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Synergistic Fitness

Goals that Grow Together

When people ask me for advice on exercise and fitness, my first question is "What are your goals?" I hear all sorts of blurry responses like "tone up," "I need a stronger core," and "work on my cardio." I also get some fairly well defined goals like "I want to lose sixty pounds in the next four months" or "I am going to run a 10 mile road race." Having well defined goals has been shown to produce better compliance with any exercise program; however, some fitness goals produce better long-term results. The best fitness goals are interrelated, and when you make progress toward one goal it makes it easier to reach the others. Following are my top five synergistic fitness goals:

Stay consistent



This is one of the simplest goals to understand but the most difficult to achieve. All the big benefits of exercise

occur with long term, habitual performance of an exercise regimen. The fitness media bombards us with "21 day fix," "30 days to six pack abs," and my favorite "Shredded in seven." The television will never be able to sell "Three Days a Week Forever" but that is the routine that will produce the best results. The psychology experts tell us it takes eight to twelve weeks to begin the formation of a new, beneficial habit. Commit to a reasonable training schedule and stay with it for twelve weeks. Consistency is king, everything else is details.

Reduce the presence of pain in your life



You will reach all of your fitness goals much sooner if your brain is receiving fewer signals of pain. A proper exercise program should improve your capacity to move. If you move better, it becomes easier to activate the muscles that maintain metabolic fitness. The presence of pain alters movement patterns and reduces the impact of training. Do not accept pain as part of your life. In my work as a physical therapist, I have heard many euphemisms for pain. Patients and clients are not limping because of pain-- they have a "discomfort," "ache," "spasm," or "numbness." Getting rid of these problems goes a long way toward restoring function and improving quality of life.

Waist circumference: One half of your height

If your waist size is greater than one half your height, then reducing that number should be a primary goal of your fitness program. Scale weight is a fairly misleading indicator of success with exercise. Most of us would be better off using a



kitchen scale to measure food portions. A measurement that has great value is the waist to height ratio. You want your waist to be less than half your height. Fat that accumulates around the middle of the body drives most of the health problems that reduce our quality of life. Fat around the internal organs create a condition called Metabolic Syndrome, the precursor to systemic inflammation, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, liver disease, and cardiovascular disease.

Make steady and consistent changes in your diet



changes. Decrease the ice cream and try more veggies. Ditch the soda drinks and hydrate with H₂O. Take in more protein and drop the weekly beer total from eight to three. You cannot out exercise a lousy diet. This is the fix for that waist measurement goal.

Attack your weaknesses

In fitness, we all do what we like to do instead of

what we need to do. Go to any commercial gym and you see lots of treadmill walking/TV watching, bench pressing, and redundant biking but not a lot of squatting, push ups or pull ups. These days, many gyms do not even have a squat rack or pull up bar. A good fitness coach makes you work on your weaknesses. He or she will take you through an assessment to see where you stand on the fitness continuum. Most performance deficits are not subtle-- they are glaring. Eliminating these deficits often clears up the pain problems that are blunting the effectiveness of your training. In fitness, you get the greatest reward when you conquer your biggest obstacles.

These goals grow together. Compliance with a long-term, reasonable fitness program that decreases pain and improves the weakest areas of performance will reduce the waist line measurement when married to better nutrition.

-Michael O'Hara, P.T., OCS, CSCS

Building Better Bones

Reversing the Signs of Osteoporosis

"Coming to Fenton Fitness on consistent basis, eating healthy, and taking my vitamins (especially calcium) is paying off!"

Jan Como just turned 79 and is celebrating life. Last December, she went in for her bi-annual breast MRI and bone mineral density test (BMD). The MRI showed still no return of cancer, so she is now a 13 year survivor.

"I am even more excited about the BMD test results. For the past several years, I've been told I'm in the osteopenia zone (pre-osteoporosis), and I've worried about becoming unable to independently take care of my physical needs. Not anymore! The report indicated an improvement of 2.6% per year!"

A Fenton Fitness member since 2009, Jan feels stronger than ever. A few years ago, she made a serious commitment to invest in her health and started meeting with Jeff for regular exercise programs. She is now on her 11th Program Design and reports that the exercises are making her

stronger and fitter and actually *healing* her body.

Jan is very proud of her accomplishments and looks forward to her workouts. She can be found in the gym every Monday,

Wednesday, and Friday afternoon. She approaches each exercise with energy, maintains good form, and pushes herself to do more.

"I no longer worry about my future. I'm doing exactly what I need to by coming to Fenton Fitness and sticking to my programs. Thank you Jeff and FFAC for your service! Now I know I'm capable of taking care of myself, whatever comes."

