick reflective stickers to it. You can also put reflective stickers on your helmet.
- Choose safe areas to ride your bike. Bike paths are great areas!
- Make sure to ring your bell or say “on your left” when passing others.
**Discussion:**

*How will you make your biking routine safer after participating in this lesson?*

**Activity:**

Have participants bring their bike helmets to a club meeting. Teach them how a bike helmet should fit, and if their helmet might need to be replaced.

**Items needed:** Bike helmet

**Key Takeaways:**

- **Biking is a great way to get exercise and improve fitness.**
- **Wear a helmet every time you ride a bike.**
- **Choose safe places, like bike paths or parks, to ride your bike.**
Healthy Food Choices

How can we be healthy when eating out? What about grocery shopping and restaurants? How do we know if foods are good choices? During this lesson we will be talking about how to choose healthy foods.

**Discussion:**

What healthy option can you choose at your favorite fast food restaurant?

**Making healthy choices at fast food restaurants can be hard.**

You can follow these tips to make it easier:

- Choose smaller portions
- Choose whole grains
- Go for lean proteins like chicken or fish
- Choose healthy sides, like apple slices instead of fries, baked potato chips instead of a cookie
- Ask for condiments and dressings on the side
- Pack healthy snacks for the road instead of stopping at a drive thru
- Review restaurant menus & choose healthy foods before dining out
- Choose baked, grilled, or broiled foods instead of fried
- Choose water or unflavored low-fat milk instead of sugary drinks
Lessons for Life: Unified Fitness Club

Discussion:

What are some healthy choices you can make when grocery shopping?

Tips to Share: When grocery shopping, it can be helpful to look at nutrition labels. This can help you decide if food is healthy. When looking at a label, look for:
- Added sugars: The less the better!
- Fiber: Choose foods with fiber, like oatmeal, beans, and nuts
- Saturated fat: The less the better!
- Vitamins and minerals: Choose foods with high percentages of vitamin A, calcium, and iron
- Fruits and vegetables usually don’t have nutrition labels. They are still very healthy options!

Activity:
Bring a few packaged foods and beverages such as chips, soup, applesauce, granola bars or soda. Have small groups or Unified Pairs identify the amount of added sugar, fiber, saturated fat and key vitamins. As a group, rank the foods in order of healthiest to unhealthiest choice.

Items needed: 3-5 packaged foods and beverages with nutrition label

Key Takeaways:
- Choose healthier options when eating out at restaurants
- Read nutrition labels when grocery shopping
- Choose water or unflavored low-fat milk instead of sugary drinks