

Top 3 emerging factors:

1

It is important to find, and have access to, knowledgeable and inclusive instructors and spaces that are welcoming and comfortable.

2

Appropriate and accessible support and resources can help women to (re)start activity after the birth of a child.

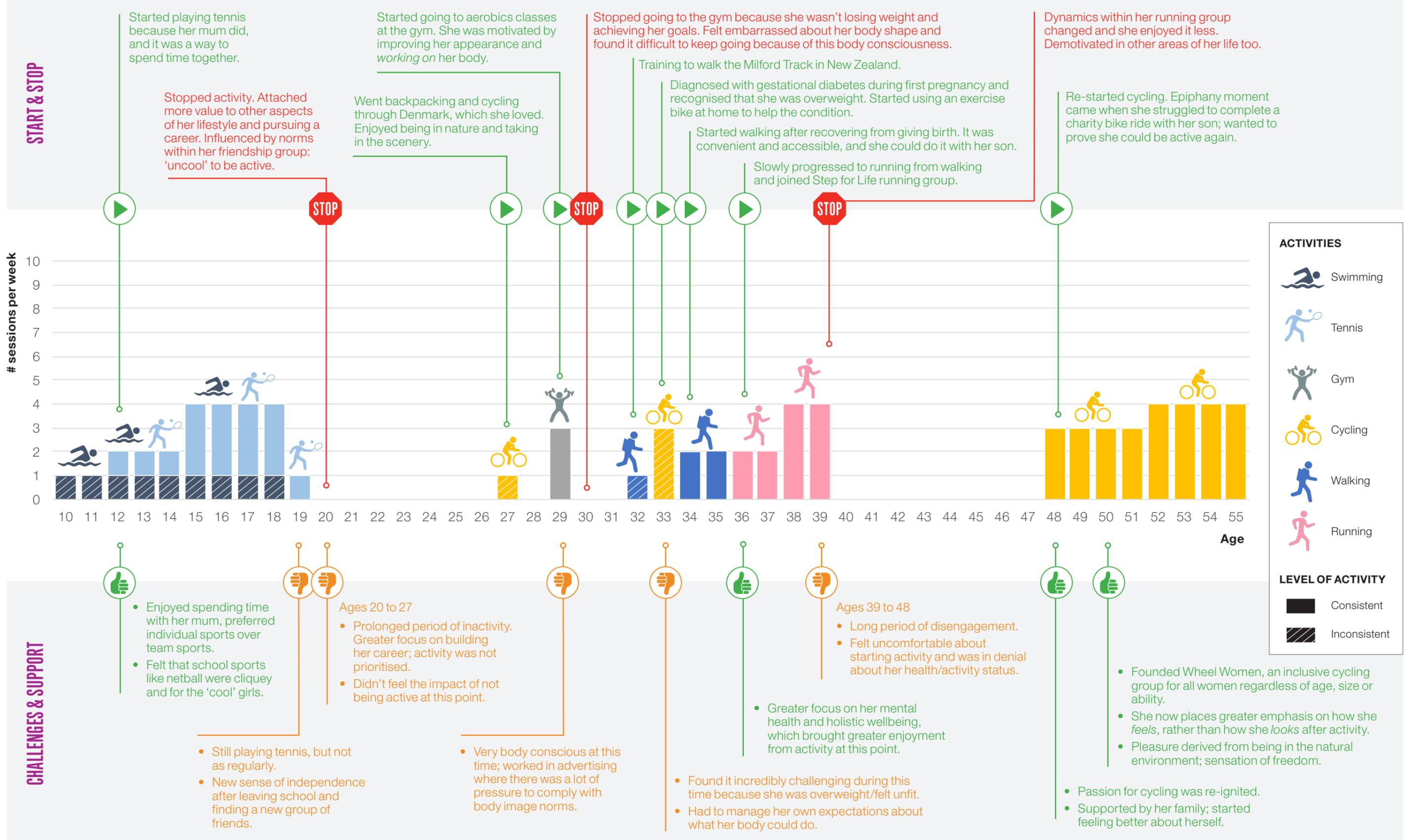
3

Relationships with activity can be unhealthy when they are driven by external pressure and expectation to conform to certain socio-cultural norms.



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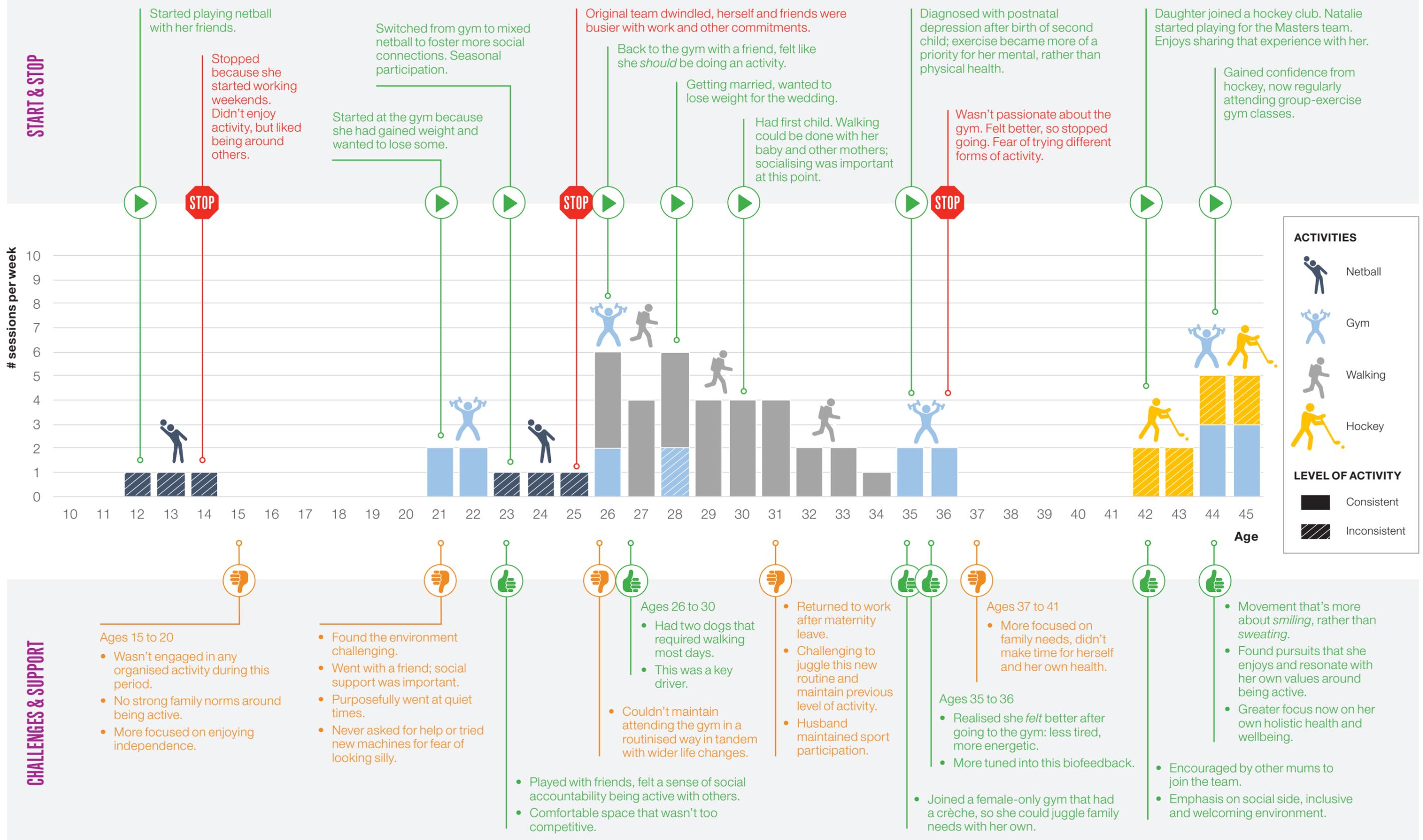


Top 3 emerging factors:

- Greater engagement and enjoyment attached to being physically active when a person finds a pursuit they are passionate about. Importance of having the opportunity to try a range of different/new activities.
- Undertaking activity in order to 'work on' body image and appearance can produce a negative relationship with being active and lead to cycles of engagement and disengagement.
- Creating 'safe' and inclusive spaces for women to be active in is important to foster their participation and ensure they can take part in activities that make them feel valued and welcome.



Natalie's Journey



Top 3 emerging factors:

1 Movement that is about smiling, rather than sweating. Importance of women finding a relationship with physical activity that works for them.

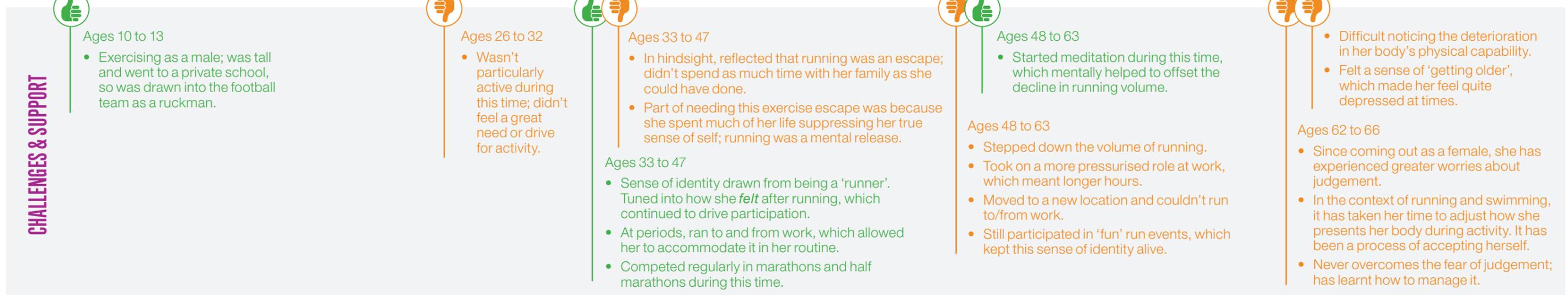
2 Importance of social connections and fostering friendships as a consequence of activity, and as a driver for being active.

