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The Test of Failure

by Johnny Nguyen

If you google the word "failure" you'll find that it's used in all sorts of context. If you're not sensitive to failure's negative aura then you'll click on the links and explore its various forms. The first click takes you to wikipedia's grand revelation that failure is "the opposite of success," a definition so astutely simple that it seems only an affirmation to those who were born last week. You feel silly for even clicking on it.

Then you click on other links and discover that "failure" is surprisingly a popular word used liberally in oddly glorified ways – such as for company names like Failure Magazine and Failure Bikes, or for celebrated themes of blogs and as a common purpose for membership clubs. Even hackers, in a process called google bombing, maimed the White House website (featuring President Bush) so that it appeared at the top of the page when someone googled the word "failure."

Although failure seems like a cult hit on the google search engine, it is predominantly a feared element of life. Much greatness has been denied because of the fear of failure. Even with the strive for greatness, failure may still lurk; and, it will surely bite when one fails to plan, or when a plan goes bad, or when a plan was badly planned. Whatever the case, failure can only accompany effort, and by that account alone failure should be forgiven. It can, in fact, be invaluable, if handled correctly.

At the start of every new year, millions resolve to becoming fit and healthy, and by the end of January or the first week of February most begin to feel the breath of failure and ultimately give up on the idea of a two-piece bathing suit and settle for the single piece, while some change their vacation from the warm waters of St. Martin to a 2-week road trip to Kansas in a Winnebago. Handled incorrectly, failure can allow another year to slip by, bringing a few more unwanted pounds, flirting with the onset of diseases.

Failure due to careless planning is bad, but caused by unpredictable factors it is a tragedy. Whatever the reason for failure, it is most often inevitable and simply the scrapes and bruises of a well-lived life, and is as certain as its cousins, death and taxes. It has a way of breaking hearts and breaking down the will to continue. And it is here that failure tests us, by how we handle it, whether we're throwing in the towel or willing to look at it square in the eye and learn from it as though it were a berating professor. Failure calls for either the white flag or for resilience.

Sometimes you just have to fight and gut through another try, other times you have to step back and analyze what went wrong and how to fix it. FIT's very

own Danielle Durante's weightlifting performance at the American Open was such that she returned after two failed attempts and bravely gutted her way to a final lift that set a personal record in competition total. It was incredible to see: No thinking, no analyzing, no devising a back-up plan. She just went out and tried even harder. Coach Rob's failure at the Golden West weightlifting competition in 2007 when he suffered an injury caused him to stop his training, step back, analyze, and then return with a plan. He has put in some time with therapeutic exercises since, and is looking very strong now in his training.

There are more stories, of several handfuls of people who experienced some aspect of failure while they trained for marathons, triathlons and other sporting events. There are even more stories of people who failed in their efforts of becoming fit and healthy, and then they came back - in their own ways - to achieve their goals and maintain them long term.

As for the rest of this newsletter, Scott Kolasinski tells us in his article how to step back and analyze where failure in weight-loss nutrition might have occurred. Analisa Naldi in her article tells us how her perspective of little failures led to her big success in her workout challenge. Angelo Dela Cruz discusses what it means when the tissues in our bodies fail and how to manage them back to health. Herm Blancaflor shares his common-sense thoughts on when it's Ok to go to the gym when we're sick, and when it's not.

Failure in Fat Loss

by Scott Kolasinski

Whenever people venture out on a weight loss plan, they usually have a certain enthusiasm and focus that enables them to manage a number of temptations and challenges. They can go to a party and successfully deal with the social pressure of wining and dining, declining or controlling their intake of cocktail and desserts. These disciplined people are planning their meals, eating 5-6 times per day, weighing their food and they know just how many calories they are eating per day. They are "eating control."

Meanwhile, they are tearing it up in the gym. Their intensity is high and they are lifting more weight, losing body fat and feeling high on life as the fruit of all of the sacrifices is manifesting into one robust transformation in their physique. Their mind is in a good place: focused and determined to achieve their weight loss goals.

This type of transformation could take place over weeks or months, depending on the amount of weight that an individual loses. In short, the individual feels a sense of control in their life.

But what if the goal is met and an individual is not fully satisfied with the visual results? For example, George originally starts a lifestyle transformation wanting to get down to 14% body fat from 28%. He achieves his goal after 3 solid months of developing a healthier lifestyle,

but when he looks in the mirror all he can say to himself is, "This is it? Where's the lean physique I thought I was going to earn?" He tosses up his hands in the air and decides, "I've been at this for too long, I'm taking a break," and decides to go enjoy a meal he has avoided for the past 3 months.

