

Learning to Love Exercise

Everyone knows that exercise is “good” for you. But most people think the main reason to exercise is to burn calories. This is true, but the real MAIN reason for exercise is because it makes you feel good and from that you are empowered to change old habits.

Our bodies were made to move and work. Unlike machines, the more we use our bodies, the better they become. If you want to keep a classic car from breaking down, you park it in your garage and rarely drive it. But if you do this with your body, it deteriorates fast!

I believe that anything that is important to our survival was made to be automatically enjoyable. Reproduction and eating are two examples. Exercise is another. Exercise produces powerful neurochemicals (brain chemicals) that are more powerful than any man-made anti-depressant or medicine. However, just the blood flow, muscle contraction and deep breathing makes us feel good.

Hypnotists and psychologists have long used muscle contraction to elicit relaxation within the whole body and mind. And in all my years of owning gyms, I have never seen a person leave the gym NOT feeling better than when they came in.



So if exercise is so great, why do so many NOT do it?

I have found that a person is either addicted TO exercise or addicted NOT to exercise. There's really no in-between. Here's why this happens:

Power of the positive feelings about exercise > Power of the negative feelings about exercise = Exercise Addiction

Power of negative feelings toward exercise > Power of the positive feelings about exercise = Exercise Aversion

When the negative feelings that can be associated with exercise are greater than the positive feelings exercise produces, exercise will never become a habit. Only when the negative feelings go away or decrease enough for the positive feelings to be experienced and thus an exercise habit can develop.

The negative beliefs about exercise

Understanding human needs allows you to understand yourself. Human needs are VERY powerful in motivating what you do. The most powerful human needs are:

1. **Approval**
2. **Control**
3. **Safety**

Approval is by far the most powerful and core human need. This need is invisible for most of us but it's the driving force of your most powerful emotions such as guilt and anger. It causes you to procrastinate and buy things to keep up with others. Wanting others to approve of and appreciate you is very powerful within your brain whether you are consciously aware of it or not.

Our need for control causes us to desire things that we are familiar with and move away from things we are not familiar with. Being able to control things allows you to feel confident you won't screw up or fail and lose approval. Your brain hates to feel like it has no control over things or situations.

Going to a gym as a new person you are going to run smack up against your powerful needs for approval and control. Some, especially older folks might fear their physical safety in that they could injure or hurt themselves physically. But it's your brain's fear of hurting yourself mentally that is the huge barrier for new people entering a gym or even going outside to exercise.

Approval fears:

- "What if someone I know sees me?"
- "People will see how weak and out of shape I am"
- "I'll look like a fat fool around all those fit people"
- "What if people see me using a machine incorrectly or doing something wrong"

Control fears:

- "I don't know how to use the machines"
- "I don't know what I should be doing"
- "What do I do if other people are using the machines I know how to use"
- "What if I do all this work and get no results"

Negative beliefs that cause negative feelings toward exercise:

1. "I'm not good/smart/capable enough to be successful at exercise"
2. "People will judge and make fun of me because I am fat and trying to exercise"

3. "Gyms have mostly fit people in them"
4. "Fit people are cocky"
5. "I have to be in shape to go to a gym so I should exercise in my home until then"
6. "I can't afford to hire a trainer so I'll skip the strength machines so I don't screw up"
7. "Exercise has to really hurt to be effective"
8. "I don't have time for 2 hours of exercise a day to get results"



How to make exercise a habit

To make exercise a habit, you must eliminate the negative beliefs that are overwhelming the positive feelings that come from exercise. If you consciously think through these, by asking yourself, "*Why do I have this belief?*" you can start to choose to see it as false and holding you back. Even more powerful is hearing others you respect talk about the falseness

of these beliefs and for you to experience the falseness of these beliefs!

- 1. Ask yourself: "*Why do I have this belief?*"**
- 2. Listen to others you respect talk about the falseness of the belief**
- 3. Set out to prove to yourself the belief is false**

Remember, what you believe you see, so when you go into a gym with the belief that gyms are full of "fit" people your brain will tend to focus on the fit people and miss the not-so-fit folks. There could be 2 super-fit people and 5 not-so-fit and you'll go home and tell your spouse that they gym is full of fit people!

Remember, because your brain is a defensive mechanism, it will do this and it will trick you with false perceptions all day long to keep you safe. But this safety also keeps you stuck and away from what you really want.