3 Generally, women place a greater emphasis on holistic health and wellbeing later in life. Activity is less about improving appearance or managing (losing) weight.



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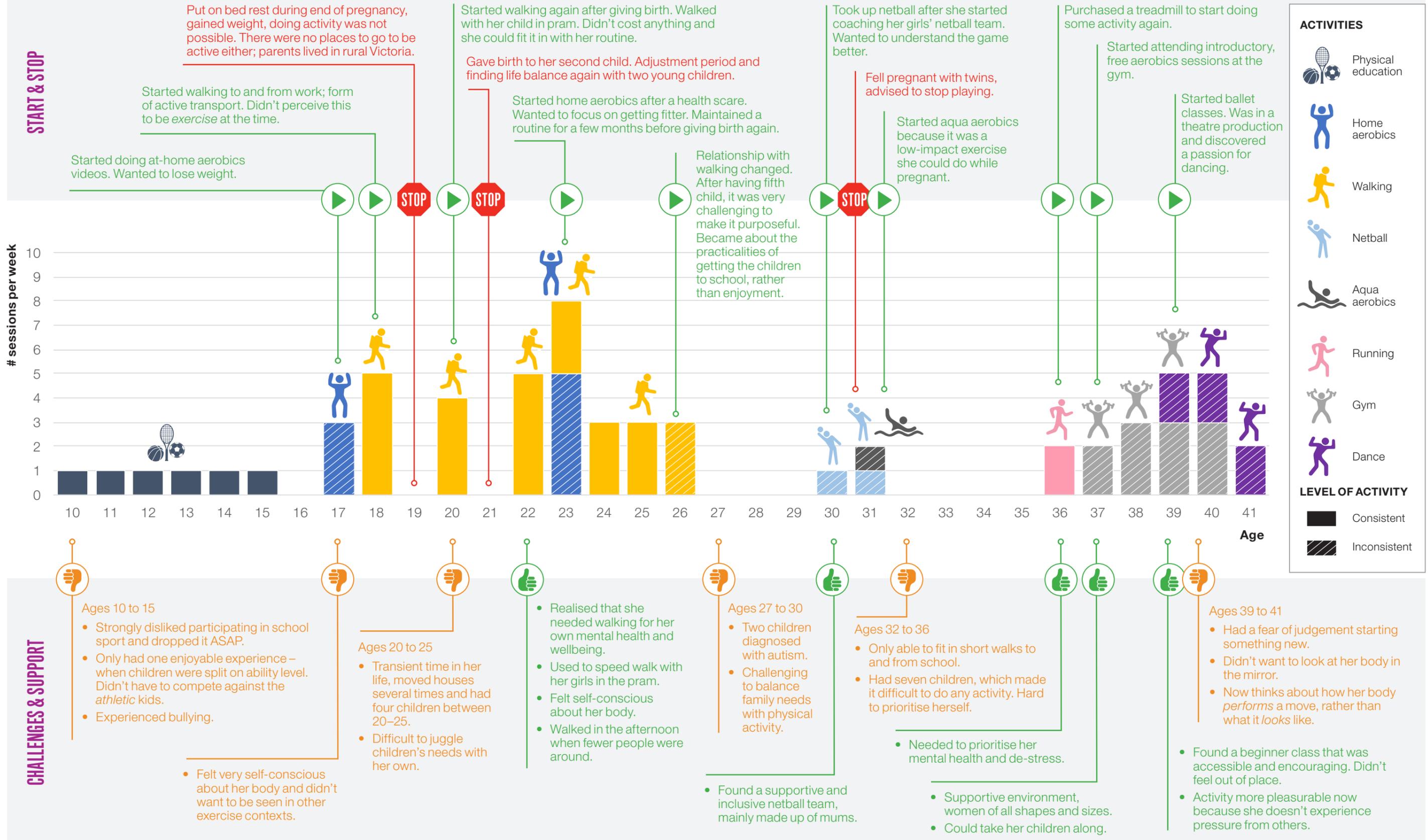
CENTRE FOR SPORT AND SOCIAL IMPACT



Top 3 emerging factors:

- 1 Social identities, such as that of a 'runner' can be powerful drivers of sustained engagement with an activity.
- 2 Activity can be easier to 'fit' in and feel more achievable if it is embedded into a person's general lifestyle.
- 3 Wanting to improve or manage mental health and feel better is an important motivation.

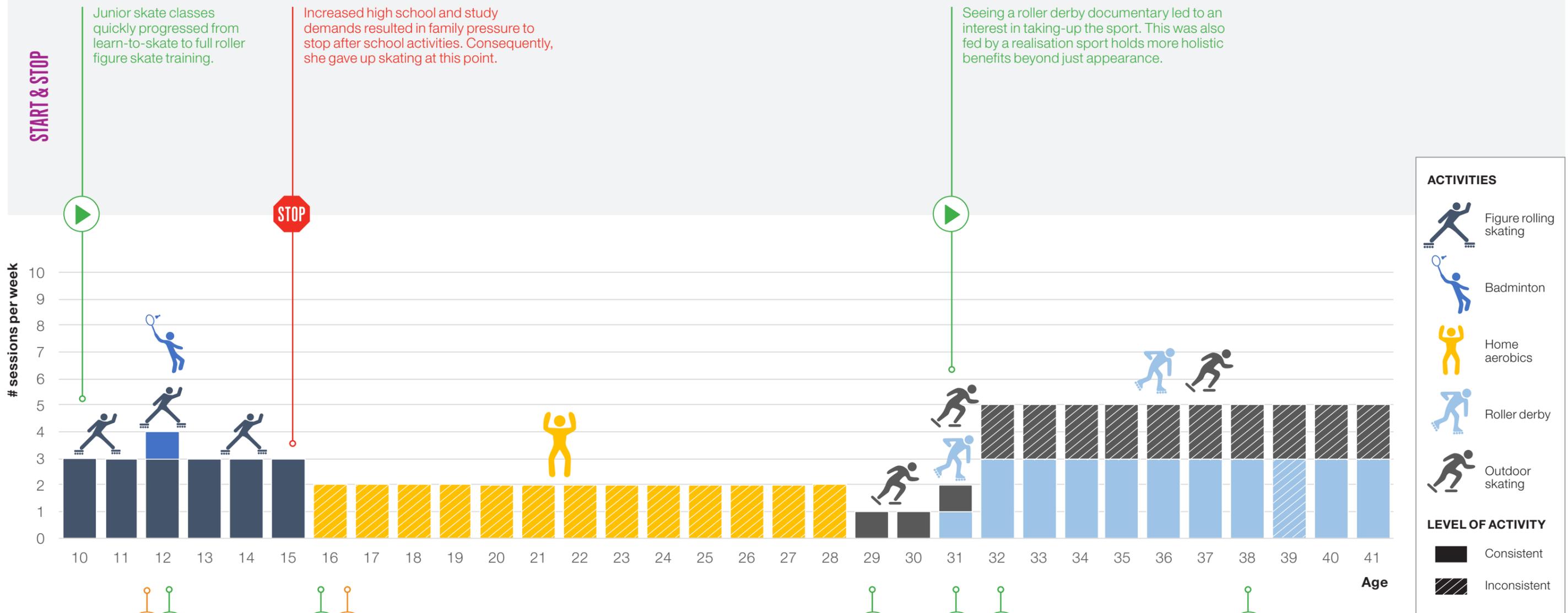




Top 3 emerging factors:

- 1 Important to find an activity you are passionate about and can sustain.
- 2 First experiences of a new activity need to be inclusive and welcoming.
- 3 Negative school sport experiences can have long-lasting impacts.

