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Rethinking Weight Loss

By Johnny Nguyen

Exercise might not result in weight loss. If this is hard to swallow, then consider this:

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) reveals that the rate of exercise participation has increased over the past couple of decades. The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) reports that the number of overweight Americans also increased through the same period. Taking these two data at face value, what we have is, while more people are exercising, more people are getting fat.



OK, so this is a correlation and not cause-effect. But consider the empirical evidence:

For every inspiring story about someone's successful weight loss through exercise, there are dozens—if not hundreds—who commit equal time and effort to exercise but fail to demonstrate any appreciable weight loss. It partially explains why millions resolve to exercise at the beginning of every year yet quit several months later. It also explains why, after years of exercising, most participants are still overweight.

Perhaps some people fail to exercise with adequate intensity to cause cellular changes; but even if exercise is intense and cellular changes occur, they often fail to meet weight loss goals or aesthetic expectation. Morphologically, a shift in body composition occurs with exercise—an exchange of some fat for some muscle. But it often transpires little to no movement on the scale. (Fitness trainers tend to overextend this concept to sooth their disappointed clients who just stepped off the scale.) Some people even gain fat along with muscle—increasing overall body weight.

THE FALSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXERCISE AND WEIGHT LOSS

So why is it then that we're so dead-set to believe exercise drops the pounds? There are a few explanations.

The first explanation is the over-simplification of energy balance: If we expend more calories than we consume, then this results in a negative energy balance that leads to weight loss. This sounds reasonable, if only the body were a calorimetric chamber. But it's not. The body is a complicated, dynamic biological machine with feedback mechanisms that fight tooth and nail to retain homeostasis—the body's status quo. The body is not some black box into which calories fill and out of which calories leave. Therefore it's far too simple to use exercise as a means to create a negative energy balance for weight loss. Through complex biological responses, we'll eventually eat more calories that negate the deficit. (Though studies show that a single bout of exercise doesn't trigger hunger within forty-eight hours, continuous exercise will eventually make us hungry. This fact means that, when we burn calories, we'll most likely refill our bodies with more calories through exercise-induced hunger. It's hormonally based; remember homeostasis.)

Exercise and fitness is a nearly 20 billion-dollar industry—it has every financial incentive to make us believe that exercise is the answer to the greatest motivation we have for participation: weight loss. The exercise world, both real and virtual, floods with this exercise-weight-loss relationship, yet no single study has definitively proven that exercise causes weight loss. The medical community tells us that exercise is good for our health, but it cannot claim that it causes weight loss.

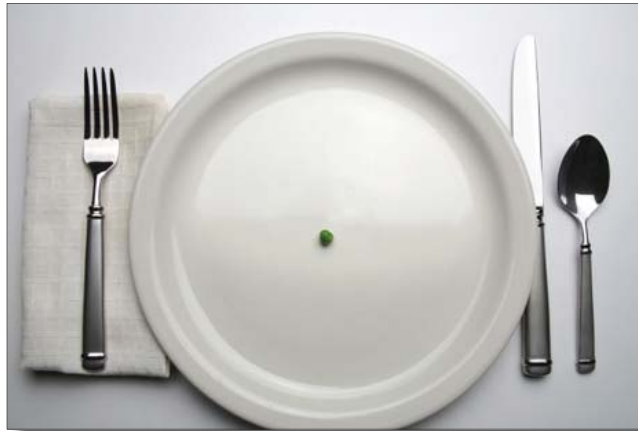
And exercise seems for most people to be an easy answer to—and a tangible grip on—the complex problem of weight loss. If the attitude is right, you simply need to get off your derriere and exercise. It's a tidy solution: Sweat and burn off the calories.



Have some fat to lose? Exercise. So we sweat and after a while we drop a little body weight, but unfortunately it's often nothing worth celebrating. So, what do we do?