Ignore the negative feelings and focus on the positive

Because your brain is a defensive mechanism, your brain will look for and produce negative feelings your first several weeks of exercising. But using this simple principle will help you get past those negative feelings to allow the positive feelings to take root and grow:

What you focus on (think about) grows

This simple principle of how your brain works is the cause for depression, anger, anxiety, jealousy and all negative emotional states that screw up our lives! What you think about, or picture in your mind, becomes the dominate feeling. For example, if you focus on your muscles and breathing while doing a strength machine, your mind cannot think about other fit people at the same time. If your mind wanders, bring it back with the power of Self-Talk. Simple words verbalized like “Push”, “Stretch”, “Nice!”, “Yes!” and “feels good!” can bring your mind back instantly to what you are doing rather than who might be looking at you. When you start to feel inferior and out of place you can say to yourself: *“I feel strong! Who cares who’s here! I no longer live fearing others! I AM strong! YES!!!”*

SEE results

Additional positive reinforcement to make exercise an addiction is to SEE results. There are two kinds of results to look at:

1. Workout progress
2. Body progress

Most people naturally focus singularly on their body’s visible progress as a sign of whether or not their efforts are paying off. So many people focus on their weight only and miss the many other important things that will improve the first day you start exercising like:

- Feel better
- Sleep better
- Less back pain
- Feel more energy
- Feel more flexible
- Less or no headaches
- Feel like eating better
- Feel like doing more



Most importantly, within your body, there are magical things taking place that you cannot see. Things like your good HDL cholesterol increasing, your insulin sensitivity increasing, brain chemicals keeping your brain healthy are increasing. Your risk factors for EVERY disease known to science start DECREASING after your first days of exercise!

But we all focus on the scale!

Seems insane when you think about it doesn't it!

Workout Progress

Your brain LOVES progress. It's that whole need for approval thing going on in your brain. It comes from the massive positive feelings you experienced getting a gold star on your report card and mom and dad being happy and proud of you. This need is hard-wired into your brain second only to breathing! So if you lifted 15 pounds last week and this week you lift 20, you'll get a HUGE jolt of positive feelings—if you notice (you're not focused on negative beliefs and feelings). These positive feelings cause what you're doing to become a habit.

So keeping a workout journal and SEEING every increased rep, weight, time or level and FEELING the positive feelings of progress is *very important* in causing your brain to learn to LOVE exercise. There are many things you can SEE progress in to feel positive reinforcing feelings including:

- Weights used
- Repetitions performed
- Sets performed
- New machines or exercises learned
- Resting heart rate
- Sit-and-reach test (hamstring flexibility)
- Push-ups to failure
- Sit-ups in a minute
- Walking speed
- Jogging speed
- Level used on cardio machine
- How much time at certain level on cardio machine
- Ability to walk a mile
- Ability to jog a mile
- Ability to jog 5K or ½ marathon, etc.
- How far I can bike outside

Ask your trainer how to test on the ones you are unfamiliar with.

Only you

Only you can teach your brain to Love exercise by seeing and focusing on the positive feelings and proving your negative beliefs as false. Even if you've always hated exercise you can do it—but only you can



do it. Nobody can change your thinking for you. It is your choice.

ASSIGNMENTS:

List what negative subconscious beliefs you have about exercise and going to a gym. Then cross this out and write what you truly believe consciously.

Example: Negative belief: ~~Everyone in the gym is fit.~~

My True conscious belief: Not everyone in the gym is fit and besides I want to be around others who are successful so I can become successful!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Set your goal to PROVE each one of these fears is not true! Look for proof!

Other than bodyweight and your strength and cardio workout information, how are you going to measure and keep track of your progress to create positive reinforcement? Examples: Hamstring flexibility, sit-ups in a minute, time to go a mile and resting heart rate.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Where are you going to record these? _____

How often will you test each? (every 2, 3 or 4 weeks?) Write after each item.

To separate your brain's emotional occupation with weight loss, write out how YOU now understand that by first teaching your brain to love exercise (by focusing on the positive feelings and ignoring or disproving the negative), that PERMANENT fat loss results will come later after you teach your brain to love exercise and love eating healthy:

Write how you understand that without establishing a I WANT TO habit for daily exercise, permanent weight loss can never occur:

