

Special Report:

**5 Commonly Overlooked Obstacles that will
Prevent You from Achieving your Fitness Goals**

It's been said that we live in paradoxical times. This statement might be most true as it pertains to our collective health and wellness. Worldwide, Americans spend the most money on weight loss and exercise equipment, yet we lead the world in obesity and weight-related conditions. Due to poor quality foods that are abundantly available, we are simultaneously dying of obesity *and* malnutrition. Despite major advances in science and medicine, we have a chronic illness epidemic (obesity, depression, joint pain, heart disease, diabetes, ADHD, allergies, asthma, etc.). More and more *children* are developing *adult-onset* (Type II) diabetes. On the heels of a three-decade-long 'health and fitness craze,' our obesity rates continue to skyrocket.

There exists an unfortunate, yet common phenomenon occurring in fitness centers, doctors' offices, nutrition centers and psychotherapy offices throughout the country. Sick and tired of feeling sick and tired, people struggling with weight, pain, and illness are taking logical first steps to improve their wellness. They invest money. They invest time. Some even invest effort. Sadly, they only realize small, if any, results at all. What's worse, personal trainers, doctors, nutritionists, therapists and the like take to blaming the client – making it their fault. “You are not doing enough cardio.” “You're not following the diet the way I designed it.” “You must not be doing the homework I suggested.” Despondent, feeling like failures, they subsequently return to their original lifestyles with the belief that they are somehow genetically destined for pain, lethargy and unhappiness.

Although some individuals wake up one morning, decide to lose weight, address their back pain, get in shape, or work through unfinished emotional business from their childhoods, and do just that, they are probably the exception. Most people struggle to

change their lot in life because, upon closer examination, we find that our widely accepted approach to dealing with health and fitness is, by design, destined to fail the client. Not the other way around.

Generally, most people identify an individual, isolated problem: “I need to lose weight,” “I have a bad back,” “I have depression,” etc. Based on that identified problem, they choose what seems like the most appropriate specialist and begin addressing that isolated issue. What we usually misunderstand is that individual struggles are almost always manifestations of more integrated problems, requiring more integrated approaches to change. As an example, low back pain can have nothing to do with the lower back itself. It can be caused by muscle imbalances in the calves, IT band or hip flexors. Similarly, while one’s weight gain might have to do with improper eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle, those eating habits and physical neglect might have their roots in emotional resistances to wellness, depression, or his/her role in his/her family.

Addressing these core issues will likely facilitate greater, longer lasting success toward the person’s fitness goals than simply addressing his/her exercise and diet alone. Just as a thorough physical assessment will usually reveal the true cause(s) of the client’s lower back pain and provide valuable information for treatment planning, the following five assessments will help determine the underlying obstacles preventing us from achieving lasting health and wellness.

1. Stages of Change

Generally used to assess motivation for treatment in people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, the five stages of change are finding their way into other forms of

therapy and might help us all understand our own needs as they pertain to making lasting changes in ourselves. The stages and their explanations are as follows:

1. Precontemplation - People in precontemplation will not even be reading this. As far as they are concerned there is no problem with their drinking, drug use, weight, health, smoking, etc. Suggest that a problem exists, and a someone in precontemplation will generally turn things around to make them “your issue – not theirs.” Discussing any sort of action plan or method of change with people in this stage might be premature and will generally prove futile.

Many therapists have success with precontemplative clients by employing a method called Motivational Interviewing (MI). Although MI requires patience and some introspection, it empowers the client to determine his/her own motivation for change.

Some of the basic ideas found in MI are:

- Empathic Listening – Try to honestly feel the client’s frustration, fear, ambivalence, etc. Instead of debating with him/her, try to appreciate how daunting change can be and appreciate the fact that (s)he does not seem to see a problem with his/her current lifestyle
- Roll with resistance – People in precontemplation will be extremely resistant to change. Again, instead of debating, try to appreciate that resistance and understand that while it might be keeping the person stuck in an unhealthy lifestyle, it is probably (or perhaps did, in the past) provide some sort of safety or security for the person (even if the person is ourselves). We will probably be unable to progress out of

precontemplation until we determine the need the old lifestyle met and find some new way of meeting that need.