DIET

In conjunction with exercise, we cut calories. This causes the scale to move. But we



still have more to lose, so we cut more calories. But not enough weight comes off, so we cut more calories. How far must we cut calories? We just tripped the hunger alarm and it's deafening. From the hypo-caloric intake we just sent our T3 thyroid hormone into the grave and the body refuses to burn anymore fat. Now we become infatuated with food and our brain floods with the thought of eating, eating, eating, so we attempt to trick

the body by chewing gum, drinking tea, and adding artificial, no-calorie sweetener into water. We're now like heroin junkies on massive methadone. We fall off the wagon, over and over.

But, for weight loss, total calories consumed matters nonetheless. We need to eat fewer calories. However, this alone is a solution way too simple to a problem much more complex, and the question must be asked: What is it that makes people since the 70s so susceptible to the hunger and overeating that earlier generations did not experience? Yes, there is now a surplus of food supply, but did we suddenly become mindlessly gluttonous? Earlier generations of people certainly had their opportunity to overeat, but records show that they mostly were not gripped by constant hunger and gluttony. What was it?

HUNGER, A NEW EPIDEMIC?

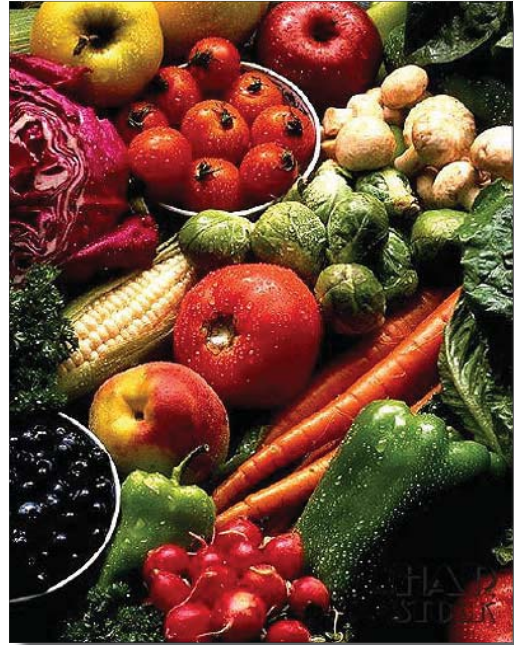
Many investigators and thinkers are pointing the finger at excessive consumption of starchy and processed carbohydrates. This macronutrient in sufficient quantity stimulates the pancreas to produce insulin, and when this happens chronically and excessively, a complex chain of cellular events leads to inefficient utilization of nutrients, imbalanced blood sugar levels, and ultimately to diminished fat utilization and increased fat storage. This also produces constant hunger.

Earlier generations, according to records, ate mostly farm-based vegetables, fruits and quality meats, which did not stimulate excessive insulin and therefore freed them from constant hunger. Hunger, it would appear, is a relatively new epidemic. We suddenly have a whole generation obsessed with suppressing hunger, drug industry making billions from our failure to stop eating, and food companies mass-marketing low calorie foods. If simply reducing calories was key, then why do millions yo-yo and fail? If exercising was enough for weight loss, then why do we still get fat?

Perhaps it is time we reevaluate the content and quality of the calories we eat. Maybe our ancestors were unintentionally right in eating mostly vegetable, fresh fruits and quality meats, and kept their blood sugar in check, their insulin under control, and their hunger coordinated with the minimum needs for energy and sustenance.

We need to eat fewer calories, but we also need to make eating fewer calories sustainable by not sending ourselves into a state of constant hunger.

Perhaps it's time to rethink our weight loss strategy.



Your Vote Counts!

By Jen Pleimann

As many of you know, I entered FITBuddies into the Intuit Small Business United Grant Competition. Thanks to your help in the first round, I have won \$5,000 and am a Finalist in the competition. Help me win up to \$25,000 in small business grants by viewing and rating my video story:

<http://community.intuit.com/contests/aTvLzIA8eqllvkab8P4pmk>

If I win, I plan to use the money to help expand FITBuddies, a program that helps individuals with mental disabilities. Please act soon - the deadline is May 31.