Or what about another individual who has been committed for several months while trying to lose over 40 pounds and then life throws a curveball and suddenly gets overwhelming, feeling out of control. Something unforeseen and unplanned happens that is outside the realm of the norm, such as an elderly family member becoming dependent, a series of family and business parties piling up (like during the holidays) or a sudden death in the family. Take your pick, I know you get the idea: a lot of unusual stress enters the individual's life.

Many of us may give in to distractions and find comfort in food...and why not? For many it satisfies their need for love and comfort, or it may be an emotional trigger (depending on the individual, depending on the circumstances); it could be any number of reasons. When there is so much chaos in our lives, food is the one thing that gives us a sense of joy that we can control. For some of us, when we eat chocolate, our stress level temporarily eases. The same could be said for how some of us respond to alcohol: have a glass of wine (or two or three), and the "buzz" from the alcohol eases your mind, which lightens your stress level, which makes life feel good for the moment. Again, there can be a number of reasons a person would start on the road to a setback.

When people react, such as George or those that get blindsided with a sudden change in life's norm, have they failed? For George, he achieved his initial goal...he thought. Once he was there, he said heck with it.

For the other individual, some sort of organization in the chaos will allow some peace of mind. Food will allow their mind to ease while helping them gather their thoughts.

However, what appears initially to be a little bit of a "cheat" or "indulgence" may become a spark to the fire of bad dietary habits of the past. Has a person failed when they get sidetracked like this? Absolutely not, but a person may certainly feel like he has failed at the moment. This can then create feelings of guilt, depression, failure, and a poor self-esteem. If the individual does not lose their focus and still adheres to his initial goals, then that moment will mean nothing. I encourage everybody on a weight loss program to have an indulgence meal at least once per week.

But when that one meal becomes an excuse to indulge for the rest of the day, or the rest of the week, or when "things cool down in my world," then there is a problem. This means that a lifestyle change has not been accomplished and the individual only stuck to a temporary fix for weight loss. If this is the case, then this will definitely end in failure. We have heard the mantra many times: Diets will fail, lifestyle changes will not.

There are a number of strategies to try when a setback occurs:

- When things seem so out-of-control, change your perspective. Take pride in knowing you CAN control what food you eat. Circumstances do not dictate food intake. Self-discipline is what got you started; therefore, you have what it takes to get started again. You just need to recapture that motivation.

- Pamper yourself with a manicure, massage or pedicure. You may need some self-pampering to help clear your thoughts, and help you realize why you started your goals in the first place.

- Understand what happened. What started the setback in the first place? Stress (for example)? What was the source of stress? What can be done to rectify the problem? Talk to a friend.

- Take your kids to the park and walk with them.

When setbacks occur for those with an emotional eating history, you really do not want any extra responsibilities, such as weighing your food, in your life. The simplest way to live is to try to listen to your hunger signals only. You still do not need to overindulge. You can eat until you are satisfied, not full, even though you may find yourself eating more chocolate than you should, or you may be drinking more alcohol than usual, or both for that matter. If you listen to your hunger signals and take responsibility for your eating behavior by continuing to weigh yourself on a scale, you can minimize the damage that a setback may create.

Until next time....

Over 5,000 Burpees in 100 Days.

by Analisa Naldi

Paul Schoemaker, CEO of consulting firm Decision Strategies International Inc., says, "People may fear failure, but they fear the consequences of it even more." This statement could not have illustrated my motivation any clearer. Once I'd committed to the burpee challenge, had a partner to complete it with, and a gym full of co-workers, clients, and friends "supervising," there was no room for failure. Not only would I let myself down if I stopped along the way, but everybody else would know!

One hundred consecutive days of burpees. Each day we were to complete one more burpee than the previous day, for a total of 100 on day 100. That was the challenge. We (Jimmy and I) were challenged on day 15. So, in order to catch up, we completed 15, 14, 13, and all the way to 1 (for 120 total), right after our regular workouts, on December 28, 2007.

To be honest, I hate burpees. They are not a movement I'm very strong or efficient at, so from the beginning I was dreading the remaining 85 days. I took it as the chance to prove that with a consistent, progressive increase in volume, strength and skill execution could both improve. I also took it as a personal challenge not to

miss one day until the 100th day. (If you miss one day, you practically have to double up the following day; miss several days and you screw yourself to burpee hell.)

