**Exercise Philosophy at The Fitness Camp**

Ask ten people the best way to get in shape, and you’ll get ten different answers. Sometimes, this is because the research is unclear or misunderstood, or perhaps your fitness professional is intent upon applying a poorly-developed one-size-fits-all mentality. However, despite the best or worst of intentions, there are four elements of fitness necessary and beneficial to the vast majority of exercisers. These four elements are:

1. Intensity
2. Variety
3. Consistency
4. Maintainability

Before I address these four elements and how they apply to someone wanting to get fit or maintain fitness, I’ll describe fitness the way I see it:

Fitness is a combination of strength, speed, agility, reactive capability, endurance, coordination, flexibility and adaptability, and the ability to effectively apply these individual elements in concert to efficiently perform daily tasks, simple and complex, athletic and non-athletic.

True fitness is achieved by subjecting the body to physical stresses (i.e. exercise) of the same magnitude faced by our distant ancestors, when survival was an everyday challenge.

Fitness requires proper nutrition—which is far simpler than most believe—and adequate rest.

By forcing the body to adapt to physical stress, and guiding the adaptive results through nutrition and exercise variety.

It is possible for nearly everyone to achieve a balance of strength, speed, agility, reactive capability, endurance, coordination, flexibility and adaptability. With this balance, attained through a training program based on regular, whole-body movements analogous to everyday outside-the-gym activities, comes the ability to apply the resulting overall fitness to the rigors of daily life.

Fitness is not achieved through fad diets.

Fitness cannot be found within the limitations of most gyms, and is never nestled somewhere in the gym mentality—

The rote belief that Monday is chest and triceps, Tuesday is back and biceps, Wednesday is the elliptical trainer at a pace conducive to normal conversation, Thursday is ab day, and Friday is leg day.

You cannot reach true fitness doing aerobics three days a week, interspersed with an occasional “pump” class (essentially group weightlifting) that never varies in programming. This mentality makes promises it rarely backs up with results, yet gives the false impression of fitness, because when do any of us see a genuine demonstration of real fitness against which to compare ourselves?

When I think of fitness, I think of Navy SEALS and firefighters—people whose lives depend on it.

Within these elite, finite groups, I imagine few of them are on the exercise bike, doing 45 minutes twice per week at a slow, steady pace. This is one of the many forks in the road where concepts of fitness diverge. You may ask, “Why do I need to be as fit as a Navy SEAL?” On most days, you don’t. But, I submit, the modern Western life—like most competitive team sports—consists of periods of relative ease nestled between moments of extraordinary stress—a car accident, house fire, moving to a new city, shoveling snow. Thus, everything in life is made easier by being more fit, *if* the fitness is analogous to life.

Fitness is more than the way you look, your body fat, your weight, or how your clothes fit. Fitness is your ability to act and react to your world, to adapt to changes—a physical and mental preparedness to “catch” whatever life throws at you, and throw it back. Whenever. Wherever. Under any circumstances.

At The Fitness Camp, we train our clients for this universal, adaptive fitness through a combination of nine workout “modes”:

1. Bodyweight (Pushups, squats, sit-ups, jumping pull-ups, etc.)
2. Dynamic (Plyometrics combined with speed bursts)
3. Interval (Progressive exercise and work/rest combinations)
4. Power (Whole-body Olympic-style movements)
5. Speed (Sprint mechanics and speed work)
6. Circuit (Multi-exercise, timed or work-based exercise circuits)
7. Mental Toughness (Muscle, cardio and mental endurance workouts)
8. Combat (Fitness-based boxing, speed burst and endurance combinations)
9. Water (Semi-submerged plyometrics, sprints and swimming)

We support these nine workout modes with joint strength and mobility rehabilitation routines, performed prior to injury, to lessen the chance of injury. Agility, reaction and hand-eye coordination segments magnify the everyday applicability of our strength, speed and power movements. The Fitness Camp integrates elements of military and Olympic training, and is instantly recognizable to those who have competed in college or professional sports as comparable to off-season and pre-season conditioning.

Despite the high level of instruction and technique training, one of The Fitness Camp’s most attractive features is inclusiveness. An entrepreneur performs push-ups next to a police officer. A marketing manager pushes a former college football player to do one more circuit round. A government contractor drops 14 pounds in two months, as sorority sisters ready their beach bodies while discovering previously-unknown upper-body strength. Disparate people with different goals and motivations achieving similar, positive results through a Consistent and Maintainable application of The Fitness Camp’s Intensity and Variety.

INTENSITY

Intensity is a misunderstood, controversial term in the world of fitness and personal training. Jack’s “intense” workout doesn’t even break a sweat for Jill, whose “intense” workout is too much for Jack to complete. So how can individuals with wildly varying fitness levels participate in the same exercise program? The key is to scale demanding elements of each workout to individual fitness levels within the group format. This is where interval training asserts itself as a tremendous tool. Interval training consists of a set period of work (e.g. as many push-ups as you can do in 20 seconds) followed by a prescribed amount of rest (e.g. 10 seconds) followed by another work period, then a rest period, and so on for as many intervals as are appropriate for the client’s goals and fitness level. In this way Jack might be using heavier weight than Jill, while Jill may be using a different interval scheme (45 seconds of work/15 seconds of rest) than Jack (30 seconds of work/30 seconds of rest) within the same minute-long interval sequence. Such a program requires only a knowledgeable, vigilant trainer with a working stopwatch.