Instructions to Vote:

1) Follow the link to view my video story: FITBuddies Video. <http://community.intuit.com/contests/aTvLzIA8eqllvkab8P4pmk>

2) Click on INSPIRING, USEFUL or FUNNY.

3) It will then take you to a QUICK login. If you are having trouble logging in, view the demo: <http://blip.tv/file/2101410>

4) After logging in, you can then vote on all three categories: "Inspiring, Useful and Funny."

Please forward on to your family and friends. Thank you for your time and support!

Best Regards,
Jen Pleimann
Jen@focusedtrainers.com

The Power of Facebook for Training

By Scott Kolasinski

The following is an actual Facebook-email conversation I had with my cousin, Jim, during April. He had just informed me that he had finished a half-marathon. FYI, I do not like to run on my own – it's just not my thing. Jim is a former recreational basketball player, but he, as most of this country's lay-fitness population, does not seem to understand the importance of strength training for overall health and even for running a half-marathon. Here's our chat as it was:

Scott:

Why in the hell would you ever want to do any thing of a running manner, especially a half-marathon?

Jim:

Run to live, live to run!! Finished my 4th half marathon.



Have done one full marathon (2007).

Scott:

Run to live...? Run to live a shorter life. If you want, I can expand on that one. But more importantly, what happened to playing hoops?

Jim:

So you are anti-running? Does this mean you are against cardio fitness? You must believe in moderation. I would love to hear your views on distance running.....

Scott:

Ahh, topics I enjoy talking about: cardio fitness and distance running. Well, I'll try to be brief because I could literally write a book on the topic.

In short, cardio fitness is great; but distance running is unhealthy. "Moderation"? Of what, cardio? What does "cardio" mean to you? What about being "fit", what's that?

I'm not trying to come off as being a smart aleck, but I hope you understand why I asked these questions after I give you my answer.

There is a way of developing cardio fitness in the healthiest manner. How do you define "distance running" for you - 5K, 10K, 25K, 50K or when do you think you're participating in "distance running"?

If you'd answer those quick questions, then I'd be better able to answer your question.

Scott:

I hope I didn't lose you with my questions.

Jim:

Nada. Nope. Definitely not. You da'man!

Scott:

I tell clients that I truly do not like running unless it is with a ball of some sort (b-ball, baseball, football, etc.), and even then, those sports are merely intervals of sprinting of various intensities. I like INTENSE training (ideally, less than 20 minutes), but not necessarily what is known as interval training. For example, to get an idea of what I mean, try this simple workout at the gym or in your home: 5 pull-ups, 10 push-ups and 15 squats; do as many rounds as you can in 20 minutes...see if you can get 15 rounds.

That workout will get your heart rate up for 20 minutes, but because it has an aspect of resistance training to it as its form of "cardio", this is more applicable and beneficial for us hormonally and physiologically versus 20 minutes on the treadmill. You will make yourself stronger, improve bone mineral density, muscle mass, burn more calories, more fat as fuel for hours later, increase your anaerobic threshold, VO2max while making yourself more powerful (if you're moving fast) following this workout versus running, swimming or biking continuously.



Endurance activities do not make us stronger; they make us weaker by utilizing muscle protein as energy. They have no applicability to handling any of life's emergencies and they create a hormonal environment that is similar to elderly sedentary people. In short, any benefit endurance training or distance training provides, strength training does it for overall health and it does it better. But it is not true vice versa. The research is available to support my statements, but I won't bore you with that.

Now, I realize it's difficult to isolate one's exercise program that could create such havoc, because we know how diet and lifestyle affect an individual. But following a workout, resistance trained athletes that lift in this manner and even

the typical strength athlete are more fit overall than distance athletes, and the country would benefit more if they would do primarily strength training instead of endurance training if they wanted to improve their health and longevity.