I began to look at each day of completion as a miniature success. We wrote the date and number of burpees completed each day on a whiteboard in the weight room, updating our totals each day. Having our progress publicly charted added to the motivation to finish. How motivated? On day 38, (a Sunday), I was sick, running a fever, and refused to miss a day, so I completed all 38 burpees, at my house, in sets of two. On day 77, we had a heavy snatch, clean and jerk, and squat session, in which I don't even know how my legs were functioning afterwards. But, the burpees were completed, in sets of 7, 8, 9....whatever I could get out of my body. Each and every time my hands hit the floor was considered a mini-success for me.

Each workout became another success. During the 30s, 40s, and early 50s, I constantly battled failure. What did I consider my failures here? I had to touch my chest to the floor on every single rep or it didn't count. Each push-up had to be full range of motion or it didn't count. This added a whole new level of success and failure to the project. Not only was the focus on successfully completing the project (all 100 days), but now each repetition had to be "successfully" completed as well.

The funniest part of the additional "level" of failure and success added to the project was that I added it myself. I decided that if I were going to be successful at the end, I had to do every little part of the project correctly. That meant, forcing myself to the verge of muscular and mental "failure" in order to finish all of the burpees correctly on a given day. Why go through the additional mental and physical anguish of little "failures" just to achieve the same success?

Here's why. Instead of viewing failure as something that I was working to avoid, I turned each potential failure in to a step closer to my ultimate objective. Richard Fenton, author of "Go for No!" wrote, "Success is the destination. Failure is how you get there." With each failed burpee, each rep that wasn't good enough, I was forced to complete more, in turn getting stronger, more determined, and more focused to do them correctly so as to not have to repeat them! With each day, the increased muscle soreness, the monotony of the movement, I was determined to not be beaten by a movement that I'd chosen to conquer.

I found that I developed the same mental state that I get when I failed a lift in Olympic-style weightlifting. You step up to the bar, focused, having decided that you're going to execute and not be beaten by the bar. If you fail and miss the lift, you can choose to take it again or you can admit defeat and move on. I tend to get mad, focus more, and always step back up to the bar. That's my competitive nature. That's my refusal to fail. That's me fighting to keep an open mind and know that with each failed attempt I am gaining strength of mind and body. This process has taught me that I am more competitive with myself than anything else.

In the beginning I quoted that people fear the consequences of failure more than the actual failure itself, thus motivation can stem from fear. Ask me on day 30, day 44, or even day 67, and I would've agreed, answered that there was no turning back now because everybody would see that we didn't finish! As we got into the higher volume days, I realized that the only people paying attention to the recorded numbers on the whiteboard, the only people with high expectations, the only people not accepting failure, were ourselves! The only person that couldn't accept failure was I.

The most important take-home message is to step up each day, open your mind, and know that failure is essential to success. Regardless of the type of success that you're motivated by and for whom you're doing it, understand that failure lights a fire within. Life is a series of failures, fights, and successes. Attack each day as such.

Count back from 100 burpees? Anyone? Anyone?

Top 5 Burpee Execution Locations:

1. Green Street, San Francisco: completed on New Year's Eve, in a fabulous 70's dress and black heels (18).
2. Naldi Acres, Livingston: completed 5 burpees in every room of my parents' house, including bathrooms, in order to avoid the boredom (55).
3. Olema Farm House, Pt. Reyes: completed in farmhouse suite, Sunday morning, just before green tea and quality time (59).
4. Hard Rock Hotel, San Diego: completed on the 5th floor, in the hallway, next to rockin' guitar signed by Van Morrison (83).
5. Pet-Co Park, San Diego: completed in the park/recreation area in center field of this beautiful MLB park (85).

FIT Client of the Month, April 2008

Name: Joe Fusco

Age: 50

FIT Member Since: 7/30/2001

Goal: Stay fit and healthy

Results: Still biking and enjoying life

Likes: Boxing, abs, abs, abs and bans. Also cappuciono and my "sweetie."

Dislikes: The end of the session, traffic, slow cars in the fast lane.

Best 500 Meter Row: 1:43

Best Chin-ups: 12 strict reps

Key to Success, in Joe's words: Shaun's work on rehabbing my knees has been very helpful. This has

allowed me to stay active.

In Shaun's words: Joe has an amazing attitude. He has worked through ACL surgery three times. He wants to work hard and take on almost anything. I really think his passion for life, friends and family help to keep him focused on staying healthy so he can enjoy it all. Joe works hard at every session and never complains. He is pretty much the ideal client.