- Always validate the client's current position – While it might feel tempting to show somebody the error of his/her ways when (s)he validates his/her current lifestyle, doing so usually just prompts him/her to defend the status quo with strengthening resolve. Validating his/her position and making it acceptable that that is 'where (s)he is' at the moment will more effectively expedite movement and commitment to change.
- For more information on MI, read *Motivational Interviewing* by Miller and Rollnick (2002).

2. Contemplation – Similar to precontemplators, contemplators have been told by enough doctors, family members and friends that their weight, health, joint pain, etc., is a problem that, even though they still don't believe it, they can no longer ignore the feedback they regularly receive. Somebody in contemplation might say, "My wife/husband has been telling me for years that I need to lose weight. Now my doctor has started in, too. I am just genetically heavy, and there's not much I can do about it, but maybe I should start exercising to make them happy."

People in the contemplation stage of change, at least, might begin to accept that some sort of problem exists. By remaining patient and continuing to employ the MI approach, these people can identify their own motivation to change. Change occurs more readily and lasts significantly longer when the motivation and related decisions come from the person – not those trying to change the person.

3. **Preparation** – Once we have admitted that we have some sort of problem (with drinking, our weight, our health, etc.) and have identified personal, internal motivational factors for change, we can now begin exploring the different approaches to making change. While not quite ready to take action yet, in the preparation stage we are definitely considering various actions and trying to decide which might be best for us. When pushed or pressured to take action prematurely, somebody in preparation might withdraw and regress back into precontemplation.

Again, like in contemplation and precontemplation, the best approach in the preparation stage might be empowerment. Instead of trying to convince, coach, nudge, convince, or otherwise help somebody in this stage to take a specific action (after all, they are so close), it might be more effective to just help them gather information, researching all options and weighing the benefits and limitations of each. Remaining supportive and helpful in this stage will help empower the person to make his/her own decision and progress into taking action toward lasting change.

4. **Action** – Finally! The stage we have all (including the identified client, believe it or not) been waiting for. The person in question has now realized that a problem exists, identified his/her own motivation for correcting the situation, evaluated various approaches in dealing with the problem and has now begun to move. In this stage we will see people begin to exercise, eat well, save money, study, build a business, start therapy, and so on.

Obviously, encouragement can be vital during this stage, but encouragement alone might not be enough. We all know that change is difficult. It comes easier to some

then to others, but people beginning this stage are at high risk for backsliding into contemplation.

External encouragement and rewards might help somebody continue the effort (s)he has begun, but, as in the other three stages, internal motivation – owning the effort can prove much more powerful for longevity. Combined with encouragement and praise, empathy for difficulty and struggle involved, validation of all the person's feelings (even frustration, temptation to quit and negativity) and unconditional positive regard for the person regardless of his/her choices will maintain the effort begun in this stage.

5. **Maintenance** – Once the new behavior or tendency becomes less of a struggle and, perhaps, even approaches habit, we enter the maintenance phase. In this phase continued, random rewards (the random part is important), relapse planning and continued, goal-oriented focus are vital.

Unfortunately, after achieving a great deal of progress, we often consider the task complete and stop thinking about it. It is worth noting that the stages of change are fluid and while we try to facilitate movement through them it is also possible to regress through them, thus a period of neglect (think holiday season or bad breakup with a significant other) can regress the person straight back to precontemplation without necessarily stopping at each of the four other stages on the way back. Thus, this long and difficult progression must begin again. The bottom line: Maintenance need not be that difficult to monitor, but it must not be forgotten about completely lest it disappear.

While identifying and addressing the five stages of change is much easier to do in others, it is not impossible (with some practice and introspection) to identify one's own place in the continuum. For example, a person who has been told by his/her doctor,

children, spouse and friends that (s)he must address his/her weight, fitness and health, but remains precontemplative might read the description above and associate with it. That realization alone will have progressed him/her into contemplation with the awareness that a problem exists.

Much time gets wasted debating logically against emotional resistance. Personal trainers, doctors, and the like spend tremendous time and energy trying to convince people to change their ways. Most people, in fact, have spent much wasted time debating themselves about the behaviors that “have to stop,” but don’t. Recognizing one’s place in the stages of change and employing the appropriate MI approach to facilitate movement in that stage might progress the person more readily than an all out debate.

