

GLOVES OF HOPE: FIGHTING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



GLOVES OF HOPE: FIGHTING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The Northern Territory has one of the highest rate of incarceration of young people aged 10-17. Most of those in detention, whether on remand or sentenced First Nations young men and boys – with an increasing number of boys aged between 10 and 14. The reasons for these high rates of detention are complex and relate to government policies, policing practices, racism, disability and the effects of intergenerational trauma.

Research shows that culturally safe physical activity programs can enhance social and emotional wellbeing and strengthen connection to community and culture. Physical activity feels good because when we exercise, our muscles release tiny proteins, or myokines, which have been dubbed 'hope molecules' because they increase a sense of wellbeing and build resilience to stress.

Sport can also curb aggressive behaviour, even if belligerent language remains – as Hoops 4 Health advisory group member, Patrick Stephenson, explained:



'Young people might still "sound rough" while being less reactive, less physically aggressive, and better able to pause, recover, and make safer decisions'.

BOXING TO BUILD WELLBEING, CONNECTION AND RESILIENCE

Boxing programs in Australia (like this one) and internationally commonly engage young people, especially boys and men, to encourage more socially productive choices.

Boxing can 'provide a cathartic release of anger, aggression, stress, and the dissipation of anxious energy'.¹ It also supports mindfulness and an escape from rumination due to

'its focus on deep breathing, and the mind/body connective awareness needed to stay focused on technical skills while punching a bag/pads'.²

Community based boxing activities provide a safe space and a sense of belonging. When First Nations led, boxing programs like NT based Gloves of Hope, also build connection to culture, which is important for social and emotional wellbeing.



¹ Bozdarov, J., B. D. M. Jones, Z. J. Daskalakis and M. I. Husain (2023). "Boxing as an Intervention in Mental Health: A Scoping Review." *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 17(4): 589–600. p. 598

² Ibid.

GLOVES OF HOPE

Hoops 4 Health's Gloves of Hope program is grounded in a healing-centred approach which recognises the ongoing harms of dispossession, colonisation and racism, and the need for preventative approaches to support pro-social behaviour. Combining First Nations wisdom with and neuroscience, the Hoops 4 Health model draws on Bruce Perry's (2013) neurosequential model of therapeutics which is based on an understanding of the effects of trauma on brain development. Applied to sport, the neurosequential model enhances the healing power of sport and enables coaches to better understand how to effectively work with young people who have experienced trauma.

Hoops 4 Health uses a range of therapeutic tools to support staff to engage with participants in a calm and supportive manner and to deescalate dysregulated behaviours. **Three Rs** are fundamental to the Hoops approach:



Regulation rather than dysregulation

Breath work and exposing individuals to moderate stress through exercise helps people regulate their emotions. This is important for those who have experienced unpredictable, extreme and prolonged stress, and as a result have a sensitised stress response that can lead them to give up if pushed too hard, too fast. Drawing on Perry's neurosequential model, Hoops 4 Health encourages patterned, repetitive, rhythmic, moderate activity (PRRMA) activity to support emotional regulation and resilience. Through coaching and mentoring Hoops 4 Health responds to participants' needs and supports emotional regulation. The model encourages 'above the line thinking'³ supporting ownership, accountability and responsibility rather than blame, excuses and denial.

³ Taylor, C. (2015). *Walking the Talk: Building a Culture for Success*. UK, Random House.

Relate

Hoops 4 Health works to build trust and meaningful relationships, recognising that people who have experienced trauma may feel isolated and distrustful. Through building a sense of connection it supports people to rebuild and maintain kinship systems. The use of flightpath coaching means feedback is provided in the moment and directly to the individual instead of singling them out and potentially embarrassing them.

Reason

A key element of the approach is the Calmness Circle, which draws on the First Nations' practice of yarning and deep listening – sitting in a circle and reflecting in a safe space. Sessions are designed with a check in so that coaches can understand how participants are feeling, and a check out so that participants can reflect on the session.

Gloves of Hope provides a structured, supportive space where participants can come together, build confidence, and develop practical skills through boxing-based activities.

Each Gloves of Hope session is designed to help regulate and refocus participants' minds, using movement, mentoring, and positive relationships to create safety and stability. The program supports young people to channel their energy in healthy ways, process stress, and build the emotional tools they need to navigate life's obstacles with strength and hope.

Gloves of Hope sessions follow a structured PRRMA approach: dynamic warm-up, boxing fundamentals, pad work and 1-on-1 sparring, incorporating Calmness Circle and Flightpath Coaching throughout. Family engagement is a defining feature of Gloves of Hope, with 10–15 parents and family members regularly attending sessions and with intergenerational groups participating.

By bringing young people into a consistent weekly routine, Gloves of Hope builds strength, endurance and resilience and deepens connection and a sense of belonging.

Led by First Nations coaches, with guest mentoring from three-time world champion Anthony Mundine, patron of Hoops 4 Health, and his sons, Anthony Mundine III and Rahim "CJ" Mundine, participants are inspired make healthy choices for a brighter future.

As one participant said

“

'I'm exhausted and sore all over my body, but this is the greatest experience for me right now, so you'll be seeing my face every day'.

The Gloves of Hope challenge on October 24 is an opportunity to support the initiative and celebrate First Nations strength, resilience and community. For more information & to book tickets go to [Gloves of Hope Challenge Tickets](#).

