

Keep Your Climbing Teams Injury Free

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in [CWA Blog](#)



Coach at Momentum Indoor Climbing. Credit: Jake Byk/CWA at Momentum Indoor Climbing

“You can’t grow as an athlete if you’re spending your focus on healing.”

I’ve heard a lot of wisdom from my older sister over the years, and this bit of advice stood out.

Sarah Gladish is a certified yoga instructor, high school dance teacher, and has dabbled in rock climbing. Having worked with youth dance teams for over a decade, she has experienced a lot of heartbreak from teenagers who have been injured and are unable to perform up to their standards.

Of course, we all want to stay healthy, but how can we specifically teach youth climbing teams to stay injury free?

Start with the Basics

Mandie Majerus, a physical therapist and longtime climber, knows a thing or two about injury prevention.

She helped one of the world’s best youth climbers, Drew Ruana, rehabilitate an injury and get stronger.

“I see a lot of repetition and overuse injuries. It’s **a lot about volume regulation,**” Mandie says. One of the keys she suggests is to teach and foster proper body positioning in climbing. **“Have good form rather than compensating** and only using your smaller muscles like your fingers.”

She finds that youth climbers can do a lot of pull ups and have strong arms but aren't necessarily as well rounded as they should be.

From a warmup perspective, both Sarah and Mandie are big believers in simple movements like cat cow.

"Taking care of your spinal cord by doing cat/cow pose every day, you incorporate your breath through each movement, that gets the breath connected with your body and is a basic health thing that people don't think about," says Sarah.

Mandie suggests using bands to get your shoulders moving before climbing and that having a strong core is important to preventing injuries.

"Keep the core strong. We talk about the core a lot, being able to do planks and things like that," she advises as ways to build the necessary strength.

Holistic Approach

It's easy for coaches to get into the nitty gritty elements of training from hangboarding to climbing drills.

Focusing on the bigger picture may be more important to fostering healthy climbers. Sarah sees practicing yoga as a great way to be in touch with the body and know when to push it or not.

She also recognizes the pressures that are put on kids these days and that they don't often get enough sleep. "I talk a lot to my students about getting enough sleep because that is important to staying injury free."

Keep it Fun

Storytelling is a great way to teach youth climbers and to keep them engaged, especially when talking about aspects of training that may not be as inherently interesting.

"It's really helpful to tell specific stories, whether it's from your own experience or an athlete, that explains how a particular move is useful or important," says Sarah.

Support is also important to help accomplish goals, so the athlete doesn't feel they are on their own.

"Having a team can make you do the core workout," Mandie says, emphasizing the point that putting in the hard work is key to staying injury free, but it doesn't have to feel like a chore.

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Examples of elite climbers who don't take their training too seriously abound, such as [Adam](#)

[Ondra's April Fools' video where he takes up ballet to expand his training.](#)

Training isn't all about how many reps you can do, or how hard each session is, rather it should be fun-filled and playful.

When her students aren't having fun or are lacking energy, Sarah will "have them stop and talk about their frustration, pair them up and figure out what the issue is."

When training is taught from a back-to-basics, fun-loving, holistic method, young climbers are less likely to be injured, and more likely to be lifelong climbers, rather than burnt-out prodigies.

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About the Author



[David Gladish](#) is a freelance writer, copywriter, and expert storyteller. He helps businesses and brands tell powerful and impactful stories by intimately knowing their products, leveraging marketing messages, and creatively sharing unique content. A former mountain guide and climbing instructor, he's most at home while climbing pristine Cascade granite.

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