2. Goal Confusion

Goal setting can prove deceptive. While it seems simple enough to state the effect desired from a fitness program, a new diet, or any lifestyle change, setting goals that will contribute to effective, lasting, sustainable change can be challenging. What’s worse, setting inadequate goals can sabotage a person’s success and actually move him/her further from his/her desired result than if (s)he had set no goal at all.

Mindtools.com recommends setting performance goals – not outcome-based goals. According to the site, setting goals over which you have as much control as possible will contribute to greater success. It can be devastating to work diligently toward a goal and ultimately fall short due factors beyond your control. This logic applies loosely to fitness goals. Improvements in strength, stamina, balance, flexibility and recovery are generally more predictable than aesthetic changes because they depend on far fewer factors.

For the most part, lifting heavy weights for few repetitions with significant recovery periods will improve overall strength almost regardless of diet, stress level, or genetics. While those factors can maximize (or minimize) results, they will not prevent strength gains from occurring at all. Conversely, the correct training protocol without other lifestyle considerations absolutely will prevent fat loss, muscle growth or weight loss.

Of course, appearances are important (to an extent). It is probably unrealistic to believe that people will undertake significant lifestyle changes without wanting weight loss, fat burning or muscle growth. Unfortunately, setting fat loss goals alone can prove frustrating because so many lifestyle and genetic factors can inhibit success. Perhaps the most rewarding approach is to compromise. Setting aesthetic and performance goals together might contribute best to longevity. A person in his/her forties with a genetically slow metabolism and a desk job might burn fat slowly. Setting a fat loss goal and a strength goal (for example) might prove more rewarding. Realizing small movement in body composition, but significant strength gains will likely be more affirming than small changes in fat percentage alone.

Another consideration for goal setting is parameters. While many models for effective goal setting exist, most are similar. Perhaps the most widely recognized is S.M.A.R.T. goal format that follows:

Specific – The more specific a goal, the more effective it will be. For example, “I want lose 5% body fat,” is more specific than, “I want to get lean.” In evaluating goals, it helps to ask the question, “How will I know if I have achieved this goal?” If the answer to this question depends on your (or somebody else’s) judgment, then the goal is not

specific enough. In the example, how will we know when I have gotten lean? While it is tempting believe that we will know by looking in the mirror, taking photographs of ourselves or by the way our clothes fit, these are not specific measures. We can, however, determine whether or not we have lost 5% body fat (within a specified margin of error) by taking formal measurements.

Measurable – Similar to the *specific* criteria, a goal that cannot be specifically measured makes success ambiguous. “I want to be a better runner,” is much more difficult to achieve than, “I want to run a five minute mile.” Again, the question, “How will I know when I have met this goal?” will help you set measurable goals.

Achievable – This sounds obvious, but most personal trainers have encountered clients that might not realize that their goals are impossible to achieve. Sometimes goals are physiologically impossible: “I want to look lean and athletic, but I do not want to work out with weights or build any muscle.”

Other goals might be technically possible, but not given other factors. For example, a fifty-year-old mother who works full-time and wants to achieve 12% body fat will have to drastically change her entire lifestyle, making fitness and nutrition her full-time endeavor to reach that goal. However, 18% body fat might be possible without giving up her family life or job.

Relevant – Again, this might seem obvious. Of course our goals should be relevant. Upon closer examination, though, we find that this too can be tricky. It is not uncommon for recreational athletes to report wanting better endurance to improve their weekend basketball game. What they might not realize is that basketball is not an endurance sport. If the person is exhausted three quarters of the way through a game, this probably has

more to do with recovery and lactic acid threshold (work capacity) than it does with endurance. If this person researches endurance training and begins an endurance program, (s)he might find that not only is (s)he still tired before the game has ended, but is now slower and less explosive. While relevance is often obvious, it can occasionally be elusive. Careful goal setting with the help of a qualified professional will help avoid such pitfalls.

Time-Bound – Fitness guru, Pavel Tsatsouline wrote once, “Without a goal and a deadline, you are exercising, not training.” While there is nothing inherently wrong with regular exercise in the absence of specific, time-bound goals, it will likely not lead to any specific, predictable end. Setting a time limit, “I want to lose 5% body fat by April 5th,” provides a way of knowing, in no uncertain terms, whether the goal was achieved or not.

