

The Massive Fitness Trend That's Not Actually Healthy at All

The world can be a crazy place, we all know that. And giving in to the fear that is endlessly manufactured by the media is a constant temptation on the path to fitness greatness. It's also true that sometimes sh!t gets real, and we need to be prepared to adapt instantly. Why? Because...

Life Is a Battle!

But (and it's a big fat booty butt) just because life is a battle doesn't mean you have to destroy yourself every time you go to the gym. Any serious athlete knows that rest, recovery, and periodization (smartly modifying intensity based on goals, performance, and ability) are absolutely crucial to optimal performance (aka kicking ass).

There is a massive trend in the fitness industry to glorify exercise as an all-out war on the body. I call it the militarization of fitness—all the boot camps, Marine-inspired workouts, ridiculously intense body building routines, and general glorification of pain. Even our recovery and regeneration techniques are prioritized by how painful they are. (Got a knot in your hip flexor? Go roll that sh!t with a baseball!)

This trend is a symptom of a much larger disease. We live in a culture obsessed with aggression, and it has found its way into every facet of our lives, even our workouts.

Exhaustion Is Not a Status Symbol

Well, exhaustion actually *is* a status symbol in our culture. And that's the problem—we're working and training ourselves to death. From a young age, we're bombarded with the message that to be successful, we must work overtime,

sacrifice our health, friends, even happiness and sanity to achieve what we want.

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The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered "Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."



Being chronically exhausted is not the key to success. It's a race toward disease and dysfunction. And in most cases, it causes suffering that is 100 percent preventable. Some people, like Dr. Meyer Freidman, the doctor who first identified the type-A personality trait, calls this western disease "the hurry sickness."

We never say things like "I bet I can experience kidney failure before you!" But that's how many of us behave. Even in the fitness industry, there are tons of people who look strong on the outside and are weak as sh!t on the inside. And do you know what we call them? Leaders. Because other people pay them good money to inherit their same warped and superficial understanding of fitness.

Our cultural pathology can be summed up pretty easily: too much yang, not enough yin; too much doing, not enough being; too much work, not enough play; too masculine, not enough feminine.

How Does the Militarization of Fitness Affect Your Workout?

In every way possible. It affects your health, happiness, the sustainability of your program, and your ability to reach your goals.

Do you believe any of the following are true?

- No pain, no gain. You have to suffer to get in shape.
- More is always more. Duh.
- Working out is not fun, but it's an obligation.
- If I don't almost throw up, I'm holding back too much.
- You're only as good as your last workout.
- I feel like a loser when I miss a workout.

If you answered yes, then you're at the "exercise is war" understanding of fitness. And that's fine—if you want to wage war on your body, go ahead. Many of us go through that phase. I spent a decade there, with plenty of joint casualties and war stories to prove it. So I'm not belittling you—I'm just saying that this isn't the only way to train, and it sure as heck isn't sustainable. And if you can benefit from my experience and mistakes, that would be swell.

So What's the Other Option?

Well, there are many options. But one of them is to decide that learning about the body and what it takes to nourish, strengthen, and heal it is a lifelong process, adventure, exploration, and privilege, not a burdensome obligation, nor a military operation.

There are plenty of people who love dancing and dance their way to a new body. Others get a deep satisfaction out of practicing martial arts and kung fu their way to super fitness glory. Then there are the yogis, who use movement as a way to manifest their bodies greatness.

None of these perspectives are right or wrong, but they're all worthy of being explored if you truly want a sustainable, comprehensive, and balanced movement practice. Depth and breadth of perspective, my friends. That's why you're here, reading this post and not one of those cheesy, superficial robot fitness sites.

Using Intensity Wisely and Normalizing Discomfort

There is a huge difference between using intensity wisely and using intensity compulsively. To reach your fitness goals, you will need to confront your limits and learn to handle discomfort. So don't use this post as an excuse to take it easy all the time. In fact, that's just as much of a trap as working out hard all the time.

Find the middle ground. Be OK with discomfort, and learn to interpret your body's language, sensations, and signals, so you know which days you can/should push and which days you need to back off and recover. This is something you can't outsource, and the better you get at [listening to how your body feels](#), the easier it is to train hard, reach your goals, and avoid injuries and disease.

I Wonder...

Are you willing to destroy your body to look super hot at age 30? Or are you willing to take a deeper look, explore the "less is more" philosophy, let go of your "no pain no gain" programming, and let your health, strength, and goals evolve in a natural way so that you're having new adventures and movement experiences well into

your 90s?

All health and fitness goals require sustained motivation. It's an adventure, not a destination, and you'll enjoy the adventure way more if you make it your own instead of following the herd.

Now drop and give me 20 push-ups!

This post was written by Jonathan Angelilli and was originally published on [TrainDeep](#). Jonathan is many things: recovered addict, peaceful warrior, celebrity trainer, elite athlete, successful writer, humble teacher, loving student. Above all, he is an Exercise Alchemist™, someone who is passionate about the power of holistic exercise to transform you into the best version of yourself, and to transform the entire world.