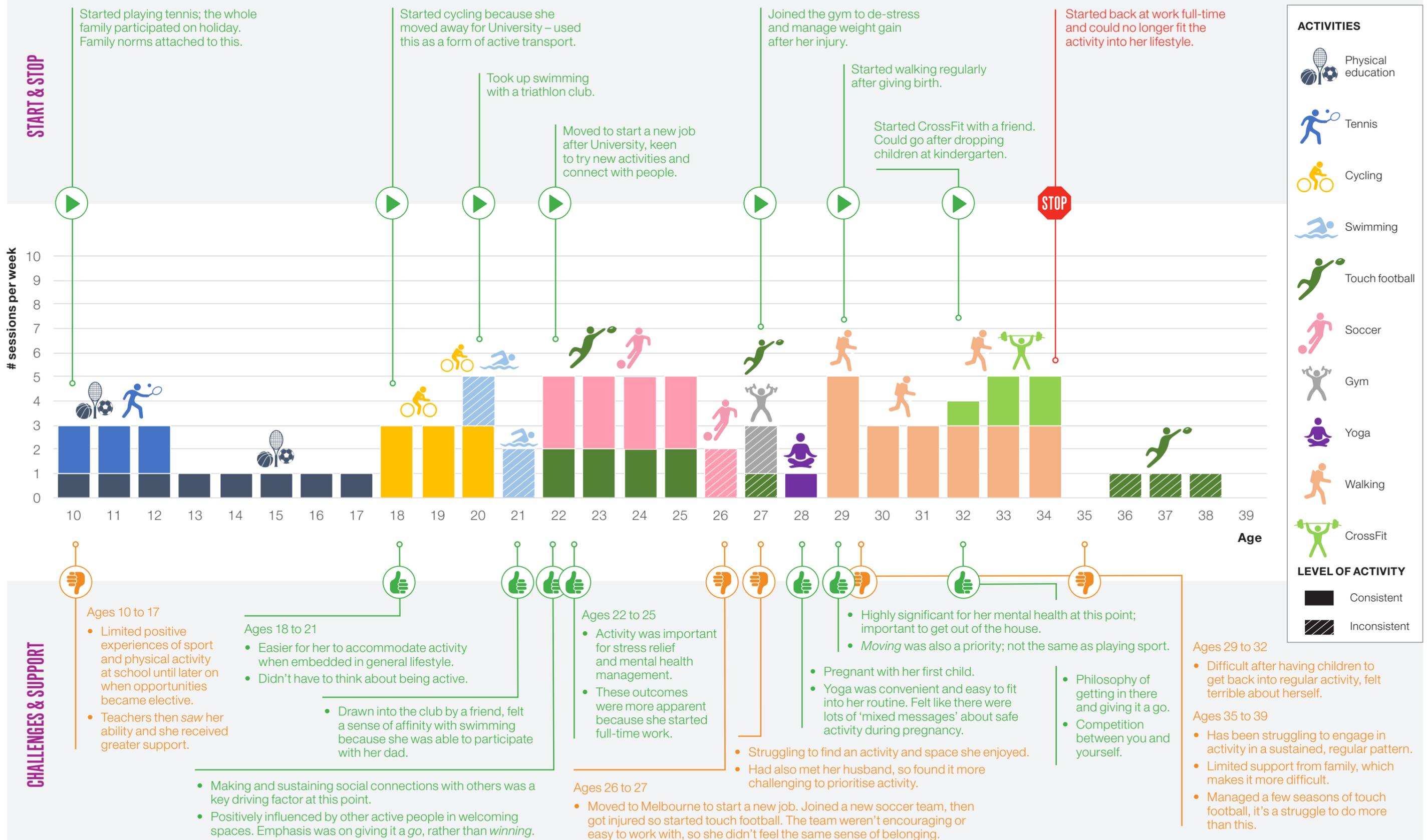




CHALLENGES & SUPPORT

- Ages 12 to 15:**
 - School bullying started around this age because she used to wear skate clothes to school.
 - This had an emotional impact but never resulted in considerations of stopping.
- Ages 16 to 28:**
 - During this time she engaged inconsistently with activity.
 - These short, occasional bouts were driven by appearance-related pressure.
 - Started exercising at home, which was mainly motivated by a dislike of the perceived fitness culture in gym settings and the impact this can have on body image.
- Ages 32 to 41:**
 - Outdoor skating was a way to keep fit during the roller derby off-season.
 - Roller derby became more popular and training became more demanding.
 - However, roller derby's inclusive and body positive culture played a big role in her ongoing commitment.
 - A desire to get back into an exercise routine led her to return to the familiarity of skating.
 - Ongoing participation was supported by regular and committed co-attendance by a spouse and a circle of friends.
 - A come-back to roller derby post-birth was aided by being able to bring her daughter to training.
 - Having a supportive partner also meant not having to choose between motherhood and sport.

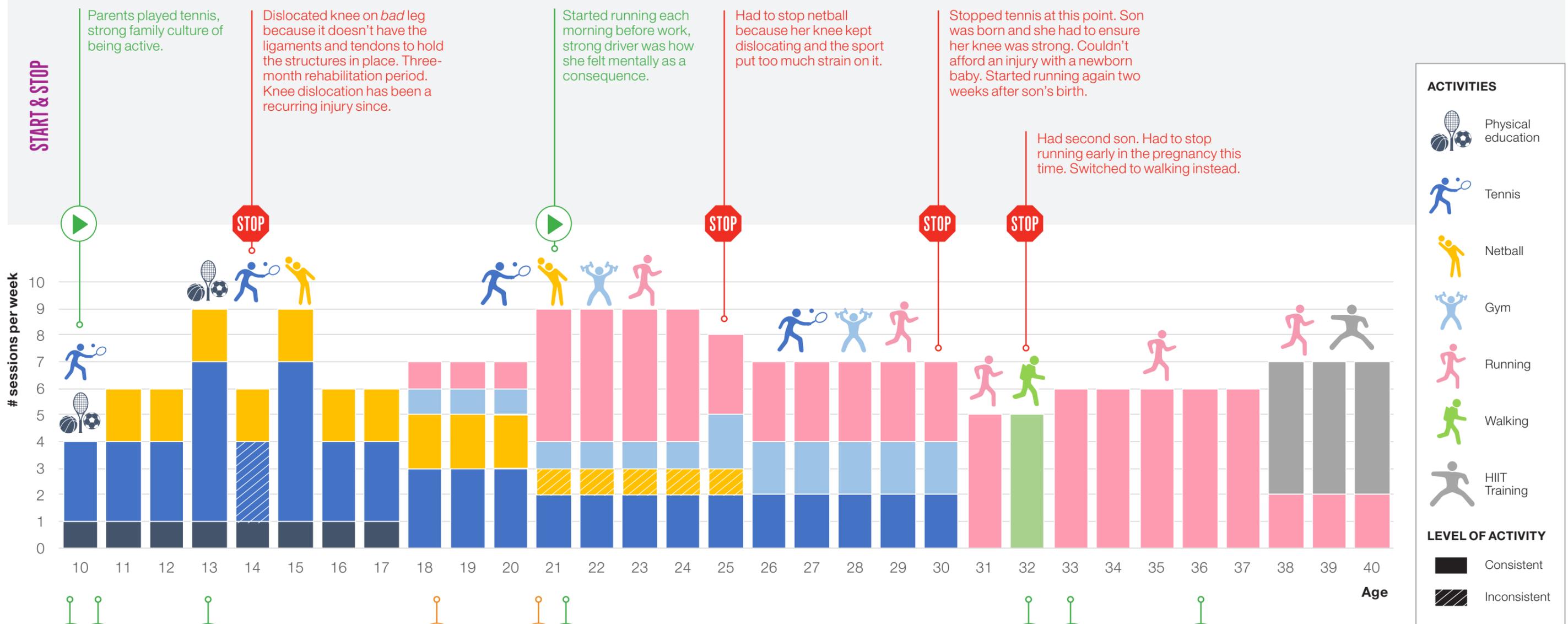
- Top 3 emerging factors:**
- Body negativity can be a harmful exercise motivation, but inclusive and body positive sport cultures can positively influence participation.
 - Logistical and emotional support for mothers, inside and outside of sport, can help maintain participation.
 - Family norms that don't support participation can be an early barrier to engaging in, and enjoying, sport and physical activity.



Top 3 emerging factors:

- Strong association between physical activity and mental health benefits, including feeling less stressed and having a space for yourself.
- Sustained engagement with physical activity when a sense of value and belonging is drawn from it. Being with the right *people* in the right *space* is fundamental.
- Gender relations within families can make it challenging for women to secure support for pursuing physical activity. Unable to make activity a priority because of such gendered norms.





CHALLENGES & SUPPORT



- Was able to start playing tennis after having foot amputated and getting fitted with a prosthesis.
- Facilitated greater inclusion in sport and activity at this point.

Ages 10 to 18

- Despite the prosthesis, parents always encouraged her to be active; didn't *cotton wool* her.
- She felt strongly that she wanted to be as included in sport as everybody else and resist others' perceptions.
- Always focused on what she *could* do.



- Strong sense of identity associated with playing tennis – wanted to be fully included.



Ages 21 to 30

- Had several periods of injury during this time. The only factors that ever stopped her from being active were complications associated with her bad leg.
- Mentally, this was challenging. Strong sense of identity attached to being active.

Ages 18 to 21

- Maintained heavy engagement with physical activity during University.
- Struggled at times with how her prosthetic leg looked and had body image issues; sometimes saw photographs of herself and felt like it looked worse than she thought.
- However, she still wanted to define herself on her *own* terms.



Ages 21 to 30

- Consistently active fostered by need to prioritise mental health and manage work stress.
- Also had a strong focus on social connections; being active with friends was a crucial support factor.



- Started running pattern again a few months after the birth of her second son.
- Had good support from husband and access to family childcare.
- Ran in the morning so it wouldn't impact on family time. Had to find the right exercise/family balance.

Ages 32 to 40

- There was a core group of women that started running together.
- They are now a group of seven that run and do HIIT training.
- Exercising with others and forming new friendships has been a key factor that has facilitated regular, ongoing engagement.

Top 3 emerging factors:

1

Strong sense of self associated with being physical active, resisting imposed disabled identity.

2

Friendships and social connections formed through activity. Sense of mateship derived from being active with others. Makes it easier to maintain participation.