Examples of goals that need work:

- “I want to lose some weight.”
- “I want to get stronger and more toned.”
- “I need better endurance.”

Examples of effectively set goals (assuming accuracy and relevance):

- “I want to lose 8% body fat in the next 90 days.”
- “I want to run a five-minute mile by August.”
- “I want to add 10% to my max effort deadlift by November 15.”

It is unfortunate, but all too often, people legitimately trying to change set inappropriate goals, and despite their best efforts, fail to get the results they really want. Not realizing that the goal itself, not the effort, is the problem, they become discouraged

(which happens easily in early stages of change) and quit. Devoting some time and effort to effective goal setting before beginning a new endeavor might mean the difference between sustained, effective change and disappointment.

3. *Nutrition Information Overload*

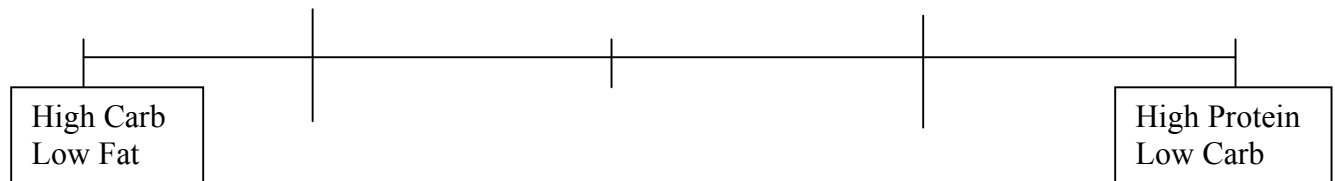
A trip to the “Diet & Nutrition” section of your local bookstore can be an overwhelming experience. It is little wonder that most people have a limited (at best) understanding of diet and nutrition. *The Fat Flush Diet, The Maker’s Diet, The Atkins Diet, The Warrior Diet, The Sonoma Diet, The Coconut Diet, The Body Ecology Diet, The Raw Foods Diet, The Paleolithic Diet, and The Fat Smash Diet*, to name a few, contribute to mass confusion and misinformation in people trying to improve their general health and wellness. While an in depth exploration of these various diets is well beyond the scope of this report, there are some basic ideas and strategies that might be worth identifying.

First and foremost, it must be noted that while optimal body weight and composition are vital for good health, not all diets designed for fat-loss are optimal for good health and vice versa. For example, before competing, professional body builders spend twelve weeks on an extremely restricted diet designed to maximize fat loss and even create dehydration (helps them look more ‘ripped’). This diet is often nutritionally limited and unhealthy if sustained for long periods of time. Conversely, diets designed to address allergies, digestive problems or other health struggles might not necessarily lead to fat-loss without extra considerations. Healthy eating focuses mostly on micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), phytonutrients, enzymes, fiber, and probiotics. Diets designed for fat loss concern themselves primarily with macronutrient (fat, protein, and

carbohydrate) quantity and distribution. Weight loss has mostly to do with caloric restriction.

Next, we must understand that different people react differently to different foods. An Inuit (Native Alaskan) will live a long, healthy life, fit and free of disease, eating a high fat/low carb diet consisting of whale blubber, salmon, fermented seal meat and whatever seaweed, fruits or vegetables can be harvested in their snowy environment. By contrast, a native Brazilian will live just healthy a life eating sweet fruits like mango, papaya and banana, and lean meats like poultry. Switch the two diets, the people will become very sick and overweight. Because of this metabolic individuality, most diets are subject to the 70-30 rule.

This informal rule of thumb suggests that any given diet will benefit approximately 70% of the public (especially if it prevents them from eating fast food, refined flour, chemical additives and refined sugar), but will negatively impact 30%.



Using the chart above, we can easily imagine that our Brazilian is way to the left of the metabolic continuum, our Inuit is way to the right and everybody else falls somewhere in between.

The Atkins approach, for example, will prove optimal for our Inuit and anybody else falling far to the right of the chart. As we move left, the diet will still benefit most people in decreasing increments, especially if it prevents them from eating non-foods like

refined flour and sugar and chemical additives. This same diet, however, will likely threaten the health of our Brazilian and others with similar metabolisms. They might begin to feel tired, lethargic and cranky. They might experience poor digestion, upset stomach, indigestion and constipation. They might also begin to develop allergies, immune deficiencies, joint aches, depression, diabetes and/or other chronic ailments.