Jim:

Interesting perspective.

All training is, at its heart, fairly simple. To paraphrase a Roy Benson talk I saw... There's 2 ways to get better: Run a lot and run faster. The details and how you balance the 2, well that's the trick...

Scott:

The question is, then, what are you trying to get better at? Running? Health? Cholesterol? What are your goals?

Jim:

What is a good balance of running and strength training?

I've run 5-6 half marathons with shorter race training runs and now I'm thinking of training for the Columbus marathon in 6 months. According to my training plan I have 2 short runs, 1 long run, 1 day alternating between Fartleks and x training, 2 rest days, and 1 recovery.

Is there any reason I couldn't/shouldn't add strength to the short run days?

Scott:

Ok, if you're training for a running event (and you enjoy running), yep, you should be running, but you're correct in that you should also be doing strength training - ideally, Olympic weightlifting (OWL).

All of our triathletes and marathoners here do OWL. They report that it's what "saves your joints". Also, it will make you more powerful. The more power you have per stride, the more ground you will cover. I realize that finding a gym or rec center that has or allows OWL or knowledgeable coaches is limited.

So, the alternatives are plyometrics and heavy strength training, with 3-5 reps and 4-6 sets, such as back squats, front squats, deadlifts, stiff-legged deadlifts, push presses and goodmornings. Some upper body work is okay, but you certainly do not want any sort of "extra" upper body weight.

Which body is best for health and performance?



Photo from TheBetterWeigh.com

Your combination of running and heavy lifting will not be enough to make you larger, but it will give your body a reason to retain muscle versus using it more as fuel for your runs. That's what you want besides the performance benefits.

Do your weight training and plyometrics early with the goal of increasing your 1 Rep Max (the amount of weight that you can move for one rep) more, then taper it down to just OWL or some plyometrics the closer you get to your actual race day, with the goal of retaining as much strength as you can and being as powerful as you can.

He never did say thank you...Heartless Bastard...or maybe I never helped in the first place. Oh well, that's family.

FIT Client of the Month, May 09

Name:

Stephanie Tilenius

FIT Member Since:

off and on since 2004 (between having kids)

Goals: Get FIT and lose weight

Goals for 2009

- lose another 10 lbs
- Run a 9 minute mile
- 20 Push Ups successively
- 1 minute plank hold



Results: I did 150 squats, 50 pull-ups and 100 real push-ups in 20-minutes the other day, feeling a LOT stronger after having a herniated disc and sciatica after my 2nd child was born... I am also training to compete in my first triathlon later this summer.

Likes: Plank Holds and Push ups, just kidding.

Dislikes: getting up at the crack of dawn.

Keys to Success: (in the words of the client) Its all in the mind, we are capable of much more than we think we are...push yourself and you will be surprised.

Keys to success: (in the words of Danielle) Stephanie is very dedicated to her life: her successful job, being a great mom/wife, and working out early in the morning twice (+) a week at FIT. Stephanie's strength and cardiovascular fitness has improved immensely over the last year. Stephanie's workouts incorporate: Olympic weightlifting, squatting, pulling (jumping pull-ups), pushing (strict push ups), interval training, etc. Not only has her physical fitness improved, her back pain has subsided. Stephanie is on a mission to obtain her 2009 goals and with her incredible work ethic it will be accomplished. Thank you for all you hard work and dedication!

Get A Body Like A Sports Car

By Angelo De La Cruz

Most of us are pretty good at taking our cars in to get regular maintenance. Why do we do this? Because if we didn't, it would be a sure bet we'd end up kaput on the side of a road so much sooner than we'd like.

Now let me ask you this: Have you ever brought your body in for a tune-up? I'm not talking about a routine check-up at your doctor's office, but an actual tune-up where

your body is worked on to bring it towards greater capacities of function.

