

Soccer = Life

Lessons From the Beautiful Game



Growing Spaces & Places for Youth Well-being

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Introduction

This book was created by a group of youth researchers who share a deep love for soccer—and an even deeper commitment to understanding what helps young people live well. Soccer has always been more than a sport for us. It’s where friendships are built, lessons are learned, and moments of joy happen that remind us what it means to belong. Playing, practicing, winning, losing, and supporting each other reflect how many of life’s most important lessons unfold on the field. It also reflects some of our research findings.

Our work as youth researchers explores youth well-being. We explore questions that matter to all of us: What makes us happy? What helps us grow? How do we support one another through challenges? And how can we build environments—on and off the field—where youth feel seen, valued, and understood? The stories, insights, and reflections in these pages come from our own experiences and our research findings.

We wrote this book for youth everywhere—for those trying to make sense of who they are and who they want to become; for those looking for purpose, confidence, or connection; for those who feel alone in their struggles or unsure about their next steps. Our hope is that these lessons from soccer help you discover something meaningful about yourself and the people around you.

We all deserve spaces where we can grow, make mistakes, learn, and be supported along the way. This book is our way of contributing to that kind of space. These pages hold the lessons that shaped us, the ones we’re still learning, and the ones we hope will support you on your journey. Welcome to *Soccer = Life*. Let’s step onto the field together.

In soccer everyone has a role, like a striker, goalie, or defender; each role has a meaning and a purpose. They might be different, but they all need each other to succeed. Teamwork is the root of winning. In life there are some things you can do alone, but often the key to success is teamwork with people that you can rely on and trust.

Mohammad Haj Ali

What does this mean to us?

Soccer is all about teamwork, and many roles are needed to win. Similarly, in life, working together with others will help you succeed. No matter what you do, teamwork – people working together -- is needed to succeed. Even if you feel you have to do something alone, others on your team can support you as you work towards your goal.

What does this mean to you?





Just because the opponent got through your defence doesn't mean it's over yet.

Zaid Hassan

What does this mean to us?

There will be setbacks along the way to achieving your goals. Never give up hope. Focus on what truly matters. Don't lose sight of your goals. Keep trying because there's always an opportunity in front of you.

What does this mean to you?





Scoring a bunch of goals is fun, but if you end up losing the game, all the goals you scored mean nothing. Always keep an eye on the goal. The MAIN GOAL.

Shehab Osman

What does this mean to us?

In soccer, you can score a hat-trick and still lose the game because you don't keep your eye on the bigger picture. It's the same in life. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture and only focus on the smaller goals, or you may not win.

What does this mean to you?





Soccer is just like reality. You can't always rely on just yourself, you have 10 other people that can help you through and reach to the end.

Ayham Alghdayan

What does this mean to us?

You don't always have to rely on yourself. You have people to help you. Teamwork, communicating, and working with others, is the key to winning in soccer and life.

What does this mean to you?





You can't control the bounce of the ball, but you can control how you react to it.

Tanade Adan

What does this mean to us?

You can't control the problems you face in life but can control how you respond to them and handle them. It's not always about how things go, but about what you do afterwards. You can't control the problems that you face or when you face them, but you can change how you face it when they hit.

What does this mean to you?





Opportunities don't last forever. Like an open shot on a goal, you have to take them before the window closes.

Mohamed Aways

What does this mean to us?

Go for the opportunities in life. If you see the opportunity; grab onto it, and don't waste time! Take your chance and don't wait or you will lose the ball. And you don't know when another opportunity will come by again.

What does this mean to you?





Play for the name on the front of the shirt, and they'll remember the name on the back. Work hard for your team, and people will remember you for it.

Abdi Hassen Ali

What does this mean to us?

Always try your best and to stay on your standards. That is how people remember you. So keep working hard, keep trying, and never stop.

What does this mean to you?





In soccer, we all need to pass, and if we don't, we can't score. The important thing is that we need to score to win, and a soccer field is 70 to 80 yards. One person can't go through 12 people in one match.

Ali Haj Ali

What does this mean to us?

You can't win or achieve your goals without help from those around you! Always ask for help and work with your teammate because one person can't do everything. If you work together, you win the game.

What does this mean to you?





You won't score if you never take a shot — but you also won't last the game if you never rest.
Abdi Ibrahim

What does this mean to us?

You have to find balance in life, balance in working towards your dreams and goals. You need to work hard and take your shots if you want to get where you want to go. But you also need to rest and restore yourself so that you can keep going for the long term.

What does this mean to you?





Patience and timing matter—just like waiting for the perfect moment to take a shot, in life, rushing too soon can waste the opportunity.

Mahamed Abdi Nur

What does this mean to us?

Sometimes timing is the key. So, take calculated risks with precise calculations. Sometimes we have to be patient and wait for the perfect time to take a shot. Don't always rush or you could make the wrong decision.

What does this mean to you?





Training and working hard makes you perform better in the game.

Mohamed Isse

What does this mean to us?

It takes discipline and consistency to succeed.

What does this mean to you?





In soccer, you won't score on every shot, but if you stop shooting, you'll never score at all. In life, too, progress often comes from persistence, not perfection.

Abdifatah Ibrahim Farax

What does this mean to us?

Persistence and consistency is the key to achieving your dreams and goals. No matter what, just keep working on your goals. Keep trying. But you also need to do the hard work, and build the basics, the foundations of what you need to achieve success.

What does this mean to you?





Sometimes being there is what matters whether you are the goalie a defender or striker. Each person plays a huge role in the game, whether they get the ball passed to them or not. What matters is being there for your team and working together.

Nomaan Hussain

What does this mean to us?

Teamwork is important in life. Helping your team and being there for them is important, sometimes more important than looking out for just yourself. Always do your part for the team, even if you win or lose. Be consistent: stay on your position and whenever needed go help out. Don't be afraid to take on different tasks, tasks that are not traditionally yours, to help achieve the bigger goal.

What does this mean to you?





Growing Spaces & Places 4 Youth