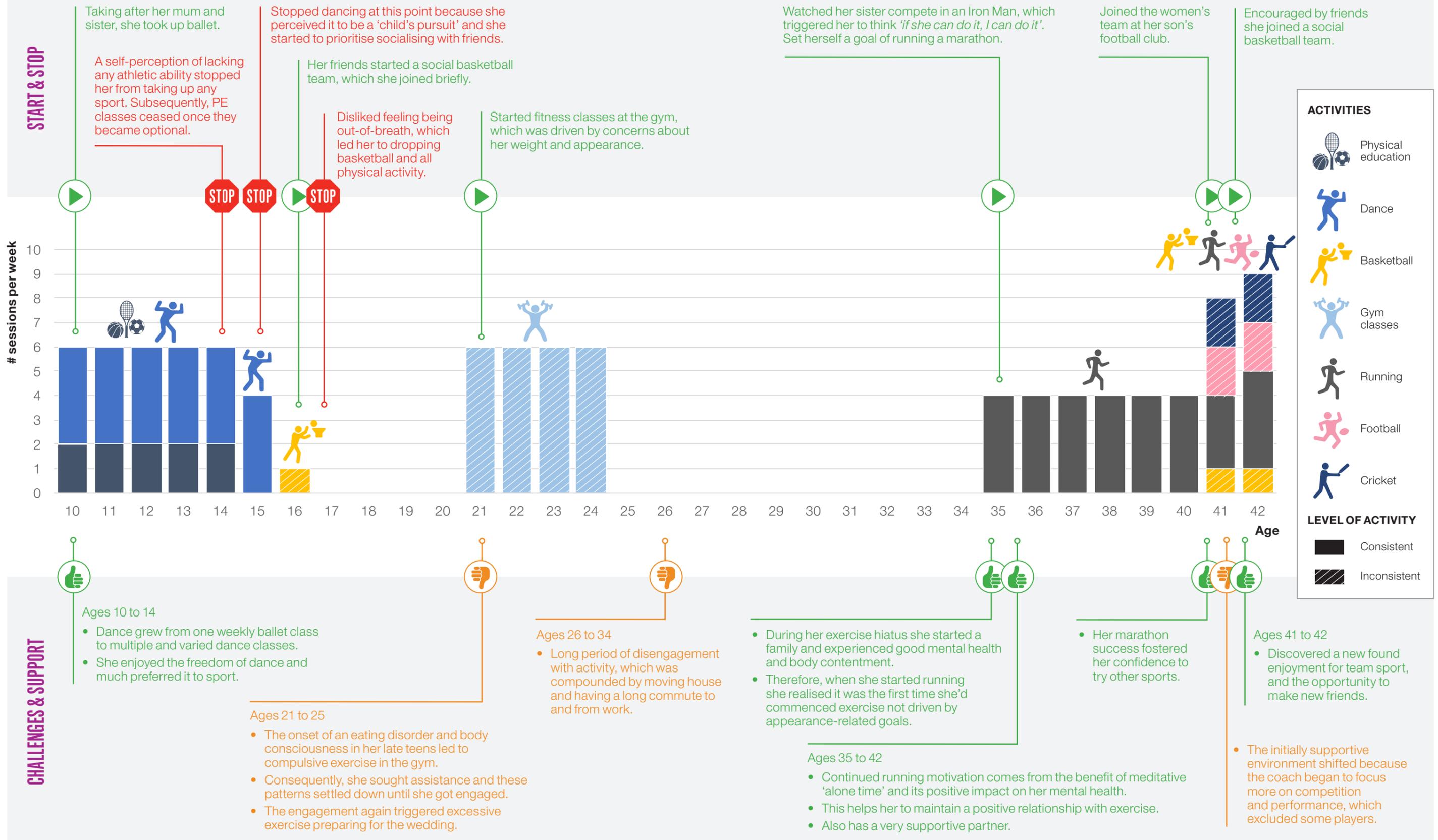
3

Positive family norms around activity are important from an early age. Parents and siblings are all still active.



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Top 3 emerging factors:

1

Body negativity can be a harmful exercise motivation, and can foster an unhealthy relationship with physical activity.

2

A fear of judgement about sport ability can discourage participation. Offering a safe space for learning and skill development can encourage participation.

3

Observing the various mental health benefits of sport and exercise can be an effective driver for continued participation.



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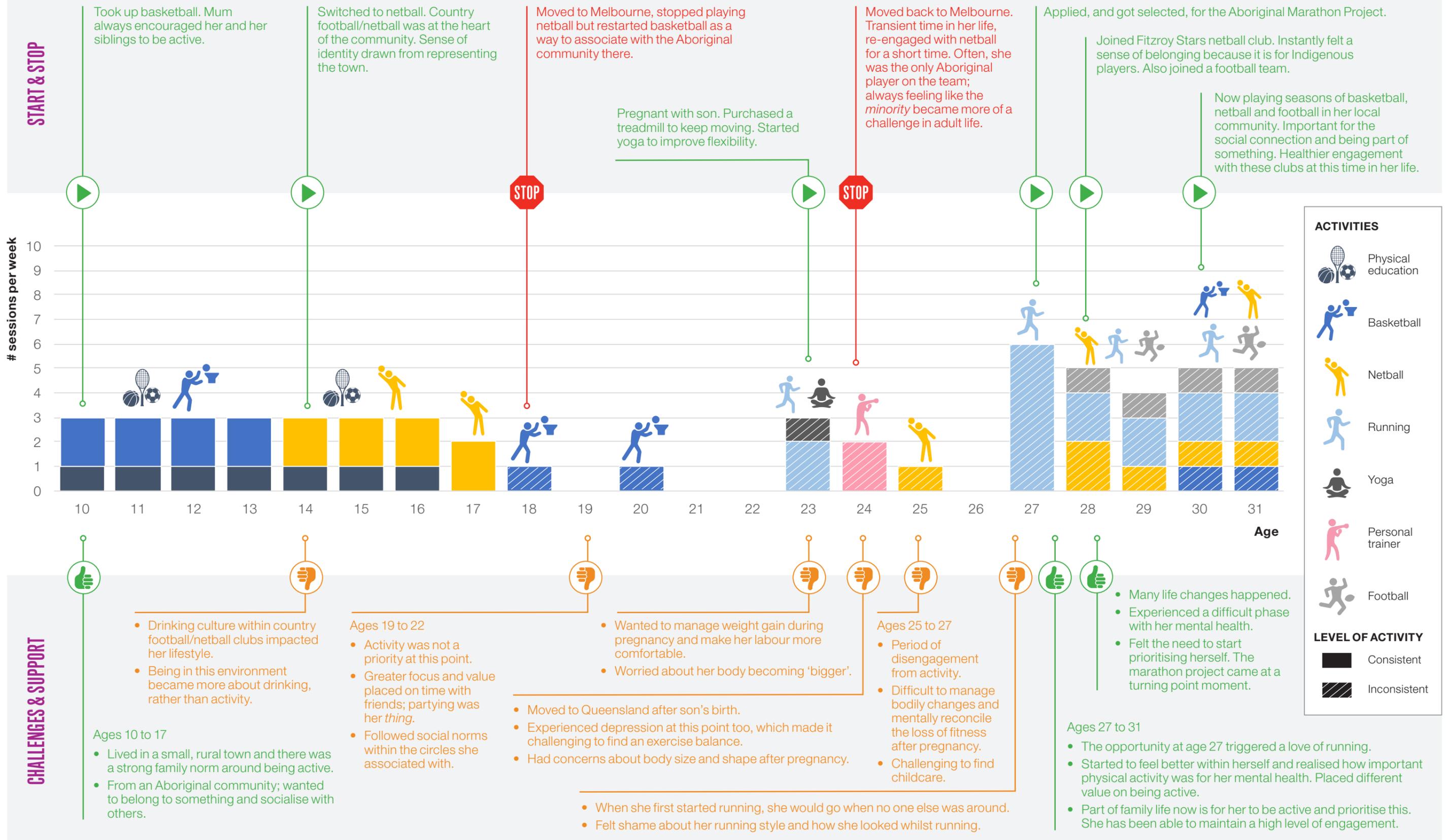
CHALLENGES & SUPPORT

- Challenges (Red thumbs down):**
 - Ages 10-14:** Strongly disliked participating in PE at school, didn't identify as a 'sporty person'. Felt hopeless and embarrassed during these sessions. More support offered to other children with a *seemingly* greater affinity for physical activity.
 - Ages 15 to 25:** Structured sport or activity never resonated with her. Tried a number of 'alternative' activities during University to socialise, including tandem cycling and bushwalking. Being in spaces that were inclusive, with an element of adventure was more appealing. Didn't make this a routine.
 - Ages 25 to 32:** After finishing University, she struggled to find work and doing physical activity was not a priority. She also experienced a more significant degeneration in her vision during her twenties as a result of a congenital vision impairment. The onset of depression as a consequence of the deterioration in her vision also made it challenging to want to be active. Felt like she hit rock bottom during this time.
- Support (Green thumbs up):**
 - Ages 32 to 35:** Contacted by the president of the club and encouraged to join for a trial run. She considered it a safe and inclusive space and has been running with them ever since. Not long after joining Achilles she started doing Parkrun. Felt worried about running in Melbourne's public spaces and what people would think about her running style and ability. Maintained engagement in running. Driven by desire to pursue own goals, rather than compete against others, which is why she didn't like other forms of structured activity. Enjoys feeling valued and a part of something – a 'mini' community. Running feels embedded in her lifestyle, rather than a *fad* thing, with greater onus on *feeling* better rather than *looking* better.

Top 3 emerging factors:

- Importance of creating inclusive activities and spaces where someone feels like they can give something a go.
- Various circumstances can create complex barriers to starting or sustaining physical activity. Broader social support can help in these situations.
- Physical activity can be easier to sustain when a person is focused on how they *feel*, rather than how they *look* as a consequence. These emotions become important drivers for sustained participation.





Top 3 emerging factors:

1

Healthier engagement with physical activity when the focus is on the outcomes of being active, rather than wider behaviours happening in certain contexts.

2

Periods of mental health struggle can make it difficult to be active, however after you *feel* the benefits it becomes easier to prioritise.

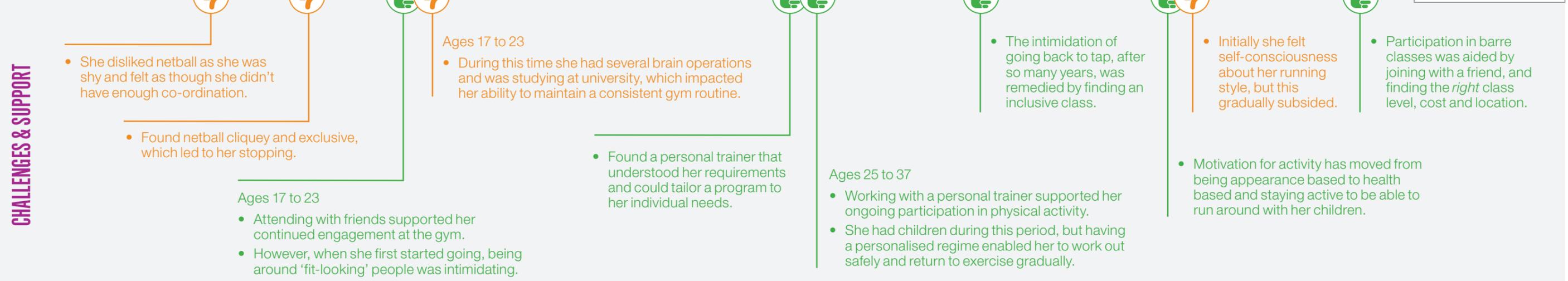
3

The socio-cultural norms associated with certain sports or environments can be a challenge. Importance of feeling a sense of belonging.



