

Our fitness coaches at Training to be Balanced (T2BB) are indulged with a plethora of different fitness questions. We receive questions that range to what's new in the fitness industry to what are the best exercises for keeping up with the grand children. This month I would like to elaborate on some of these topics.

Although this is not as current, I still receive questions regarding the Vibram Five Fingers (VFF) running shoe (the one that has slots for the toes, which incorporates barefoot technology) as a workout shoe; they say it is the closest thing to running barefoot. There is a lot of research (R. Squadrone and C. Gallozzi at the Institute of Sport Medicine and Sport Science in Rome, Italy) that support the similarities in running movement with VFF and running barefoot as well as working out.

I agree with the article written in the America's Podiatrist website by a Dr. Nirenberg last year in 2009, "The benefit of the pockets for the toes is that they allow the toes to flex and extend, approximating the toes complete range of motion. This is great, as extension of the toes is limited in most shoes. Extension of the toes is important to allow the tissues under the ball of the foot to stiffen/tighten to absorb the force of impact on the ground and the muscles contracture of extension helps pump swelling out of our feet."

They also have VFF shoes for yoga, exercise, walking, you name it. Are they good or not for the feet? I believe they provide a great feel similar to bare feet. I always promote walking around on bare feet. It is how we grew up and developed from birth but some people are just born with abnormalities within his/her feet. If you like them, try them. However, if previous injuries are in your medical history you may take precaution in the process or transition of wearing shoes all your life to almost barefoot shoes. It is stated on the VFF website does not recommend those with severe supination or pronation.

Growing up in the martial arts, I have a slight biases opinion with bare footedness. I have been on bare feet half of my life in explosive and quick agility movements (not running though). I stretch my feet every morning and evening from 15 seconds to 5 minutes, depending how much time is available. Therefore, I like being bare footed but others may not.

This leads to another topic question. A father of a 12-year-old child that I was training asked me which sports are the best for a 12 year old. My initial response is what does he like to do? I like to include the child in the conversation as much as possible instead of a parent dictating everything. After much dialogue we came to the conclusion that the parent wanted him to explore the best all around movements for his development.

I have witnessed most sports by visual observation or participation. The best options are swimming, martial arts, dance, and gymnastics with skate skiing and basketball a close 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. These sports are ideal for the maximum development of adolescents who desires the all types of movements and energy development systems (ESD).

My bases is drawn from the five elements of complete movement: coordination/agility, strength, flexibility, balance, and power. It is also important to have a high level of ESD's (anaerobic and aerobic) conditioning. Of course, there is always another sport that has better endurance or aerobic training then one that has more agility dominant features. The four above is the best all around sport an adolescent could do for his/her development before choosing the one sport he/she wants to commit. In any case, the more variety of sports you perform, the better athlete you become.

Thus, leading to the final topic question. What is the best overall exercise? It is the one that you need the most!

There is no one exercise that will magically accomplish ultimate fitness strengths, fat loss or athleticism. You must find the one that will help you and all your goals. The exercises that T2BB have seen to produce the best overall results in members for sustained health are below:

Bouncing medicine ball (BMB) chop against the wall is a great core stabilization exercise with explosive components. Kneel with left knee down and right knee up with your nose parallel to the wall to your left. Kneeling tall with your left glute (butt) cheek engaged bring the BMB high above your head on the right side. Throw the BMB down to the floor in a chopping motion. Let the ball bounce off the floor, hit the wall and bounce back to your hands repeat.

Another is the Roman Deadlift: Starting Position is standing; Movement is (1) Bend at waist and lower dumbbells to shins while keeping back flat, (2) use glutes and hamstrings to return to starting position, (3) repeat for prescribed number of repetitions. Considerations include feet are hip width apart, keep a soft bend in the knees, small weight shift to heels, while standing, keep shoulder back and down, during step 1, keep dumbbells close to shins. You should feel your glutes and hamstrings with some lower back and core.

Whatever you choose to do in exercise or sport or simple trying the latest product, do what works best for you.