While each diet on the market makes unique recommendations, most have some underlying and universal similarities. Without adhering to any one specific diet, one could begin to dramatically improve his/her health and optimize his/her body weight and composition by following these common, general recommendations:

Whole, Living Foods: Simply put, living foods are alive when we eat them. For the most part, these include fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, herbs and seeds. These (and all) foods have the greatest health benefits when eaten whole, unprocessed and unrefined. When eaten raw, these foods are teeming with nutrients, enzymes and probiotics that will optimize health and well-being. Some living foods (asparagus, broccoli) might be difficult to digest raw, though. If not eaten raw, these (and most) foods can be lightly steamed, sautéed or stir-fried. It's best to avoid overcooking foods whenever possible.

Clean, Sustainable Sources: Organic produce is free of toxic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and genetic modifications which can threaten our health, make our bodies acidic and toxic, ruin our environment and even slow fat loss. What's more, organic produce has been shown to be three to five times more nutrient-dense than conventionally grown foods.

There is some debate in the nutrition industry concerning the consumption of meat and other animal products. If you choose to eat meat, the following recommendations are uniform throughout most diets:

- **Organic, Grass-Fed Beef:** Cows were meant to graze. Raised on commercial feedlots, cattle are fed unnecessary antibiotics (to prevent illness), bovine growth hormone (to maximize meat production), corn and other grains (because it is inexpensive) and ground byproducts of slaughtered cows (also inexpensive). Residues from hormones and medications get stored in the cow's fat cells and ultimately make their way into the meat we eat. What's more, grains and animal products turn toxic in the cow's digestive track and those toxins also find their way into the fat cells and meat. Pasture-raised, grass-fed beef, lamb, venison and bison promises to be clean, free of toxins and ultimately health promoting.
- **Free-Range, Humane Certified Poultry and Eggs:** Chickens and turkeys can be treated terribly on most farms (for more information, read *The Ethics of What we Eat* by Peter Singer or *Chew on This* by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson) and food labels can be deceiving. For example, 'cage-free' chicken or eggs might have been raised in cardboard boxes as small as a cage, just as long as they were not actual cages. Free-range and humane certified birds, however, were allowed to roam free and engage in natural, instinctive behaviors. Animals experience stress when they cannot engage in natural behaviors (for more information about the physiological stress response read *Why Zebras Don't*

Get Ulcers by Robert Sopolksi), which can cause them to store toxins in their meat and eggs.

- **Wild Caught Fish:** Like poultry and beef, fish raised in enclosed ‘farms’ are often fed antibiotics and other unnatural foods that leave toxic residues in their systems. What’s more, the pens in which farmed fish live, prevent natural behaviors, causing stress. Animal experts have observed farmed fish swimming in continuous circles do to stress – similar to humans pacing. Also, because our oceans and lakes have become so polluted, small, cold-water fish such as salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines and anchovies will have the least metal toxicity, making them the best choices for seafood.

Hydration: Most Americans struggle to drink enough water. Also, popular beverages like coffee, tea, soda (even diet and caffeine free) and alcohol cause us to urinate out more fluid than we drink in which worsens our hydration dilemma. Our bodies are more than 70% water. Proper hydration improves brain function, mood, metabolism and helps alleviate chronic joint pain, inflammation, immune deficiencies, digestive problems and a host of other maladies. Most people would benefit from drinking water based on the following formula: $\text{body weight (lbs.)} / 2 = \text{minimum oz. of water per day}$. For example, a 200lb. man should drink approximately 100 ounces of water each day.

Optimally, water should have a pH of 7.2 or higher. At very least, water should be free of toxins like fluoride and chlorine, which are commonly added to public water. Make no mistake. These additives are poison. Most people know that chlorine is toxic, but fluoride is just as bad. Your toothpaste tube probably recommends calling poison control if you happen to swallow some of the product. A squeeze of lemon and/or a

pinch of sea salt will improve water's taste and absorption in the body. This translates into more energy and less urination.

Grains: There is tremendous debate in the health and fitness community regarding grains. Some experts recommend avoiding all grains, arguing that there is no compelling reason to keep them in a healthy diet. Others believe that grains are nutritious, high-fiber, living foods that should be consumed by most people. Whether you choose to eat grains or not, there are some universal truths worth considering.