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Top 3 emerging factors:

- 1 A fear of judgement about sport ability can discourage participation. It is important to have a safe space in which to learn.
- 2 Engaging fitness professionals that understand medical requirements and can modify training accordingly is important.
- 3 Being active to work on your body can be a harmful exercise motivation. However, shifting to focus on more holistic health benefits can support ongoing participation.





- Tennis became serious.
- Training increased to each weeknight with matches on a weekend.

- High-level, competitive tennis stopped when school finished and university studies took over.
- However, a monthly social game continued during university.

- Ages 24 to 28**
- After a break from regular physical activity during her university years, she enjoyed getting back into it.
 - Felt fully immersed in the surf lifesaving club during this period and made lots of friends with matches on a weekend.

- Ages 29 to 31**
- Learning English, being new to a country, and feeling home-sick impacted her confidence and inhibited her engagement with physical activity.

- Participation in tennis and swimming was aided by working at a large leisure centre that housed a pool and tennis courts.
- Tennis became even less frequent.
- Giving birth then putting on weight led to negative bodily comparisons with her younger-self and worries about being judged on the tennis court.
- This negatively impacted her mental health and proved a barrier to activity.

- Ages 33 to 38**
- Feels as though tennis is her passion, which helps her to stay motivated.
 - Meeting and socialising with other mothers became a key factor for supporting her increased engagement with physical activity.
 - Joined a play group with her son, which increased her social circle and connected her with other mothers.
 - One friend joined the gym with her, which had crèche facilities.

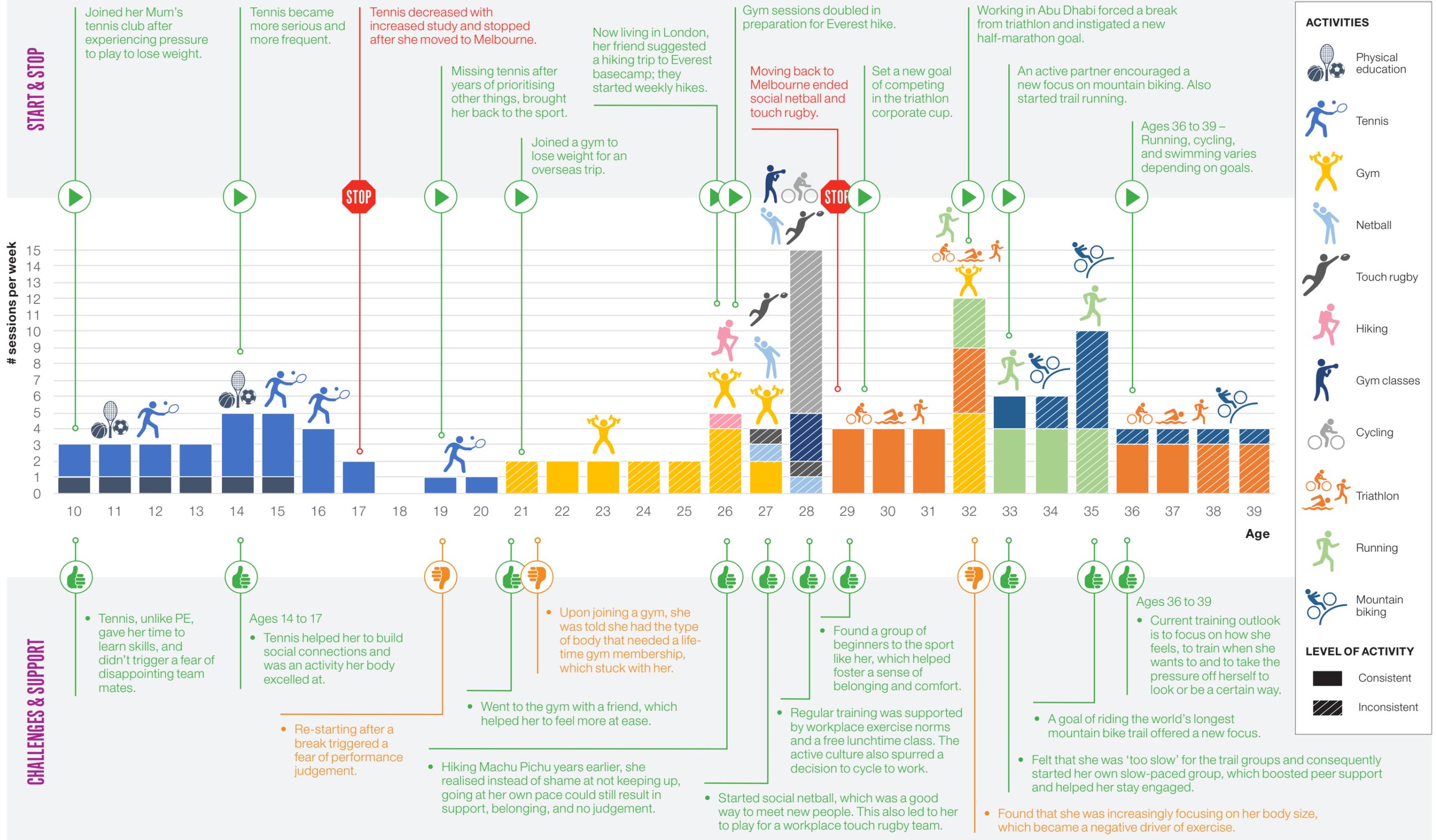
Top 3 emerging factors:

1 Feeling the various mental health benefits of sport and exercise, can be an effective driver for continued participation.

2 Logistical and emotional support for mothers, inside and outside of sport, can help maintain participation.

3 An important benefit, and encourager of sport and exercise, can be creating and building social connections, which helps to generate a sense of belonging.





Top 3 emerging factors:

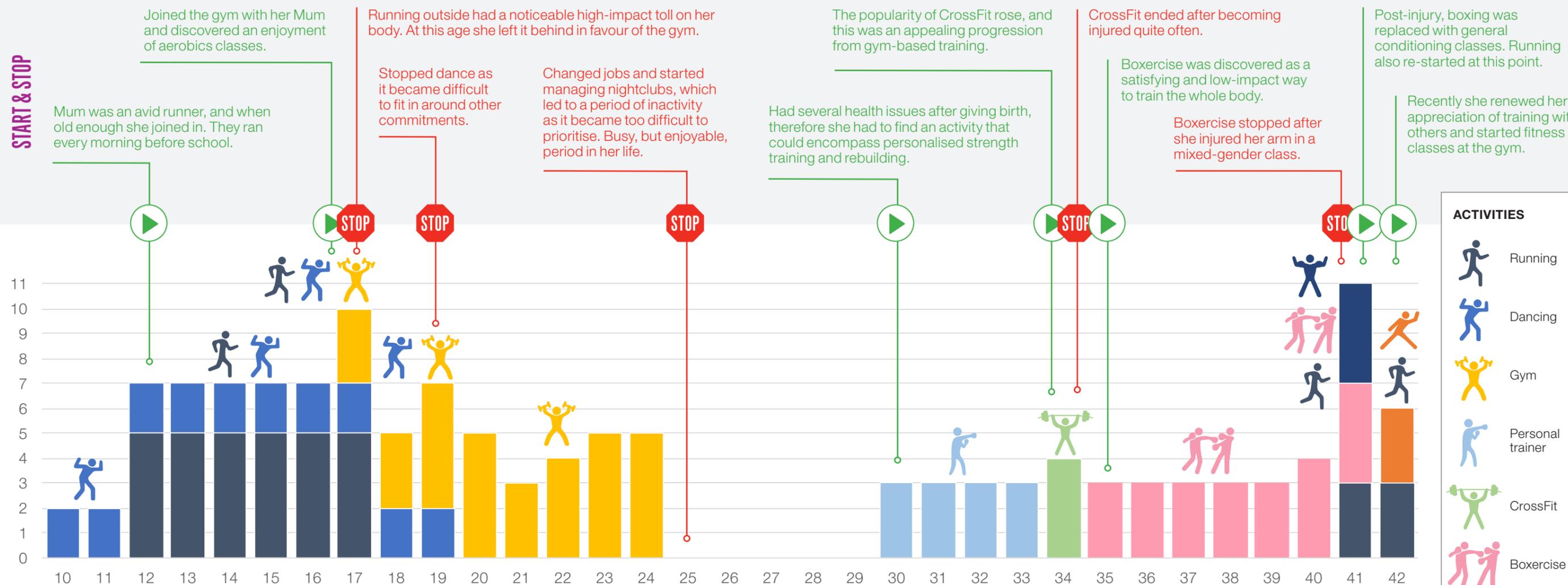
1 Event-based goals can be effective motivation for starting and maintaining physical activity.

