

Why Do You Work Out? (No, this isn't a trick question)

In order to get the most from your workout, a big question to ask yourself is, why are you working out in the first place? Why are you running 5 miles every day, why are you riding 60 miles each week? Why are you cross-fitting 5 times per week? Is it because you want to look better or feel better? Because you want to prove to yourself that you can be better than the next guy or because it's just fun to participate? To boost your confidence or to boost your metabolism for more energy? Does your workout leave you drained or energized? Be really honest with yourself and find your why.

Try to push past an answer like I just want to be fit. What does "being fit" mean to you? Does it mean that you can ski or swim without pain when you get a chance to enjoy some downtime? Does it mean you can win the next race? Does it mean you can sit at your desk for 8+ hours a day without your wrists/neck/back killing you, or does it mean you have the best-looking abs in the gym or the biggest biceps 20 miles around? Get really specific, and don't be content with a vague answer.

Why am I so nosy?

Whatever your reason for working out, it's a good one if it resonates with you. I ask you to think about it - not to judge why you work out - but because if you are not aware of why you're doing it, you will not be willing to make needed adjustments in your workout. Or you won't know which adjustments to make to reach your goal, since your goal isn't clear. And if you're not willing to make needed adjustments, or if you don't know what they are, your workout will not work for you or show you results.

If you honestly know that the biggest reason you're lifting heavy things is because you want to win a competition, then also ask yourself if you're willing to get injured to achieve your goal. If that's a yes, keep going. You're not alone: professional dancers and high profile athletes do it all the time. In fact, many of them practice Pilates to minimize risk and get regular massages to keep the muscle tissue in good shape. But unless you're a professional athlete who gets paid for their performance, you might not have the time for all of those counter measures. So be clear on your goal and what you're willing to do to reach it.