As compared to fruits and vegetables, grains are inferior sources of carbohydrate. While grains might not be the root of all evil, fruits, veggies, nuts and seeds are probably healthier choices that will have less of an insulin reaction on the body, thus causing you to store less fat than grains will. Also, while some people tolerate them better than others, ALL grains have an inflammatory effect on the body. People suffering from arthritis, allergies, immune deficiencies or recovering from surgery should probably minimize grain consumption.

Most experts agree that refined, processed grains (anything besides 100% whole or sprouted grains) are not food and should always be avoided. Whole grains, with their husk intact are better choices, and sprouted grains, loaded with enzymes, fiber and higher protein content are probably best. Corn and wheat tend to be the hardest grains to digest and contribute to the most dramatic insulin reactions. Organic kamut, quina (not actually a grain) and spelt are probably the best choices.

Sugar and Salt: All health experts agree that refined white sugar and table salt (sodium chloride) are not food and should be avoided at all costs. White sugar has no nutritional value and a high glycemic load. It has been argued that sugar might be primarily

responsible for almost every chronic health disorder facing our modern culture.

Nutritionally, sugar is pure evil and artificial sweeteners (splenda, sweet-n-low, aspartame) are even worse. Raw, unrefined sugar is an improvement, but as far as sweeteners go, raw honey, raw agave syrup, raw maple syrup, xylitol and stevia are nutritious, natural alternatives with low glycemic loads.

Table salt is unusable by our bodies and does nothing but contribute to gall and kidney stones, elevated blood pressure, and create other life-threatening conditions. Sea salt, on the other hand, tastes identical to table salt and actually works to improve our health. The mineral content of ocean water is actually so close to the mineral content of human blood that the Navy S.E.A.L.s learn to give injured people blood transfusions with purified ocean water.

Nutrition can be confusing, but starting with these general recommendations and, as you progress tweaking them for your individual nutritional needs will start you on the road to optimal body weight, fat burning, and improved overall health.

4. Inappropriate Training Protocol

Much like nutrition, fitness information is vast and confusing. Magazines, books and television programs all feature different fitness experts promising incredible results with their specific program or gadget. High reps/low weights, Spinning, Yoga, running, Pilates, H.I.T., Super Slow, Total Gym, and Bowflex...who to trust?

While optimal training recommendations should be the result of a formal assessment and goal-setting session performed by an experienced fitness professional, the following information will provide some basis for getting started:

Movements – Not Parts: Most people working out in the gym will immediately discuss body parts with you. “... great exercise for your lats,” “I am working my back and biceps today,” “This is great for blasting the quads.” While focusing on isolated body parts might be appropriate under certain circumstances, movement-based training will be most effective for general conditioning and fat burning. Replacing lats, pecs and bis with push, pull, squat and lunge will yield the greatest results.

Limit Machine Use: Most fitness centers are chock full of fancy, expensive machines designed to work every body part in every imaginable way. Unfortunately, most people, despite being drawn to them like sailors to a siren’s song, would do best to maximize their use of body weight and free weight exercises. While there are also appropriate times to use the machines (including for fun and variety), free weight squats, push ups, pull ups, walking lunges and burpees will provide much greater conditioning, strength gains, athletic performance and fat burning.

Avoid Aerobic Cardiovascular Exercise: The only reason to perform long-duration cardio like running, rowing, cycling or swimming is because you enjoy it. Outside of pleasure or competition, there is no compelling reason to perform more than twenty minutes of cardio once or twice a week, if at all.

Fitness experts Alwyn Cosgrove, Mike Boyle and Craig Balantyne do an excellent job of explaining the science behind this idea (I highly recommend their materials). For optimal athletic performance and fat burning, performing short, intense work intervals with intermittent recovery periods is best.

Simply watching the Olympics will illustrate this point perfectly. Marathon runners come in all shapes and sizes. Some are lean, many are emaciated, and some are

chubby. Sprinters are all lean and muscular. Short high-intensity sprints with regular recovery periods for fifteen to twenty minutes once or twice a week will enhance performance, improve cardio-respiratory health and maximize fat burning. Additionally, if you hate cardio-type exercise, these same heart-rate based workouts can be accomplished through weight lifting or other resistance training.