2 Body negativity can be a harmful source of motivation.

3 Feeling a sense of belonging and making new social connections can help encourage ongoing participation.



START & STOP



CHALLENGES & SUPPORT

- Ages 12 to 17**
 - Her Mum normalised the morning run.
 - It was also good mother-daughter bonding time.
- Ages 17 to 19**
 - The gym offered new social connections beyond school friends.
- Ages 21 to 24**
 - Started work full-time and had to find a new balance.
 - Managed to fit activity in before work and was able to make this a priority.
- Ages 30 to 34**
 - In CrossFit she found an encouraging and supportive community.
- Ages 34 to 35**
 - CrossFit was initially quite intimidating.
 - She worried about her upper-body strength and judgement from the mainly male group.
- Ages 40 to 42**
 - At this point mental wellbeing is the primary driver of maintaining her participation in physical activity.
 - She found group training can be more welcoming and enjoyable when with a group of similar and like-minded people.
 - Becoming older fostered a new perspective on physical activity.
 - Mental health became a key motivator and driver of being active.

ACTIVITIES

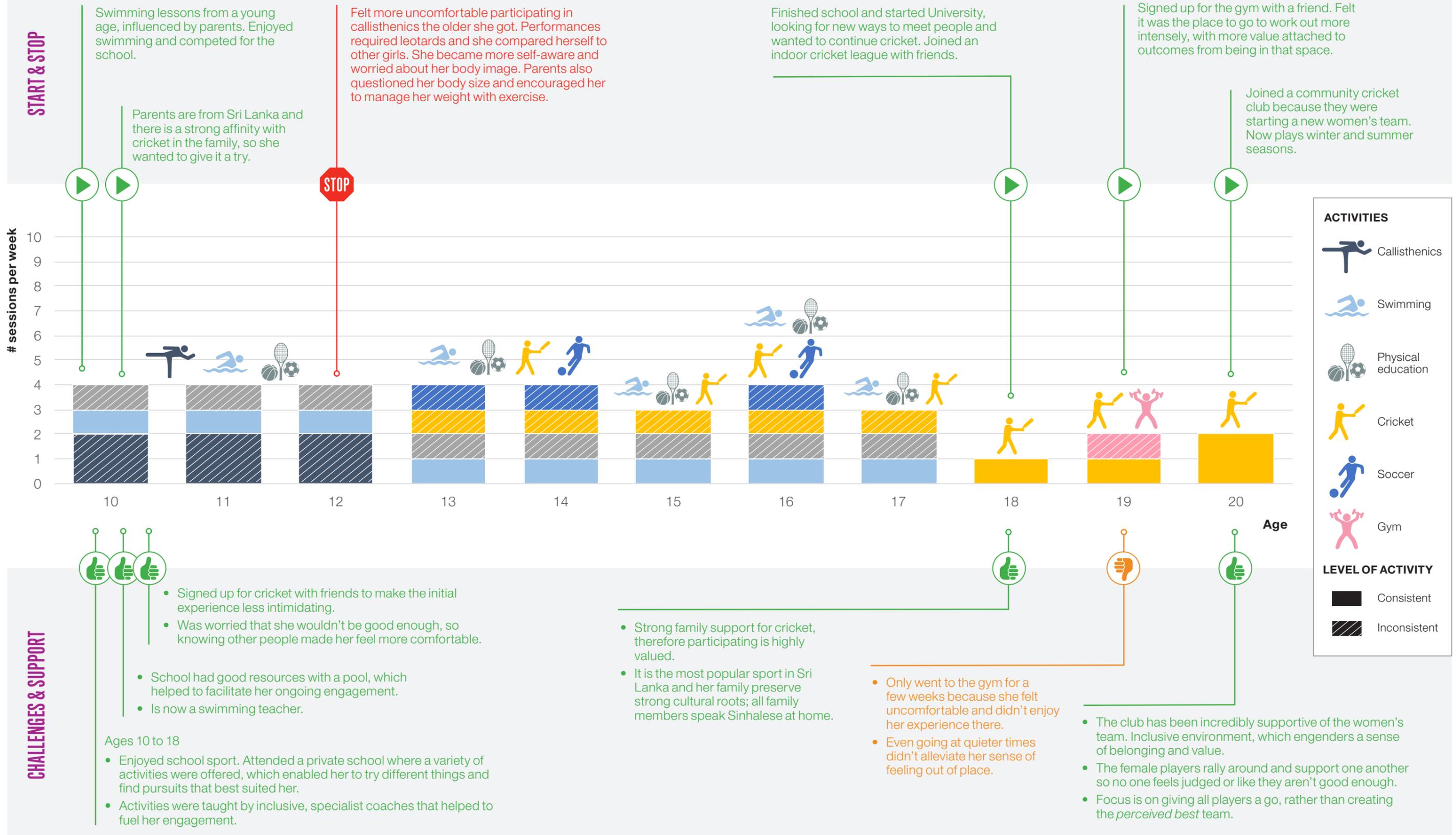
- Running
- Dancing
- Gym
- Personal trainer
- CrossFit
- Boxercise
- Strength training
- Fitness classes

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY

- Consistent
- Inconsistent

Top 3 emerging factors:

- Active family norms can positively influence a person's ongoing relationship with sport and physical activity.
- It can support participation to find fitness professionals that can understand medical limitations and can modify training accordingly.
- Feeling the various mental health benefits of sport and exercise can be an effective driver for ongoing participation.



Top 3 emerging factors:

1

There can be strong cultural identities attached to certain sports or activities, which fosters participation and engagement. Inclusive environments support this.

2

When creating new women's teams in burgeoning female participation sports, such as cricket, it is important to focus on building opportunities that are welcoming and build a sense of belonging.

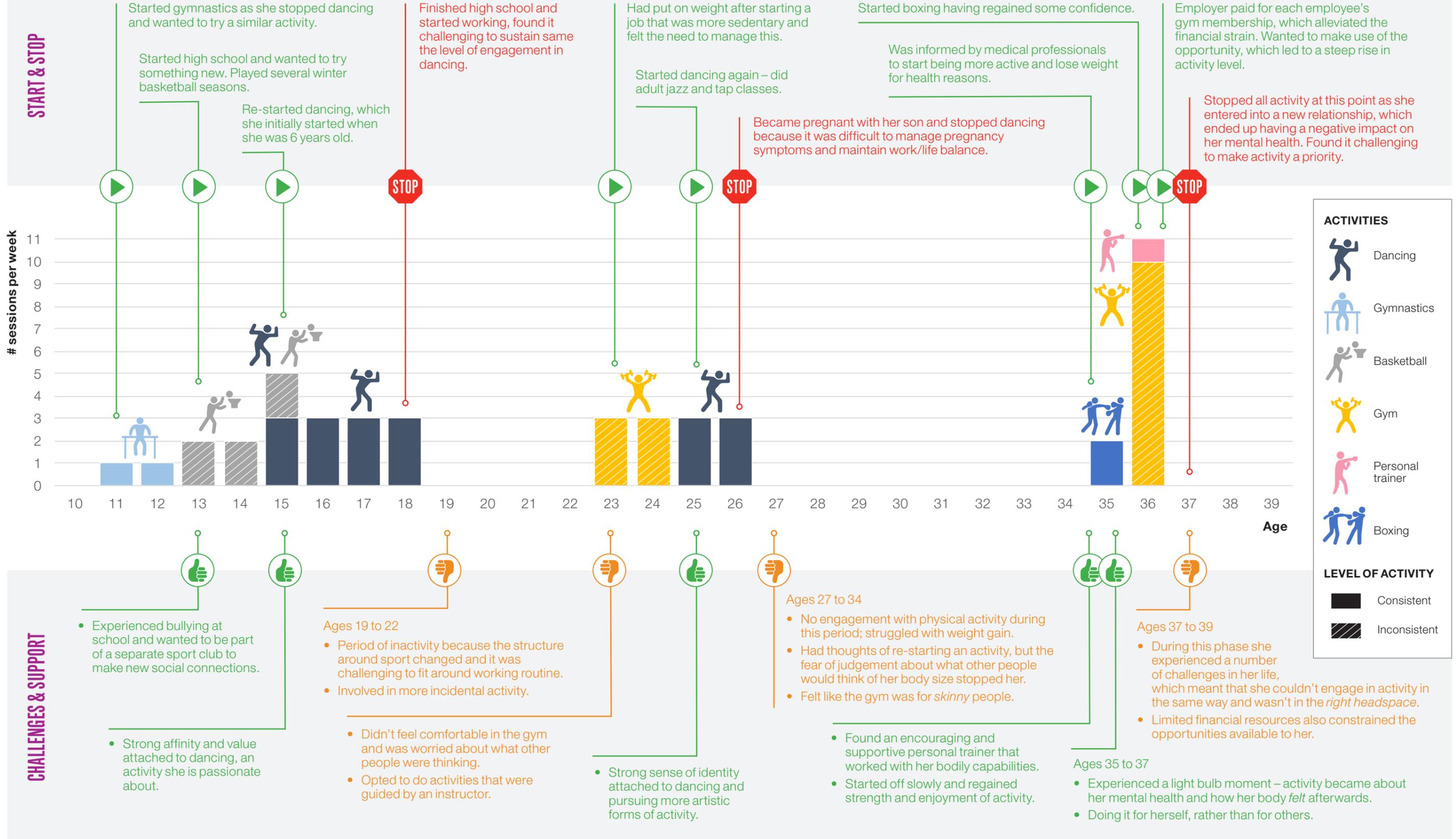
3

Women can find it challenging to carry on participating in an activity or be in a certain space when they feel a strong sense of discomfort.