FIT Kid Spotlight, April 2008

Name: Andrew "Shaggy" Rosen

Age: 13

School currently attending: BLACH

Date you started working out at FIT? August 2007

Why did you start working out at FIT? To get stronger .

What is your proudest moment at FIT? When Rob said I asked too many questions...ha ha!

What is your favorite exercise or movement at FIT? Weightlifting .

What is one thing you've learned from working out at FIT? Never give up!

What advice would you give future FIT TEENS? Work hard and you'll achieve your goals.

Shaggy has come a long way since his first day at FIT. Not only has his hard work paid off and he's now able to execute highly demanding exercises (squats, clean and jerks, snatch, deadlift), but his work ethic has also improved. He doesn't question anything. He says things like: "Okay coach...yes coach...sure coach." Andrew is a key part of our afternoon program and, aside from the fact that he absolutely loves working with Coach Rob, he is an excellent example for our younger FIT KIDS!

Tissue Failure: The Perfect Antidote for Sprains and Strains

by Angelo dela Cruz

Sprains and strains would most likely be the most common injury that we have all faced. They can dampen our fitness goals and affect our work productivity and the way we live our everyday lives. A sprained ankle can cause a serious limp, slow down our mobility and if not taken care of properly, lead to lasting negative consequences.

The good news is that by gaining some basic knowledge, we can better equip ourselves to deal with sprains and strains more easily, minimize their effect on our lives and prevent possible future frustrations.

What Is a Sprain or Strain?

A sprain involves overstretching or tearing of the ligaments or joint capsule that connect a bone to another bone. When tearing happens to muscle or tendons, it's called a strain. Often times, sprains and strains occur together. Just like rubber bands, ligament, muscle and tendon fibers can stretch to a certain point and then return to normal resting length.

Sprains and strains occur when these fibers stretch excessively exceeding their maximum elastic capability. The tissue fibers then tear or remain incapable of returning to their normal resting length. The speed and force of overstretching will determine the level of damage. Ligaments and tendons may also be injured gradually over time due to repetitive and overuse stresses leading to tendonitis, such as golfer's or tennis elbow.

Common Sprains:

- ankle
- knee
- wrist

Common Strains

- hamstring
- low back
- shoulder rotator cuff

What to Look For:

It is important to seek medical attention immediately if a loud, painful "pop" was heard during injury, if severe swelling is present, or if there is severe loss of function or muscle weakness (the joint feels as if it's going to "give out").

Minor sprains and strains typically involve slight pain, sometimes reported as a "twinge" with slight muscle or joint tightness and a feeling that you can continue with activity (although not necessarily the best thing to do). More moderate and severe cases involve a higher level of pain, tightness/ stiffness, swelling and discoloration, tenderness to touch around the injury site, and inability to continue with activity.

Phases of Inflammation and Repair

Inflammation follows shortly after injury and is your body's way of beginning the healing process. The inflammatory response involves pain, swelling, redness, heat, and decreased function of the affected muscle or joint. Although necessary for healing, inflammation can be "overactive." Prolonged or severe swelling is detrimental because it can "choke off" oxygen and nutrients to the injured area and surrounding healthy cells.

Acute inflammation lasts approximately 1 to 6 days after injury. This is the most delicate phase of the process and the level of care taken at this phase will determine the speed and effectiveness of recovery. As the inflammation settles, the injury site will undergo regeneration and

repair lasting from 3 to 8 weeks. The end of the repair phase is when moderate to almost full activity might be resumed. (You might notice that 3 to 8 weeks is a lot longer than most of us would like to wait.) After the repair phase, the body will work to remodel or reshape the area for 2 months to 2 years afterwards.

Basically, the injured area is like a construction site and during these stages of inflammation and repair it becomes imperative to provide elimination of waste products and increase the flow of repair materials (i.e. specialized cells, oxygen, nutrients) into the injury site.

If not taken care of properly, we unnecessarily risk

- Increased inflammation
- Further injury
- More pain
- Excessive atrophy and deconditioning
- Excessive adhesions and decreased range of motion
- Chronic injury and secondary compensations affecting other parts of the body

All of these would lead to a much longer and more difficult recovery time and more time away from doing the things we like to do.

What to Do for Fast Recovery

1) Discontinue the activity that caused the injury and limit movements that cause pain, especially during the acute phase of injury. With minor strains and sprains that don't seem like "a big deal" at that moment, continuing activity increases the risk of causing a more severe injury.

2) Determine if you need medical attention. If any severe symptoms are present such as those mentioned in the "What to Look For" section, get professional help.