“Wow. I didn’t know that this exists!” you say? Yes it does, and you can be one of the few that takes advantage of this. Unfortunately, most Americans take better care of their cars than their own bodies. We at FIT know that you have chosen to take your health to higher levels and are happy to serve you on your journey.



As we hit life’s inevitable bumps in the road, our bodies go through wear and tear and accumulate “engine build up” that degrades our body’s performance and makes us more susceptible to problems. This “engine build up” takes the form of scarring, muscle tightness, and imbalances in our neuromuscular system, the engine of our bodies. These can contribute to premature aging and joint degeneration and predispose us to injuries. The bad part is that much of this stays hidden because most people aren’t aware of them and most health care professionals don’t look for them until maybe an injury or problem occurs.

The good news is that through advanced massage and bodywork you can clear away these distortions throughout your entire body and decrease the chances of problems down the road. The right bodywork therapist can help you identify issues that you may not be aware of and help get rid of old injuries or surgeries that are slowing you down.

Depending on the demand that you put on your body and any current issues that you may have, the frequency of these tune-ups can vary from every week to every month. Using this as part of your healthy lifestyle can keep you revved up and running for a long, high performance life.

Note: Mention this article and get the “Tune-Up Special”

Buy two (2) 50-minute bodywork sessions with Angelo and get the 3rd one FREE.

(\$150 off a 3-session package)

Offer expires June 30, 2009

All sessions must be used by July 30, 2009

www.proactivebodytherapy.com

A SMART Start

By Analisa Naldi

What does it take to convince you to put your health and body first? What triggers the change in behavior that creates an increased awareness of exercise and nutrition within your day? What are your personal core values? What do you want for your life? How do you want to live your life?

These questions were prompted by a group of ladies that I am fortunate enough to work with on a regular basis. They are all individually searching for ways to jump-start their bodies, their goals, and make some positive improvements to their already chaotic, active lifestyles. This was just prior to the start of spring, so the feelings of “spring cleaning, re-setting, and renewal” were abundant around the gym.

Our conversation began with me asking them what they felt their biggest deterrents were. The majority response was, “My family comes first, my work comes next, and the remainder of the time I have will hopefully be dedicated to my body or something that I enjoy doing.”

Next question, “What would it take for you to put yourself first? How can we start an experiment, an exercise anything that will be realistic and a no-fail program for the next three months, until the start of summer?” They all had different answers that ranged from needing to be held accountable, to menu planning, to daily check-ins, etc. These are not out of the ordinary requests, nor are they difficult to manage. However, they all had one thing in common; they didn’t have clarity as to what they really wanted to accomplish.

Hence, we started with what they passionate about. One said that she’d like to lose some body fat and have her clothes fit her a looser. Another admitted to getting very little sleep and wanted to figure out how to get to bed earlier on a consistent basis. One of the most motivating and unique goals was one woman deciding to put herself first while still taking care of her family.

Once each had established what was most important to them, whether it be weight management, getting more sleep, or balancing out life activities, the next step was goal setting. We decided to get SMART. SMART is an abbreviation for: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Each goal has to be clear and specific, to ensure that the path makes sense. If you can’t measure it, then how do you know when you have achieved it? In determining your goals, make sure that they are actually attainable and realistic, (i.e. if your ultimate goal is to win the ESPN hot dog championships and you are a vegetarian, your chances have just shrunk considerably). Finally, make it timely. Set a deadline, goal date, or specific time to have your goal accomplished by. Now, we’ve established a SMART start to our plan.

Finally, before we could get started, we had to determine the most effective methods of accountability and communication. Since their goals were all individual, we decided that a weekly email update from each individual with their personal progress (specifics) along with a personal victory each week was to be included. We decided to focus each week on what types of exercise and nutrition decisions made each feel victorious each week. Highlighting their victories during the journey has helped keep the focus positive and moving forward.