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Top 3 emerging factors:

1 Importance of financial and practical resources for single parents.

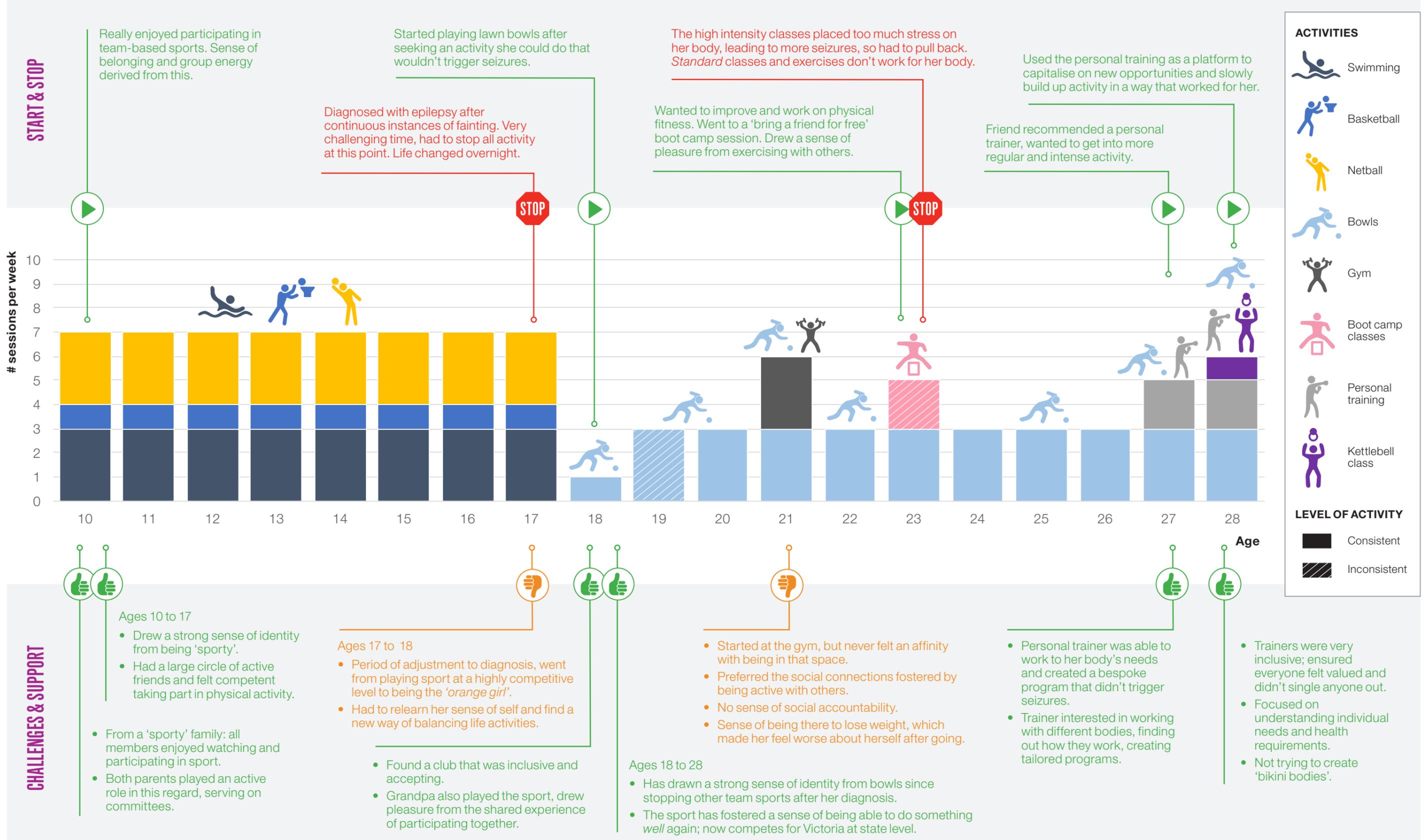
2 Greater focus on being active for yourself rather than others, which means you value it in a different way.

3 A shift in activity towards holistic wellbeing and mental health, which can foster more pleasurable experiences.



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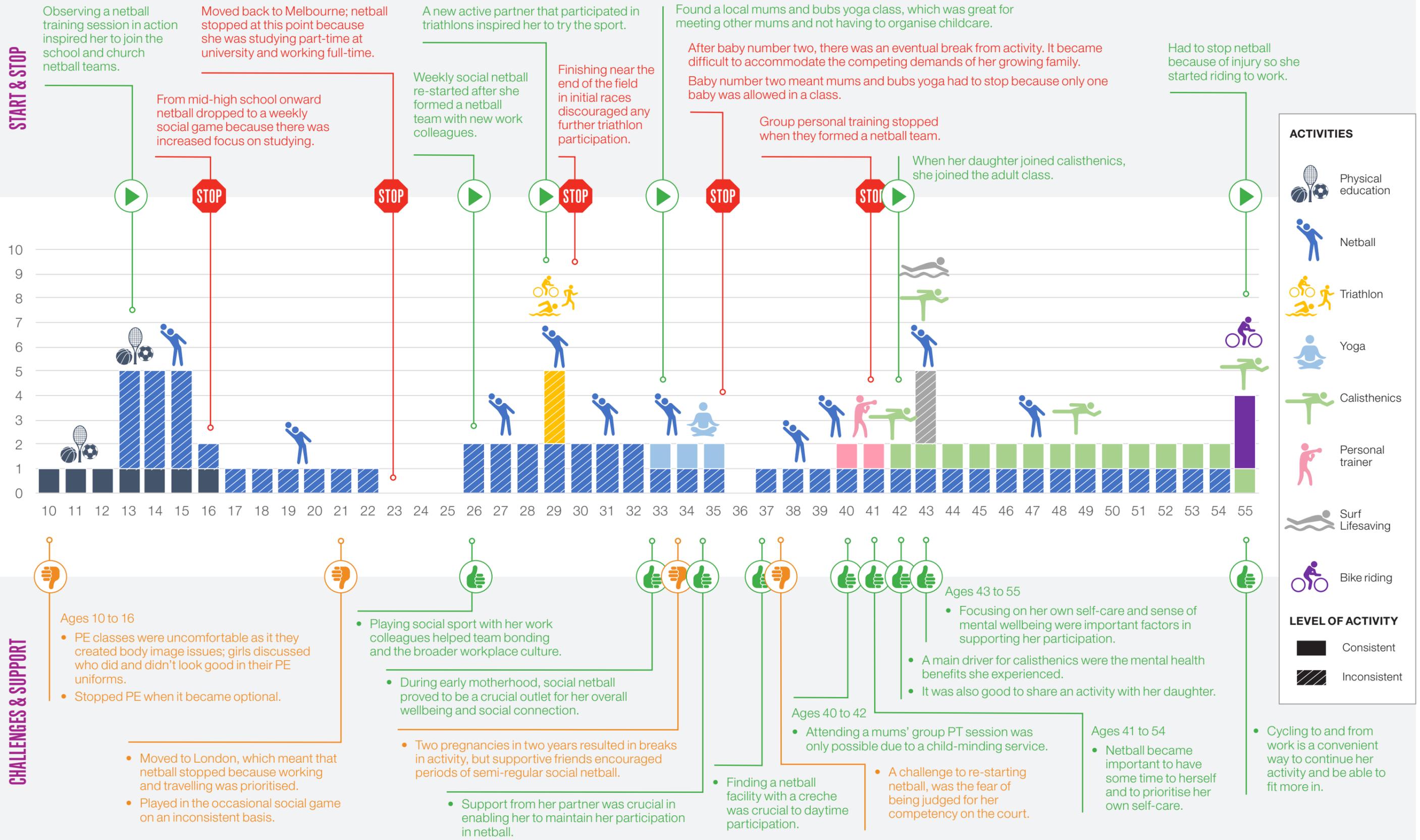
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Top 3 emerging factors:

- 1 The sense of identity drawn from sport, or other forms of physical activity, is a powerful instigator of ongoing engagement.
- 2 It's important to find fitness professionals who are motivated and able to work with different bodily capabilities, particularly when there is an element of risk attached to being active.
- 3 Creating and fostering social connections is an important motivator and outcome for women being active. This social influence cannot be understated for activity engagement; friendships can be vital in this context.





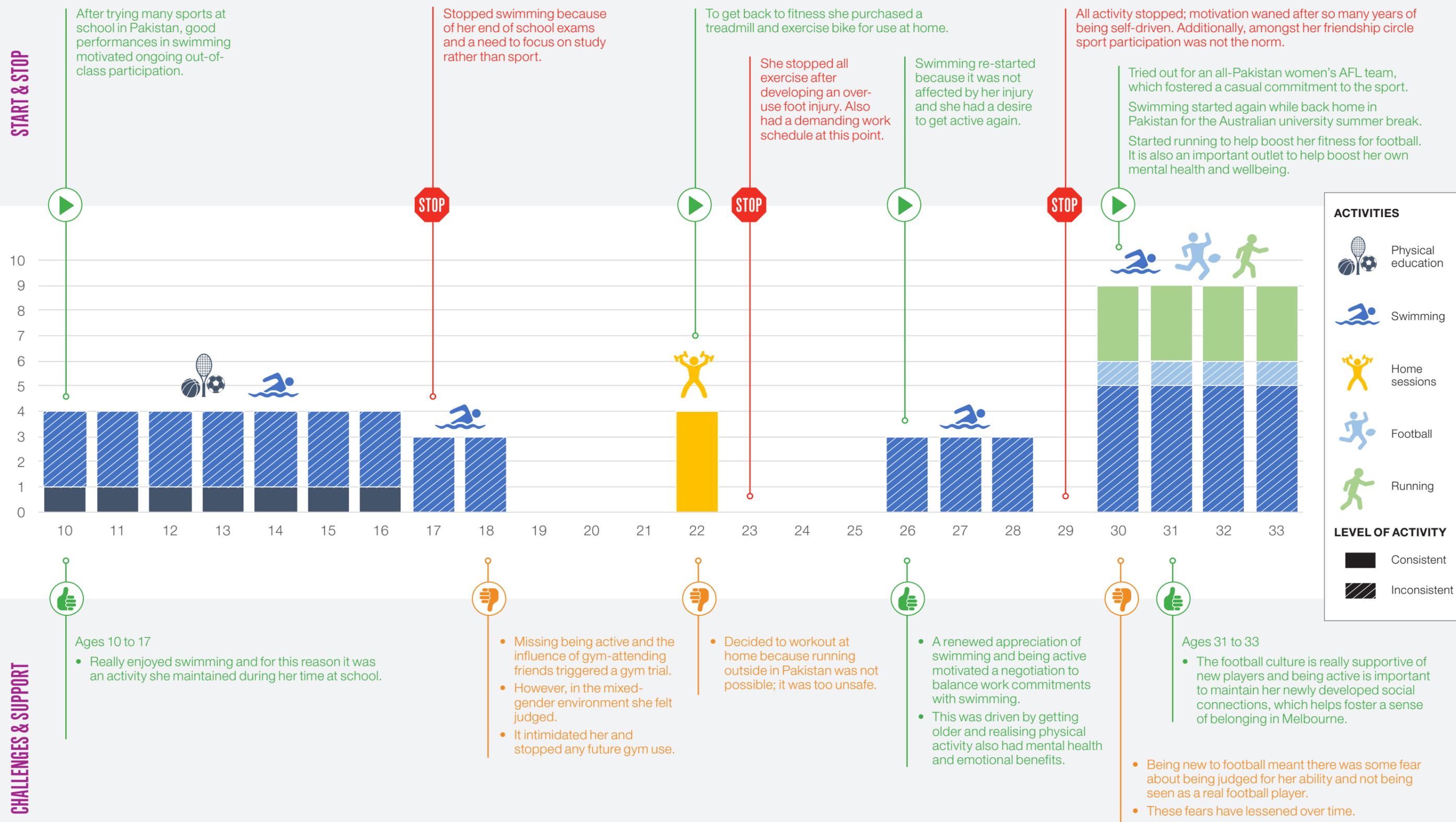
Top 3 emerging factors:

