The Art of trying to do too much: How to combat the human desire for instant results

With the rise of technology we have seen a severe shift in people’s perception concerning gratification to a greater emphasis on instant gratification. Market focus has shifted to focus on giving the consumer exactly what they desire; we have become a society fixated on instant gratification. This is rampant throughout the fitness industry, with hundreds of programs promising to lose 20 to 45 pounds of Fat and being the next perfect system that only needs 30 minutes 3 times a week to look PERFECT. Whatever the flavor of the month is, people buy into hook, line and sinker, quickly dropping macronutrients from their diet and adopting this new workout routine that guarantees you will reach perfection. Now honestly, has this ever worked for any of you? Ever?

# **So WHY do people do this?**

**#1 - Pride**

Obviously I cannot answer this for every single human in existence. But, I can point out the obvious from someone who stands from a distance and observes people struggle through this cyclical system of trying out the newest flavor of the month. For many, the problem is that people don’t know what they are doing and we humans hate to admit that we don’t know something. Add in the fact that fitness is all about manipulating your respective body with dozens of people watching and we create a lovely mental storm where people’s pride and ego get in the way of ascertaining the correct information. It is hard to overcome this stigma and to have the proverbial balls to ask others how to do go about fitness; so let’s make a nice shortcut for you and use me! If you have any questions concerning fitness, by all means ask; odds are I know the answer or I am more than willing to find the answer! Seriously send me a message and I’ll gladly provide a long winded explanation for you all to read!

**#2 - Priorities**

We spend so much time learning about how our world around us works and very little time ascertaining how our bodies work. Many of you can tell me how our solar system is arranged, the difference between convection and conduction heating, the concept of DNA replication, but if I asked you what a ventilatory threshold is and where your two thresholds are and what they represent I will more often than not receive blank stares. In the United States, as well as many other developed countries, we pay far more attention to the world around us and very little attention to what we are and how we function. We’d rather know how crappy traffic will be today, what the weather will be like, and how the stock market is performing. Time for some change!

**#3 – Unrealistic expectations**

The big secret to having the shredded six pack, the impeccable pectoral muscles, the rippling biceps is not the routine that these people do, but rather that they pay attention to their body and how their workouts affect their body. They listen to what their body actually craves and provide the brain and body with proper nutrients, an adequate amount of sleep, and they rest when appropriate. Oh, let’s not forget one of the pivotal aspects: they cheat! And by cheat I mean they don’t live within a box; they still enjoy burgers, pizza and junk food but restrict that intake to once or twice a week. We are human and are bound to cave into our desires and eat delicious victuals that are anything but healthy, but this is necessary! Our brain works in a wonderful Reward:Cost paradigm, always calculating whether the cost of expending energy, effort, neural activity is worth the reward. The same applies to how well you adhere to a healthy diet; if rewards (cheat meals) are not included your brain tends to not appreciate all the effort (cost) you are investing into making positive health changes. This is the main reason diets do not work long term and why so many fail to make consistent changes to their diet.

So how do you go about making this shift from eating unhealthy snacks or foods that are full of calories that don’t satiate our bodies true nutrient needs? Nice and slow! Remember, making giant sweeping changes will not spell success! Reduce your intake gradually and your body can adapt to these changes and in turn will create lasting behavioral changes concerning your dietary patterns. Eat out 3 times a week? Try over the next two weeks to only eat out twice and in another two weeks reduce it to once a week. Be smart about the changes you make as well; if your diet is primarily junk food, phase it out over numerous months and don’t try to go cold turkey. Remember, your body is smart and will shut down and enter crisis mode if you try to alter too much at once. The goal is to making a lasting difference in your behavior that will shift you toward a healthier lifestyle that allows you to do everything and anything you desire.

**#4 – Forget that big picture**

If you live like a square, is that really living? I live by the mantra “there’s no such thing as a diet, just more exercise” and approach fitness as a wonderful way to challenge myself each and every day to improve who I am and what I am physically capable of completing or attempting. Do I expect you to have that same mentality? Nope! Not yet at least hehe. Learning proprioception is an art that everyone needs to learn. It is beyond unfortunate that many haven’t been provided the opportunity to develop this skill, yet fortunately, regardless of age, this skill can be developed and mastered.

# **So HOW do I change this behavior?**

Creating lasting behavioral changes is one of the hardest components for people to tackle as it’s too easy to go to an extreme. Here are a few suggestions to create lasting changes:

**Make a list** – determine everything you would like to change concerning your habits. Be clear and definitive with what you wish to change. “be less lazy” won’t cut it, define the habit and what aspects need changing.

**Create a long term table** – most habits take months or years to form, and typically take twice that time to break that poor habit. Be aware of how long things will take to occur; losing 20 pounds and keeping it off is not attainable in several months, but is more than possible over a 4 to 6 month period.

**Progress reports** – it’s just as important to create a plan as well as to insure that you are sticking to your plan. Personal progress reports are a wonderful way to reinforce what you are doing as well as provide you with some positive feedback as you transition toward your goals.

**Shift from a weight focus to a lifestyle focus** – American society is obsessed with weight and we pay a heavy toll for being so fixated. Try to shift your goals away from “losing 20 pounds” to task oriented goals like “hike Tiger mountain in under an hour.” Your weight is not indicative of how healthy you are, merely how much your mass fights gravity. Once you reach a healthy body fat percentage (12 - 17 % for males, 20-22% for females) the focus should shift to what you are doing. For example, you typically can only complete 10 push-ups before reaching failure; a smart, realistic goal would be to try and complete 12 push-ups before failure within the next month.

**Find something you ENJOY** – you will reach the greatest amount of success if you find something within fitness that you enjoy. So running on a treadmill isn’t your thing? Go hiking, enjoy the outdoors! Don’t enjoy weightlifting? Try pilates or bodyweight exercises. Don’t like gyms? Be engaged in outdoor activities. It matters little WHAT you are doing as long as you are doing something!