Respect the Protocol: An interesting phenomenon (one of many) occurs in most gyms across the country. Chubby, un-athletic gym goers explain to anybody who will listen how they are getting lean and ‘toned’ using ‘light weights’ and ‘heavy reps’ as they casually curl 3lb. hand weights twelve times. Little do they realize that, not only are they using the incorrect training program for fat loss, but they are also incorrectly interpreting the incorrect training program.

There are essentially four basic training protocols, each designed for a very specific result. Of course, achieving optimal fitness for competitive athletics, or correcting muscle imbalances, etc., can get much more intricate. However, starting with basic (correct) protocol will maximize results and set you well on your way toward your appropriately stated goals.

- **Strength:** Getting stronger is about producing more force – moving more weight than you could before. It has little, if anything to do with your physical appearance. In order to train for strength, use very, very heavy weights – close to your absolute maximum. Perform 5 or 6 sets of 1 – 3 repetitions, allowing a solid two minutes recovery between each set. You will see your numbers improve significantly within a few weeks. Use a spotter!!!

- **Endurance:** Endurance is the ability to do something for a sustained period of time. Like strength training, working for endurance will yield little change in your physical appearance. This generally applies to distance running, swimming or cycling. Most team sports, combat sports, tennis and sprinting require recovery – not endurance.

Here is your light weights and heavy reps training. We must be clear, however, light is relative. We use weights that are light compare to those used in strength training. For endurance, we still choose weights 50% - 60% of our absolute maximum. Using these weights we perform 3 – 6 sets of no fewer than 15 repetitions with only 30 to 45 seconds rest between sets.

- **Power:** Power or explosiveness is the combination of speed and strength. Explosive power plays an important roll in most sports, especially football, basketball and martial arts, but it too will not affect your appearance much. To train for power, use either your body weight or relatively heavy external loads, perform exercises explosively (fast) for 8-10 sets of 2-3 repetitions with 2-3 minutes rest between sets.

- **Hypertrophy:** A fancy word for muscle growth, hypertrophy is the training protocol with the greatest benefit for fat burning. I can already hear people (specifically young women) now. “I don’t want too get big and bulky.” Young women have been trying to convince me for more than a decade that their genetics are somehow the sole exception. When they work out with weights, they automatically develop the size and mass that competitive body builders spend their lives working and taking supplements to achieve. It is just not so. The key to a lean, athletic body IS and always has been muscle growth. In fact, the celebrities we generally consider

the gold standard for fit bodies (Madonna, Angelina Jolie, Gabriel Reese, Cameron Diaz) are, indeed, thin and lean, but they are also very muscular.

Hypertrophy training requires moderately heavy weights (approximately 75% of your maximum) for 3- 4 set of 8 -10 repetitions with 45 – 60 seconds rest between sets. This protocol with the heart-rate interval training outlined in the cardio section, and the appropriate diet will ultimately yield a lean, muscular body.

These parameters are more important than specific exercise selection. Do not get sidetracked or distracted by fancy gizmos, bloated promises or marginal information from other gym-goers. Yes, as you advance, there will be more to it than this, but this is, and will always be the root from which all else grows.

5. Family and Social Systems Resistance

This might be the single most overlooked obstacle in pursuing lasting lifestyle change, and simultaneously, the most difficult to overcome. We all live in social systems. In fact, most of us live in many different social systems between family life, work, friends, church and other organizations. Even within our families, there exists various subsystems. If we have a spouse and children, that becomes one system. Our family of origin (our parents and siblings) is another, and our families-in-law are yet another. Each member in each system is like a cog inside a clock. Each is individual with its own qualities and independence, but its interaction with the others keeps the clock working. Change one cog, and all the other cogs must be changed in order for the clock to continue ticking.

Social systems are like thermostats. When you set your thermostat to a certain temperature, the air conditioning and heating will do whatever is necessary to maintain

that temperature. If the room cools, then the heat turns on. Heat the room and cooling mechanism kicks in. When threatened with change, social systems rearrange in order to protect the status quo.

