

Okay really, New Year's Resolutions, do you even remember them? Set goals! Writing down your long or short terms goals increases your chances of success. Write one down right now before continuing the article.

I received several emails last week regarding my previous article written on age and injury. Many readers asked specific questions about injury protection concepts and how they make a difference to exercise and outdoor activities. During this time of year, I also receive an equal amount of questions from our members about pre-summer conditioning. These two topics have indirect relationships.

During the winter season, ankles sprains, tweaks, or twists are common. Most people take leave, ice or even have the ankle checked out by a medical professional but the pain or discomfort usually subsides after time. That amount of time has a significance impact to outdoor activities or exercise. The area of concern, in this case the ankle, is called a "compromised area".

Let's draw an example from my imaginary male friend named Travis. He is in his mid 40's, fairly athletic, does multiple outdoor activities from skate/cross country skiing, mountain/road biking, hikes/runs and occasionally does drop in workout classes in the valley.

Travis twisted his ankle on ice in January. He did not do much for it other than stay away from skiing and workout activity for a few weeks. After feeling better he resumed normal activities. A few months pasted and Fred noticed a weird sensation in his ankle or "felt" it during one of his drop in workout classes. He worked thru it and went about his time through spring break, the end of ski season and then off-season.

The Jackson weather turned nice in April to the point where Fred wanted to begin working on his pre-summer outdoor activities and started to ride his bike around town as well as run. Fred "felt" his ankle again during running and after biking, no pain indicated but it was becoming annoying so he began hiking instead where he did not feel anything during but felt soreness or stiffness after each hike. Fred continued to ignore the "feeling" of his ankle and worked thru it and never really had it treated in any manner. He still tried to run and found that his back was aching/uncomfortable that was never there before.

Does something to that affect sound familiar? Was his back pain a result of his ankle? His ankle is a compromised area, which will always be a compromised area. A good possibility to Fred's low back pain/discomfort is his compromised ankle. He altered his walking pattern; the compensated walking pattern inhibited his glute muscle from firing in movement; his low back ended up over working for the lack of glute firing.

However, does that mean every compromised ankle problem is a result of the knee, knee, back pain/discomfort? Understand what I am writing here. Many times compromised areas effect other areas of the body. I am not diagnosing or treating through this column, I am simply stating that, as outdoor enthusiast in this valley, we tend to "work thru" compromised problems without getting a clearer understanding of alignment, exercise form, and non compensated patterns of movement. It is imperative to not just exercise, but exercise with proper form and integrity of movement to ward off potential compensated movements that may result from compromised areas.

Enter: pre-summer outdoor activities or workouts. All workouts should be gradually progressive and include single leg development exercises. An excellent example is single leg runners. We place a small object three feet in front of the body on the floor and reach down to touch with the hands while the swing foot reaches up and back to counter weight distribution. If Fred was in our class we would encourage him to slightly shift his weight to heel of the standing single leg to help engage more of his calf/hamstring/glute. This helps the body learn to use all they muscles in synergy during single leg use, which conveys into low intensity activity, like walking or even hiking to a small degree.

As far as outside activities, use the weather as your guide. During the Jackson off season, there is not much to do in the mountains until the snow is gone. Thus, as outdoor activities become more manageable, gradually increase your time within your activity. For example, many people begin running about 40 to 60 minutes initially to be outside but have not run since October of previous year. So we preach less is more. In the beginning, start with small amounts of time doing whatever outside and use that time to pay attention to biking, walking, hiking, or running form. That could mean run for 5 minutes and walk for 1 minute. By working on the form, you still can spend time in the sun and work on

movement efficiency. Everyone is such a hurry to shed his/her extra winter “fat” pounds and they end up overdoing areas that could result what Fred experienced because he worked “thru it” or did not give the compromised area is due credit.

If your running, concentrate on foot placement (mid foot), arm swing (wrist should pass midline), standing tall (small lean forward during running) and core engagement (glutes, lats, abs part of your core). If your biking, be attentive to equal pulling and pushing with your less dominant side through your feet. If you paddling, engage your core by digging your feet into the foot peddles. If your still skiing, stretch afterwards!

Enjoy mud season!