

Last month's article regarding transformation strategies stimulated some thought. Many people had "ah-ha" moments regarding the process of losing "fat" not "weight". As we follow up on the importance of fully indulging upon all strategies of *stress, nutrition, resistance (strength) training, interval training, and recovery* together, I will detail the demands for every workout and the importance of not changing your routine up **too** often. Much of this information has been paraphrased from Alywn & Rachel Cosgrove (national presenters in fitness) articles based on resistance training.

Ironically, I have been preaching for years that isolation training does not work to successfully prepare anyone except body builders (and rehab individuals) for any sport (chest on Mondays and Legs on Wednesday will not help the hike up Snow King!) Many people concentrate on only one of these strategies (*stress, nutrition, resistance (strength) training, interval training, and recovery*) to be completely fit.

Creating new demands every workout for resistance - What do you think would happen if you did the same routine over and over for a year? How long before you would stop progressing? The amount of weight you use must increase to allow for physiological changes. Remember pushing beyond comfort and creating that metabolic disturbance is a must (not allowing the body to adapt for too long).

You should never lift the same loads twice - If you are recovering properly, you should always be able to increase your load every workout, however, not exactly every exercise or rep. This is important to understand. You don't want to increase weight for every single exercise in one workout. Each increase will affect the exercises that follow in the workout. At most, increase weight for one to three exercises. Then the next time, pick a different one to three exercises to kick it up a notch.

Progressively increase your weights - You should be getting stronger every time - then you know you are making progress! Learn and LIKE to push your body beyond what it is used to - this is the road to success. Grunting is great!

Avoid changing too much too often - While you put new demands on the body, it is wise to stick with the same program for a minimum of 4-6 weeks. If the program changes too often, you will not see the progress. The new demands should come from increased loads and volumes, as mentioned before. It will take 4-6 weeks for the body to neuromuscularly adapt, once that occurs change the routine via load, reps, sets, intensity, rest period and/or type of exercise.

Stick to the same program long enough to achieve the benefits of that program, using the same exercises and number of repetitions for 4-6 weeks. Change only one thing at a time. For example, if you are starting a new strength-training program, then avoid an overhaul on your diet at the same time. Changing one thing at a time, will allow you to know what is working for you. It's important to make things challenging, but to continue progressing and seeing improvement each week with the same program over 4-6 weeks.

Understanding recovery - Your body must have enough rest and recovery in order for it to respond to the stimulus of training. Allow at least 24 hours between workouts and take at least one full day off from training a week for your body's full recovery. Usually 3-4 days of weight training is the most your body can handle and STILL recover.

It is important to take lifestyle into account to know just how much recovery your body will be getting. For example, a new mom might not have a chance to sleep through the night regularly, so this should be factored into recovery. Listen to your body! If you feel something is not quite right - a sore back, a tight muscle or pinching...do not push. Your body sends signals for a reason! Usually a little time on your friend - the foam roller, along with some stretching will alleviate soreness! Of course, if you have reoccurring pain, really listen and seek appropriate help.

Keeping track of your progress in all aspects of lifestyle - The only way you will know for sure that you are progressing is to keep track of what you have done. Journal your daily food intake, workout program, type of day (whether stressful or not), recovery, etc. Don't leave it to the ole' memory! Go to the gym with a written plan and make notes on the weights you used and how many reps you did. Note the date, the time it took, how you felt, whether it was easy or hard or if any issues came up to be aware of. This allows you to know exactly what to progress upon and when. That memory will fail you, so keep yourself accountable!

Lastly have a support system of accountability - Especially for women, creating a support system of like-minded exercise partners is truly a huge component of success. Sticking to the plan and keeping MOTIVATED and DISCIPLINED! How easy is it to 'talk yourself out of a last rep, more weight or worse, a complete workout!' Having those partners in place makes this much less likely, because you are accountable to someone else! Look at the increased energy in group training classes. That energy keeps you focused, motivated and willing to work harder! No one wants to let the group down! Training does not need to be a solo journey!