



SPORTS | FITNESS

Keynote Title: Making Recreation More Therapeutic with the Strategic Use of Evidence-based Practices

Speaker: Greg Connors, Recreation Services Coordinator, Els for Autism Foundation

Day Two: March 24, 2023

Time: 8:15-9:15 a.m.

Abstract

While sports & fitness activities have their well-documented benefits – improved circulation, the development of healthy and functional movement patterns, improved metabolic efficiency and increased immunity – professionals in the field of recreation are beginning to redefine what recreation is and can become with regard to serving individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In fact, the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team confirmed fitness as an evidence-based intervention for ASD in 2020.

In addition to the physical, physiological, and even mental health benefits of sports & fitness, opportunities exist for growth in recreation therapy in a multitude of ways. Beyond providing the opportunity to specifically target social/communication, motor, and other skill development, by re-creating recreation as a supplemental therapy where other therapies can live, we can redefine what one thinks of when he/she considers recreation and its impact on the lives of individuals living with ASD.

This presentation will, through direct instruction, as well as video analysis and explanation, detail how programs such as the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® Programs (Golf, Tennis, Fitness) provide a blueprint for how specialists and professionals in the field can reinvent recreation as a supplemental therapy.

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to understand why the Ernie Els #GameON Autism® curricula – Golf, Tennis, and Fitness – embed autism learning concepts in tandem with sport-specific or recreational skills.
- Participants will be able to analyze where their own recreational activities/practices could include autism learning concepts.
- Participants will be able to evaluate one of their own common practices w/ regard to skill development with students/clients in an effort to add an autism learning concept to that skill development process.