-Amy Warner, Director of Sales and Marketing



To Supplement or not to Supplement

That is the Common Question

Gym members and nutrition clients often ask about supplements. The multi-billion dollar supplement industry has done a magnificent job marketing their products—feeding people delusional dreams that one little pill or scoop of powder will somehow replace years of consistent training and proper eating. Supplements can have a place when transitioning into better eating habits or when temporarily on very restricted caloric intake (such as weight class or physique athletes) in order to maintain adequate nutrients.

The biggest problem with the supplement industry (at least in the U.S.) is that they are basically unregulated by the FDA. They do not have to prove the claims they make on their packaging (unlike pharmaceutical companies), and they often misrepresent data to support their claims. A couple of times each year, you can expect to hear about a major company that gets busted for false labeling or for having various contaminants in their product. The FDA only regulates or pulls these products after enough consumer reports are filed or if someone decides to send the product to an independent lab for testing to verify its contents.



A recent study* on fish oil supplements in New Zealand showed that, on average, all of the fish oil supplements tested had only 50% of the labeled Omega 3 fats in it. Out of the 32 products tested, it was determined that only 1 in 11 products matched its label due to oxidative damage/rancidness of the product. Another common practice is to use an ingredient that has been proven to work (such as creatine or caffeine) and under dose it in a proprietary blend so that the amount is so small it doesn't exert its benefit.

For these reasons, I rarely recommend supplements to our clients (with the exception of a protein powder to those struggling to ingest enough protein). No pill or powder will replace or enhance better than whole food nutrition and consistent effort with regard to nutrition and training. If you insist on taking a supplement, I would recommend using a company that is 3rd party verified and has lab results regularly published (this is very hard to find) or have your doctor prescribe a pharmaceutical grade product that has more stringent testing criteria.

For more information on how many of the main retailers for protein powder fared when independently tested, click here for a great summary:

<https://labdoor.com/rankings/protein>

-Jeff Tirrell, B.S., CSCS, Pn1

*Fish oil supplements in New Zealand are highly oxidized and do not meet label content of n-3 PUFA (which is the scientific term for Omega 3 fats), Benjamin B. Albert, et al. January 2015

Additional Resources

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The Perfect Posture Pair

Foam Roll and Face Pulls

I talk to people with beat up shoulders nearly every workday. They have pain that disturbs their sleep and makes it impossible to enjoy normal activities. Their shoulder function is limited by lack of strength and restricted range of motion. They have ridden the ice and heat roller coaster and, by the time they get to physical therapy, they have been injected and medicated. Shoulder patients come in all sizes, ages, sexes, and activity levels but they do share one common trait—they all have poor posture.

Put “Lose Your Gut” or “Get Six Pack Abs” on the front of a fitness magazine and everyone grabs a copy. A more valuable but less sexy article would be “Stand Up Tall” or “Lose Your Caveman Posture.” Performing the pair of exercises listed below will go a long way to help improve your posture and bullet proof your shoulders.

Foam Roll “T”

The foam roll T exercise stretches out the front of the shoulder girdle and the front of the cervical spine. We use a foam roll to allow the shoulder blades to move on the rib cage. Take deep breaths and try to relax as much as possible during the stretch phase of the exercise.



Position lengthwise on a foam roll. The head, spine and hips should all be supported. Bring the arms out

to the side so that the elbows are even with the shoulders and bent to 90 degrees. Let the shoulders relax and permit gravity to pull the arms toward the floor. Attempt to keep the forearms parallel to the floor and the elbows at 90 degrees. Stretch for 20 seconds and then brings the elbows together in front of your body. Repeat for three to five repetitions. The foam roll stretch will increase the mobility of the

shoulder girdles and correct upper thoracic and cervical posture. You should eventually be able to get the elbows to the floor. After you have increased mobility, it is time to integrate that range of motion with some face pulls.

Face Pulls

The face pull strengthens the muscles that rotate the shoulder blades upward and externally rotate the humerus. These muscles are generally neglected in most fitness programs. More pulling type exercises are what most gym goers need to include in their training programs. Many bench press fanatics have been saved by some consistent face pulls.



You can use resistance tubing, but I like a rope attached to a resistance cable unit. Set the cable up at neck level and face the machine. I like to use a half kneeling position as it makes it harder to cheat the movement and throw the weight up with the

lower back. Grip the rope at each end with the arms extended and hands facing down. Pull the shoulder blades back and move the hands to side of the head. Let the humerus (upper arm bone) turn outward and keep the elbows slightly lower than the shoulders. Hold for one count and then return to the starting position. Do not let the head protrude forward and keep the chest up. Use a weight that permits performance of at least eight steady repetitions and do not train to failure.

Tips: If you find your elbow stops eight to ten inches off the floor, you may need to perform the foam roll T stretch every day. Do not use too much weight on the face pull. The tempo should be slow and controlled. Perform two sets of this exercise pair twice a week.