3) Protect the injured area and prevent further damage. These are the primary goals during the acute phase of injury. The earlier these steps are taken, the better the outcome. Remember the acronym R-I-C-E + Move:

- Rest – This means to avoid painful movements as much as possible. The use of crutches or other or a sling may be helpful.
- Ice – Apply ice as soon as you can to reduce inflammation. Do not apply ice directly to the skin. A thin towel may be used or Ziploc bag with a bit of water. A bag of frozen corn or peas may be used if you've used all of the ice for margaritas. It's best to ice the injured area for 15-20 minutes and then wait at least an hour to repeat as necessary.
- Compression – A pressure bandage may be used to also reduce inflammation. It is important not to wrap the area too tightly that blood flow is cut off. There should be no increased pain or throbbing or tingly sensations. Remove the bandage every 2-4 hours to allow proper circulation and reapply if necessary.
- Elevation – This will also aid in decreasing inflammation and increase venous blood flow away from the affected

area. If possible, it is recommended that the injury site be elevated to about 12 inches above the heart.

- Movement – Begin moving in slow, pain-free ranges of motion as soon as possible. By doing this, you will be flushing the injured area of waste products and speed healing and repair.

* If there is no sign of improvement in a day or two following this protocol, seek help from a health care provider.

How Massage Can Turbo Boost Your Progress

Orthopedic massage and bodywork is specifically designed to treat the common pain and dysfunctions that people experience, including sprains and strains. In conjunction to the above protocol, the recovery process will be dramatically improved for new injuries and the negative consequences greatly minimized. Orthopedic massage can also be used to clean up and "erase" old injuries to maximize function and performance of the entire body.

Specially applied massage techniques will stimulate healthy cell production, encourage proper alignment of healing tissues, and aid in faster remodeling of the injured site. You will also be guided in isometric contractions and gentle movements that you can do anywhere at any time to build more momentum towards quicker healing.

You may also use orthopedic bodywork to help you prevent injury and promote your body's structural balance and integrity. By identifying possible problem areas and keeping those tissues more pliable and youthful, your body will be more resilient to damage. In addition, the treatment session will help counter the stressful effects of pain by inducing a healing physiologic environment for the body and mind.

Angelo dela Cruz
Orthopedic Bodywork Specialist
<http://www.kineticbodywork.com>

Pushing Through Illness with Common Sense

By Herm Blancaflor

When are you too sick to go to the gym? I have often asked myself this question. Not only is it a question of being well enough versus doing more damage to an already compromised immune system, but it should equally be held in the context of how it will affect those who are in the gym at the same time, sharing the same air and equipment. It is out of consideration that the decision needs to be made. You should ensure that you are not likely to be contagious and give the ominous gift of viral/bacterial infection.

If you've got a phlegm-producing cough that won't go away, the best thing you can do for yourself is to go to your general practitioner. It sounds simple, but it's amazing how many of us simply do not go when it's the fastest way to clear an illness and get back to progressing at the gym.

Or at the onset of a cold ("I'm fighting a little something," as is often said), some of us feel that a little workout is exactly what we need to feel better. While we might feel better after the workout, that can often be a temporary feeling, a kind of runner's high, that might ultimately intensify or prolong the illness. We should instead consider the overall affect that exercise has on the weaken immune system: Exercise utilizes resources that should instead go to recovery.

What if you know you are on the mend, yet that stubborn cough still wants to enjoy the workouts with you? As a courtesy to others, you should be AND appear to be well enough, meaning you don't want to be hacking up a lung during the course of your workouts. It may be best to take the opportunity to work out on your own, enjoying the weather outside of the gym. It doesn't need to be complex... remember, you should be easing back into the groove! Not only will you save others the worry of catching something, but you will benefit from going at your own pace during a non-gym related workout by not pushing your limits and going harder than you should during the recovery process.

Once you've determined that you are ready to step back into the gym, it's a good idea to inform others of your previous condition, as appropriate. Greet with the newly en vogue "fist bump", and not by shaking hands. Bring a couple of tissues in your pocket, just in case. Hand sanitizer goes a long way. And, whether you're sick or not, a courteous wipe down of the equipment is always appreciated by everyone!

Hopefully there will not be a next time you're too sick to go to the gym, but if there is, please use your best judgment as to whether or not you should go. Will others be at risk in catching your illness, and, most importantly, will you put a bigger dent into an already compromised immune system?

For more information regarding FIT:
Visit - www.focusedtrainers.com
Call - 650-947-9831