

## Why involve youth in fishing?

In recent decades there has been an alarming trend of children becoming more disconnected from nature than in past generations. The ramifications of this situation can have long lasting effects on youth's physical, mental and even spiritual health. According to Dr. Berry Brazelton, professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, "the tragedy we are facing in this generation is that there is no time for children to explore, to play, to go outside.... outdoor play lets children find themselves, find out what they're like as people, find what works, and what doesn't work."

### Reconnecting Youth with Nature

Getting youth hooked on fishing provides an excellent learning experience and an easy way of getting them outside and interested in the natural world. Children are naturally curious and the more they are exposed to their surrounding environment the more they will want to probe, poke, investigate, and inquire about it. In addition to the fish they catch, they get the opportunity to see, first-hand, the abundant diversity of wildlife associated with our fresh and saltwater environments. Fishing can also serve as a direct spring board to getting kids excited about science, reading, social studies, art, and P.E.



### Development of Life Skills and Knowledge

Fishing experiences provide opportunities for children to develop important life skills and knowledge. For instance, teaching a child how to tie a fishing knot or hit a target while casting can *improve hand-eye coordination* as well as *build self-confidence and esteem*. As any experienced angler will tell you, fishing also teaches the value of *patience*. Often, children get frustrated if they do not catch a fish immediately after throwing a line in the water, but given enough opportunity, their patience will improve. It is hard to miss the excitement on a child's face when he/she lands their first catch; an experience they are not likely to forget.



### Critical Thinking Skills

Over time youth will also improve their ability to think critically as they learn to study the waters they're fishing, or decide upon the best lure or bait to use for the fish they target. These skills will not only enhance their future fishing experiences but will serve them well in school and throughout their lives.

## Quality Time Together

In our modern, fast-paced society, it is sometime easy to forget the value of slowing down to relax and enjoy life. Quality time with family and friends is often overlooked as we rush to accomplish our next task. Consider the value of taking a child fishing and enjoying time spent together, or the benefit of children interacting with one another as they learn more about the sport. These experiences can long-lasting impacts.



## Development of Stewardship-Minded Anglers

Fishing is and will continue to be an integral part of Florida's economy and heritage. However, it would be naïve to think that fishing doesn't have its impacts. A vital component to any child's exposure to fishing must include the importance of conservation and stewardship such as:

- Proper catch and release techniques
- Waste disposal
- Water quality
- Habitat protection



Do not wait until they are adults to learn how fish are managed, why there are regulations, what factors contribute to water pollution, or how even individual actions can impact our natural resources. Not only are they more likely to stay involved in fishing, but they're also more likely to take an active role in protecting our fisheries and surrounding environment.

*"Who will be around in 50 years that will be seriously concerned about environmental conservation? Having resilient ecosystems is a necessity for human health and we as a society need to protect our ecosystems in ways that are sustainable and durable."*

-Dr. Howard Frumkin, Director, Center for  
Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for  
Environmental Health

## Keep these tips in mind when exposing children to fishing:

- **Have patience:** The younger the child, the more likely they are to get distracted easily. Don't get frustrated if they do not want to stay in one spot or lose interest quickly if the fish aren't biting.
- **Don't break the piggy bank:** Fishing gear can get incredibly expensive, but there's no need to purchase top-of-the-line equipment with all the accessories and gadgets. Make sure the gear is appropriate for the size and age of the child. Live or frozen bait will probably be your best bet starting out. If you are not sure what to purchase, check with a local tackle shop.

- **Location:** You don't need to take a child to far off exotic locations for a good fishing experience. A neighborhood lake or shoreline is more than sufficient to get them started.
- **Come prepared:** Consider the tolerances and needs of your child when fishing. Make sure you and they have sunscreen, hats, glasses, water/food and any other essential supplies that will keep you both safe and comfortable.
- **Learn together:** Fishing is a continuous learning experience. Take the time to learn about fishing and the environment with your child. It's a great way to spend time together and get more involved.
- **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to ask locals about learning how to fish. We are fortunate to have several avid anglers, guides, fishing clubs, and tackle shops in our area. They will be more than happy to help you and your child. In addition there are numerous on-line resources available to learn about knots, fish identification, tackle, techniques and conservation.
- **Explore:** Wherever you fish, take time for you and your child to explore the surrounding environment. Bring along a dip net to investigate other types of life living in the water.
- **Be a positive role model:** Demonstrate responsible fishing practices in front of your child. For example, if you see trash or discarded fishing line, pick it up and use this as an opportunity to teach about stewardship.

Bryan Fluech  
Collier County Sea Grant Agent  
(239) 417-6310 ext 204  
[Fluech@ufl.edu](mailto:Fluech@ufl.edu)

**Solutions for your Life**

The Extension Service is an off-campus branch of the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and department with the Public Services Division of Collier County Government. Extension programs are open to all persons without regard to race, color, creed, sex, age, handicap, or national origin. In compliance with ADA requirements, participants with special needs can be reasonably accommodated by contacting the Extension Service at least 10 working days prior to the meeting. Contact Extension at (239) 353-4244 or by fax at (239) 353-7127.