



# Speaking From the Heart

Fostering optimal physical activity experiences in children with congenital heart disease



## PURPOSE

We examined how children with CHD and their parents **THINK** and **FEEL** about physical activity and how this impacts their physical activity **PARTICIPATION**



## STUDY METHODS

### WHO



16 Children  
9-12 years old  
moderate-to-severe CHDs  
and their parents

### WHERE



BC Children's Hospital  
Children's Heart Centre

### WHAT



Interviews

## FINDINGS

### 1. Children were active for fun, skill and confidence building, and for health and well-being



Kids with CHD said they engage in physical activity

- ♥ because it was fun
- ♥ to spend time with friends
- ♥ to improve overall health and well-being
- ♥ to work on building movement skills and confidence

### 2. Kids and their parents experienced complex emotions in relation to physical activity



#### Children with CHD...

- ♥ felt proud when they mastered a movement and could play with older peers
- ♥ sometimes felt **embarrassment, shame, and envy** when they were not able to keep up with their peers

#### Parents...

- ♥ felt proud when their kids were having fun, putting in effort, challenging themselves, and improving their skills
- ♥ sometimes were **fearful and/or anxious** as they worry about their kids' heart condition and its impact on their activity involvement

### 3. Kids learned to self-regulate during physical activity to ensure safe and continued participation



Kids talked about the importance of pacing themselves to manage CHD-related symptoms

- ♥ sometimes during physical activity, kids felt tired, dizzy, and were breathing heavily. During these times, they listened to what their bodies were telling them and adjusted the type and intensity of their activities so that they could continue to participate



#### How did parents assist in their kids' self-regulation practice?

- ♥ parents tried to hide their concerns so as to not deter their kids from participating in physical activity
- ♥ parents also helped their kids learn how to self-regulate during physical activity
- ♥ physical activity leaders (e.g. sport coaches, PE teachers) were made aware of the kids' heart condition and ensured that they let the children take breaks when needed

#### Show support by encouraging kids to...



- ♥ be active for fun
- ♥ focus on effort
- ♥ work on skill building and teamwork
- ♥ get involved in accessible activities where they can play within their abilities and thrive