1 Logistical and emotional support for mothers, inside and outside of sport, can help maintain participation.

2 Taking part in an activity with your children or sharing the activity experience can help women start and sustain participation.

3 A supportive family dynamic that allows women the opportunity to prioritise their own self-care is important.





Top 3 emerging factors:

1

A lack of safety is a barrier for women to participate in individual outdoor sport activities such as running and cycling.

2

A supportive environment and team can be an effective facilitator of ongoing participation.

3

Trying a new sport with friends can help it to feel less intimidating.



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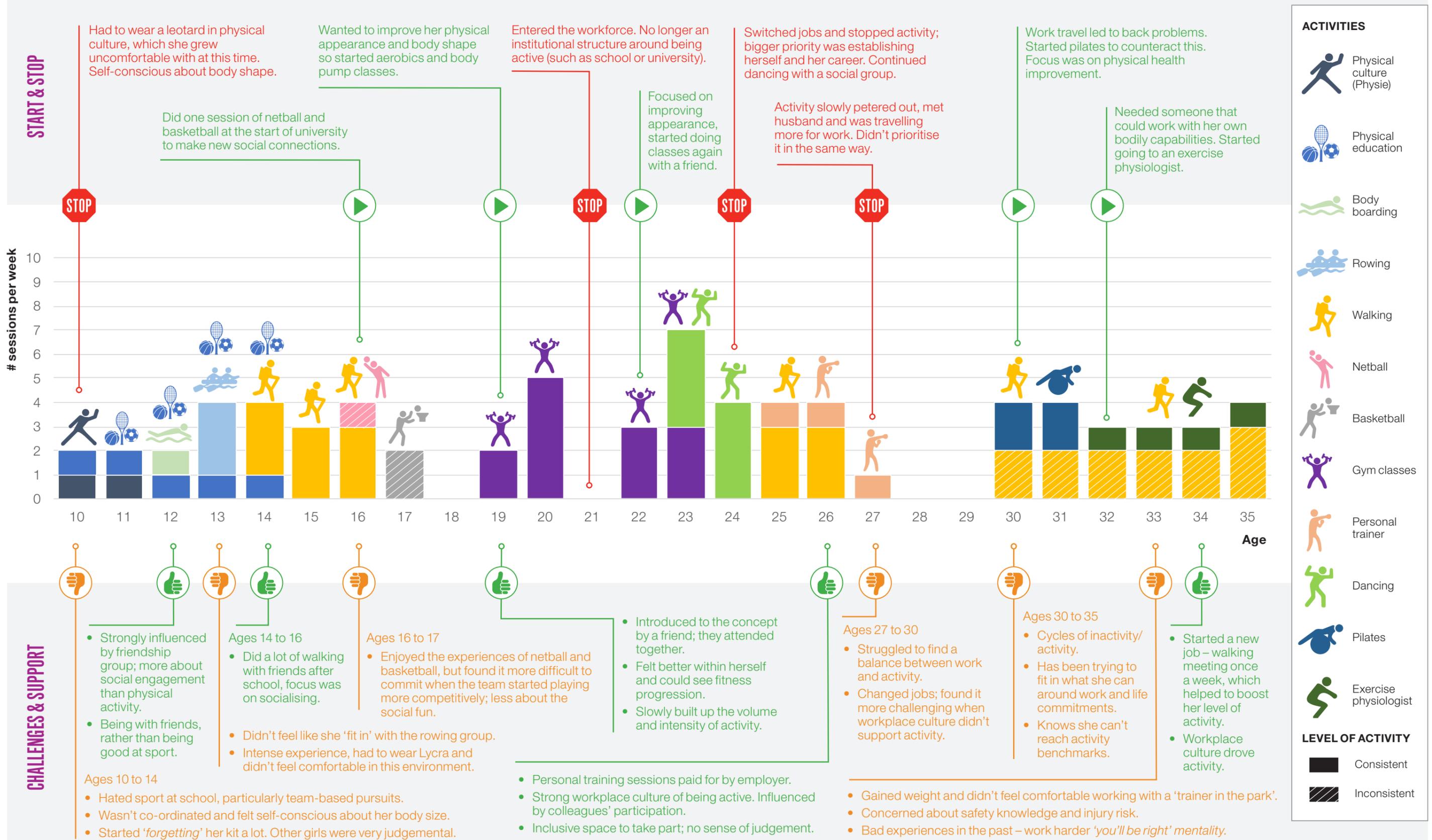
CENTRE FOR SPORT AND SOCIAL IMPACT



CHALLENGES & SUPPORT

- An ongoing challenge was the changing room environment and the body comparisons that can occur in these contexts.
- Was cast in male dance roles because of height and body shape, which negatively impacted her enjoyment of dance.
- In her home town the netball scene was unappealing because it was highly competitive.
- Additionally, her friends weren't particularly active or sport.
- Going to the gym was the social norm in her new job.
- Gym became an extension of the office social dynamic and attendance was encouraged.
- Only did this for a short period.
- She tried out for a television choir and was told she didn't have the 'look' producers were after.
- This spurred worries about her appearance and instigated negative drivers for activity.
- A return to hiking and walking was fostered by coming across 'Escaping Your Comfort Zone', which is a body positive walking group.
- The positive and celebratory group dynamic with a philosophy of inclusivity helped her get back into activity.
- Being very goal driven, the significant aim of hiking Mount Kilimanjaro drove increased training for the six-month lead-up period.
- Her experience with 'Escaping Your Comfort Zone' meant she felt able to set herself challenging goals.
- Gym staff struggled to comprehend 'atypical' gym goals for a woman in this age-bracket.
- They kept setting weight-loss programs instead of hiking conditioning training.
- Mental health benefits help drive ongoing participation, and new event-based goals help ramp-up both motivation and training frequency.

- Top 3 emerging factors:**
- Peer social norms concerning sport and exercise can positively or negatively influence participation.
 - Observing the various mental health benefits of sport and exercise can be an effective driver for continued participation.
 - Negative body comparisons with other women can be a demotivator and is also a harmful reason to be active.



Top 3 emerging factors:

- 1 Workplace culture can be a driver of physical activity engagement. Ripple effect of people around you being active every day. Employer backing and resources directed at this can further support women.
- 2 Social support and socialisation with others can be a very strong driver of being active, leading to more enjoyable and sustainable experiences.
- 3 Easier to be active when this is consistent and embedded in general life routines. More challenging to move through cycles of activity inconsistency. Importance of finding activities that can 'fit in' around work and other factors.



CHALLENGES & SUPPORT

Ages 10 to 18

- Coming from an active family exposed her to positive norms that shaped her early involvement with physical activity and led to her trying a wide range of different sports.
- Playing club basketball was enjoyable, but the added bonus was the friendships and social benefits; especially when school friends were located quite far from home.

Ages 19 to 24

- Exercise became more regular in the year leading up to her wedding.
- However, her dad passing away soon after the wedding impacted her relationship with activity.
- Didn't have the propensity to be active at this point.

Ages 25 to 26

- Having a new dog with a lot of energy and in need of activity helped kick start a regular walking regime.
- She also enjoyed the opportunity to be out in the natural environment.

Ages 27 to 32

- Having a dog to walk produces a sense of accountability, which has supported this regular walking routine.

Ages 33 to 36

- Finding a local physical activity group with a familiar demographic has proven a barrier to increasing activity.
- They are typically for older women or younger women with babies.

Ages 37 to 39

- There has been a desire to get back into more intense physical activity.
- However, having negative self-perceptions has created a fear of judgement, which makes it difficult to undertake new pursuits.
- Finding a local physical activity group she feels comfortable with has proven to be a barrier. They are typically aimed at older women or younger women with babies.

Top 3 emerging factors:

- Strong family norms associated with physical activity can positively influence early engagement and ongoing enjoyment.
- Having access to supportive groups and people can be a barrier to physical activity. Especially if women are seeking out opportunities with others.
- Social connections and a strong sense of belonging can help sustain women's engagement with physical activity.