Does this mean that there are no consequences for poor decision days or breakdowns in the path towards the goal? Rather than consequences, we identify the source of the breakdown and a specific plan of attack for the following week, just in case it occurs again. For example, there a lot of days when the kids have schedules that require mom to drive all over the place, be in multiple locations within a short amount of time, leaving little or no time to plan for meals, let alone exercise. Therefore, we set up quick “grab and go” snack options, mini-exercise routines that can be performed anywhere at a high intensity or without any additional equipment, so that their exercise and nutrition needs are more likely to be met.

Now, this brings us to today. We are over one-third of the way to our “91 days to summer” experiment and thus far we have celebrated getting to bed by 11:00 p.m. versus 1:30 a.m. cooking 5 or 6 nights per week versus 2 or 3, helping the kids make their own lunches while preparing snacks for the week, and making time for additional workouts on the weekdays instead of filling time with other household duties.

The journey is nowhere near over. It is still in the beginning stages. However, the SMART has helped establish specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals. They are still in a family-based experiment that includes support, celebrations, and reflection.

What are you passionate about? What is the trigger for your SMART Start?

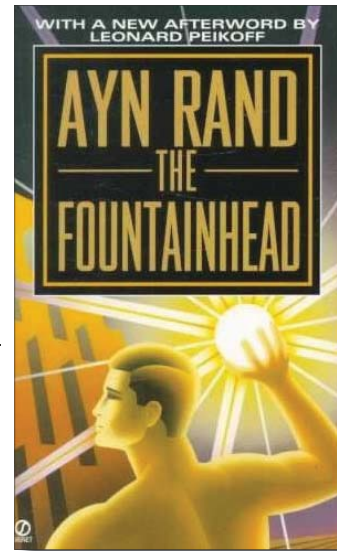
FIT Book of the Month

The Fountainhead

By Ayn Rand

A classic whose philosophy is staying true to one's belief despite worldly influence, ringing loudly with FIT's own philosophy of staying true to exercise practicality despite overwhelming fads and trends.

http://www.amazon.com/Fountainhead-Ayn-Rand/dp/B001IAO2QE/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1242768913&sr=8-2



Steak & Potato Kebabs with Creamy Cilantro Sauce

Courtesy of Eating Well, May/June, 2009

Active Time: 40 minutes

Total: 40 minutes

Equipment Needed: Eight 10-12-inch skewers (*if using bamboo, soak in water prior to using so they don't catch on fire)

Serve with: Fresh green salad, black beans, and/or brown Spanish rice

Ingredients:

1/2c packed fresh cilantro leaves, minced

2 tbsp red-wine vinegar or cider vinegar

2 tbsp reduced-fat sour cream (can substitute FAGE 2% or 0% greek yogurt)

1 small clove garlic, minced

1 tsp chile powder

1/2 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp salt, divided

8 new or baby red potatoes

1 1/4 lbs strip steak trimmed and cut into 1 1/2 in pieces (can substitute meat of choice)

2 poblano peppers or 1 large green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 large sweet onion, cut into 1-inch chunks

1. Combine cilantro, vinegar, sour cream (or yogurt), garlic, chile powder, cumin, and 1/4 tsp salt in a small bowl. Set aside.

2. Preheat grill to high (or ensure coals beneath grill are hot enough if cooking over charcoal)

3. Place potatoes in a pot of boiling water and let cook for 3-5 minutes, until just tender when pierced with a fork.

4. Toss the potatoes, steak and pepper pieces with oil and the remaining 1/4 tsp salt in a large bowl. Thread the potatoes, steak, peppers and onion chunks onto 8 skewers. Grill, turning once or twice, until steak reaches desired "doneness", approximately 6 minutes for medium. Serve the kebabs with reserved sauce.

Makes: 4 servings

Cost per serving: under \$4.50

Per Serving: 271 calories, 9g Fat (varies with meat selection), 17g Carbohydrate (varies with meat selection), 30g Protein (varies with meat selection).

Enjoy!

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