As a case study, let's examine the animated television family, *The Simpsons*. Each of the Simpsons plays a common and predictable role for an alcoholic family. Homer, of course, is the alcoholic parent; irresponsible, childlike and embarrassing. Marge plays the role of the enabler. By calling Homer out of work when he is hung over, making excuses for him to the community, defending him to her family and keeping her complaining to a minimum, Marge enables Homer to continue drinking and acting irresponsibly without facing any consequences. Lisa Simpson plays the role of the Hero. Her overachieving gives the family an outlet for its praise, high expectations and positive attention, and keeps attention off of Homer by constantly achieving greater things. Bart actually performs two roles. He is the Clown and the Simpson family Scapegoat. As the Clown, Bart provides occasional levity to keep the family smiling and distracted from Homer's terrible problem. As the Scapegoat Bart gets into regular trouble and provides the family with an outlet for their frustrations, disappointments, anger and negative attention. While he might seem a pain, the Scapegoat is actually a noble, self-sacrificing role. By constantly underperforming and accepting punishment, Bart, in essence sacrifices himself to help maintain the status quo and prevent the family from having to change. Appropriately named last (and almost completely forgotten by me) is Maggie, the lost child. Quiet and low key, Maggie demands little attention and is easily forgotten about. It is appropriate that Maggie is an infant because, while the lost child is often considered strong and independent because they demand little, they are often fragile and

unable to fend effectively for themselves. They stay silent because they do not know how to compete for the attention they want and need.

If any one of the Simpsons decided to change their role, it would upset their entire system. If, for example, Homer decided to stop drinking, become a more responsible husband and father, and get in shape, Marge would no longer have anybody to enable. While that might seem liberating and positive, it can be paralyzing. Although relatively unhappy, Marge's role as co-dependant enabler to Homer was familiar, predictable and safe. Lisa, Bart, and Maggie, too, would no longer have a need for the roles that play and the entire family would need to rearrange itself, let alone the social system of Lenny, Carl, Barney and Moe at the bar. This same phenomenon would likely occur no matter which family member chose to change. To that end, each member toes the line, adhering adamantly to his/her roles and resisting change with remarkable strength.

Now, apply this model to yourself or others you know who have tried unsuccessfully to change their lives. If they have long been 'the fat one,' or 'the sickly one,' or 'the weak one,' others in their family and/or social systems might have subconsciously sabotaged their efforts to change in order to protect the system's integrity. Maybe, like Bart, the person in question sabotaged his/her own success for the good of the group. Managing this sort of systemic resistance can be tricky, but might be necessary in order to facilitate lasting change.

Sometimes, during the *preparation* phase of the aforementioned stages of change, it can be helpful to let your loved ones and close friends know about your plans for future change. Employing their help, or contracting with them for their support might make the difference. If this does not help, and resistance persists, individual, family or small group

therapy might be in order. Although time consuming, this process can help each person involved identify his/her role in relation to you and empower them to support you instead undermining your efforts.

Conclusion

Change is tough. No question. Sometimes it seems impossible, but that is usually because there exist hidden obstacles and resistances that must be contended with before enduring change can become a reality. If, in an effort to remake your health and wellness, you have found that despite eating well, exercising regularly and doing some sort of emotionally therapeutic activity, you still struggle to change, then pause. Review the stages of change and make sure you feel comfortable in the action stage before actually taking action. If not, employ Motivational Interviewing techniques to work through the earlier stages.

Revisit your goals. Using the S.M.A.R.T. goal format, make sure that your goals accurately and appropriately express exactly what you hope to accomplish and when. With those goals in place, use them as the benchmark for assessing your fitness program. If your goal is greater strength and you find yourself following an endurance protocol, consult an experienced fitness professional who can help you make the necessary adjustments.

Follow the general nutritional guidelines provided and tweak the specifics (meal frequency, meal size, macronutrient distribution and the like) until you find the balance that works optimally for you. Have patience. This process can sometimes require time. The general recommendations alone are a great start and should provide some movement. The specifics will just be the icing on the cake.

Finally, in quiet moments, honestly assess yourself, your family and your close friends. Search for ways that you or they might sabotage your success. If you find that they are undermining your efforts, try not to attack them or become angry. Understand that they are unconsciously working for the greater good of the group. Instead try to empower them to help you by asking for their help, encouraging them to embrace change, or go to therapy with them. These steps will definitely replace frustration and disappointment with lasting health, fitness, success and happiness. Good luck.

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