Run for Fun! (20 minutes)

Items needed for this activity:
• Obstacle course: cones, large boxes, hula hoops, paper bags, large balls, jump ropes, or other items.

Background information for presenter:
Jogging and/or running can be an excellent strategy for increasing daily physical activity. Running is easily accessible to most people – regardless of age, sex, income or fitness level. It can be done in almost any weather or climate, given the proper gear, or event on an inside track. No fancy equipment is needed to run, except for a decent pair of running shoes. Best of all, there’s not much of a learning curve for running – most people know how to do it.

Running burns more calories per minute than many sports and is considered one of the best aerobic exercises. It can be a casual, non-competitive sport done at a pace as fast or slow as a person wishes, or taken to a higher level, with competition in short- and long-distance races.

Not all running has to be distance running. The activities included in this guide are easy-to-coordinate experiences that can generate feelings of success and accomplishment among youth participants.

Step 1: Information to share with club members (1 minute)
Running is a good way to increase your minutes of physical activity and is a great aerobic conditioner. Running can also help strengthen your legs, develop greater endurance, ease tension, boost energy, and burn 585-700 calories an hour, depending on your speed and size. Along with the obvious benefits of adding running to your list of physical activities – there also can be a few concerns to keep in mind with running. Running can place increased stress on your joints. Like all fitness activities, it is important to work your way into a routine. Start off running short distances to make sure that your body adjusts to the increase in physical activity.

Step 2: Group Activity (8 minutes)
Leg Stretches
To prevent muscle injuries, it is good to stretch your leg muscles before beginning a long run or before you begin today’s games. If you participate in organized sports, you may already know some basic muscle stretching exercises. There are many variations to leg stretches and here are a few examples that you can try as a group before beginning the other activities.

Stretch #1 – Calf Stretch (two options)
1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Extend one leg behind you, keeping both feet flat on the floor. Your front knee should be bent and rear knee straight.
3. Move your hips forward, keeping your lower back flat. Lean until you feel tension in the calf muscle of the extended leg.
4. Hold for 10 seconds, then relax
5. Stretch the other leg.
6. Repeat.

Stretch #2 – Calf Stretch
1. Stand arm’s length distance from a wall, tree, or other support.
2. Put your hands on the wall, keep your back and your legs straight and your heels flat on the floor.
3. Bend your arms and lean forward, trying to touch your chest to the wall.
4. Feel the stretch in your calf muscles.
5. Hold it for a few seconds.
6. Repeat.
NOTE – you can do this one leg at a time, or both together. **DON’T BOUNCE** when you stretch – stretch gently and completely focusing your attention on the calf muscle.

**Stretch #3–Hamstring Stretch (two options)**
1. Sit on the floor with one leg out straight.
2. Bend the other leg at the knee and press the sole of that foot against your opposite inner thigh.
3. Extend your arms as far as possible, grasping the ankle of the extended leg and pulling your upper body down as you exhale. Hold your bent knee close to floor and bend at the waist, keeping your spine fairly straight.
4. Hold 10 seconds, then relax.
5. Stretch the other leg.
6. Repeat.

**Stretch #4 – Hamstring Stretch**
1. Stand about a foot from a wall and place your hands on the wall at shoulder-height, shoulder-width apart.
2. Take a step back while pushing into the wall.
3. Keep your back straight and press your heels into the floor.
4. Hold, then step forward and repeat.

**Stretch #5 – Knee Stretches (Quadriceps)**
1. Stand on your left leg.
2. Reach back and hold your right foot behind you with your left hand.
3. Balance against a wall with your free hand as you gently pull upward on your right foot.
4. You should feel a stretch in your right thigh, not in the knee.
5. Reverse and repeat with your right leg.
NOTE – you should do this gently and do not strain your muscle.

**Step 3: Group Activity (15 minutes)**

**Sharks and Minnows**

*Prior to the activity, identify a large open area. If you have a large number of participants, try to find an area similar to the width of a football field. A smaller space can be used for a smaller group.*

This is an active game, but a good warm up game since it gets everyone involved right from the start. Designate one participant as the shark, the other participants all start as minnows. Have the minnows line up in a straight line on one side of the field, all facing the opposite side. The goal is for the minnows to cross the open space and reach a designated line. The shark will attempt to tag as many minnows as possible. Once tagged, the minnows become sharks. Continue running back and forth until all of the minnows are turned into sharks.

**Drop & Pop Race**

*Prior to activity, identify an open area for participants to run. Mark a start and an endpoint. Place a chair at the designated “end” line for each team.*

Divide participants into teams of equal numbers. Give each team balloons – one balloon per team member. Participants should inflate the balloons to approximately the same size and tie them. Instruct all of the team members to form a line behind the start point. When the race begins, the first team member of each team runs to the chair, drops the balloon on the chair, then sits on the balloon until it pops. When the balloon pops, the team member runs back to his or her team, tags the next person in line and the race continues until the last team member in each team makes it back to the line. The first team to finish wins.

NOTE – If it is a hot day, the balloons can be filled with water for more fun.

**Running Obstacle Course**

*Prior to the activity, set up an obstacle course for participants to run through. Potential items for the course are included in the supply list provided above.*

Create an obstacle course designed from available resources. The course might involve participants running, hopping, or skipping around markers or cones; crawling through tunnels made from large cardboard boxes; running through a series of hoops; or jumping rope a specific number of times. It works best to have identical items so that two courses can be created, allowing two teams to participate at the same time. If you have more than two teams, include an elimination round in the event or use a stopwatch to time each team.

**Get Up & Move!**