Often, a new client is unaware of what it means to work out with “intensity.” After years of being told we must be able to carry on a conversation while exercising, it is little wonder many of us have never achieved any semblance of real results, or real fitness. Anyone who has participated in organized team or individual sports recognizes the great divide between a gym-offered aerobics class and pre-season football/basketball/softball practice. As alluded to previously, sports, and life, are built on intervals. Periods of extreme effort, then relative rest periods, followed by more effort, until the end of the game. Not only does interval training burn fat, build muscular endurance, and increase the ability to maintain speed and power, but it is kindred to life, and therefore uniquely suited to physical training.

VARIETY

The body adapts. This helps us survive and evolve, but hinders our ability to train for life and evolution, now that most of us no longer fight to meet our basic needs, and hunting and gathering has given way to Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s. This ability to adapt inevitably leads to training plateaus—that moment when you realize you’ve been pushing around the same weight for the same repetitions on the same day of the week for the past three years. This is when variety can save the day. By consistently changing the physical stimulus (e.g. movements, intervals, load) it is possible to keep the body guessing, avoid plateaus, and, shock of shocks, achieve the results we’ve always thought possible.

However, this planned variety is outside the scope of most exercisers’ capabilities. Insufficient knowledge or time constraints, or both, conspire to keep most of us performing the same workout routine, or going to the same exercise classes, for years. The body adapts, progress is minimal, boredom maximal.

In contrast, The Fitness Camp’s variety and innovation are refreshing. We won’t repeat a workout for at least nine weeks. During the first six months of 2007, out of 136 total workouts, only three workouts were repeats. As mentioned previously, The Fitness Camp utilizes many exercise methodologies while implementing a wide range of equipment. Through the course of a four-week session we will often execute a single exercise movement with two, three, even four different equipment types. This helps our clients master the movement, while delaying the adaptation response.

We take pride in delivering original workouts to our clients, and providing them with more than they could have hoped for when they first enrolled in The Fitness Camp.

CONSISTENCY

Regardless of how you exercise, consistency delivers better results. Granted, fitness researchers and experts can poke holes in the previous sentence, but in spirit it is correct. If you want to lower body fat or lose inches or build muscle endurance, you will achieve better results by exercising four times per week than you will if you exercise only three. Exercising five times per week is still better, though incrementally less so.

Our bodies are complex. We all respond somewhat differently to exercise. The intensity and variety and mode of exercise greatly impact the effects. For example—though this may belabor the obvious—if Ed goes to the gym five days per week and does standard bench press workouts each day while Matt performs a full-body circuit on Monday, swims on Tuesday, runs 200-yard repeats on Wednesday, completes a high-intensity interval sequence on Thursday, then joins Jack on Friday for a 1-rep max bench press workout, in a short period of time Matt will be in far better overall condition, and—genetic factors, starting strength and other variables being equal—may even perform better on bench press than Ed. Why is that? Exercise researchers will offer countless reasons, but at The Fitness Camp we tend to take the black box (input-output) approach to fitness: we do what works. Our clients who attend four days per week or more experience faster and more dramatic results than those who attend three days per week. This is why I encourage each client to make a commitment to their own fitness and wellbeing and carve out at least four days per week for themselves and their health. If time or money prevent attending The Fitness Camp at least four days per week, once a client reaches a certain level of fitness I will recommend off-day workouts for the client to perform at home, appropriate to their equipment and facility access. If a client is traveling, we provide (as part of the program) “hotel room” workouts free of charge. If a client misses a day—and won’t be able to make it up—we email a substitute workout, again based on the client’s equipment access. At The Fitness Camp we take consistency seriously, and do whatever we can to assure our clients’ success.

MAINTAINABILITY

The ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle is the fourth “pillar” of our philosophy at The Fitness Camp. If you cannot maintain your exercise program or the way you eat, what will you do when you reach your fitness goals? How will you make a (sometimes) complicated transition into a maintenance phase? This is, again, where time constraints and/or lack of knowledge hamstring many exercisers. Fortunately, the solution is simple. When you look in the mirror and decide you need to get in shape, or lose weight, or get rid of your love handles/hips/thighs, or want to compete in a figure competition, there are two immediate actions you can take to increase your chances of success. The first is to pluralize your goal. Instead of “I want to run a marathon,” make your goal, “I want to run marathons.” This simple conversion of your immediate objective to a long-term plan forces your solution to include the aspect of maintainability. Another example: Instead of “I want to lose 30 pounds,” try “I want to weigh 120 pounds.” The second mental shift to make when framing your fitness goal is to do so with maintainability in mind. For example, the “impossible-to-maintain” characteristic of nearly every popular diet is the reason why, five years after beginning a diet, the vast majority of dieters find themselves heavier than before they began. Can you really eat nothing but cottage cheese and grapefruit for the rest of your life? Would you want to? Eating is (or can be) one of life’s most pleasurable experiences. Why punish yourself by taking that away so you can lose twenty pounds in the next two months, then slowly, inexorably gain it all back over the following six months, when a less radical change and a little patience can result in achieving your ideal body weight while discovering an enjoyable combination of exercise and nutrition you can maintain as long as you wish?

At The Fitness Camp, we design our workout program with maintainability in mind. In addition to preserving the crucial element of variety, during the four weeks of each camp we escalate the intensity from the first workout to the last. In this manner new clients can build a fitness base while our regular clients experience a brief “easing” of intensity every four weeks, with workout intensity building to a peak during the fourth week. Because of the interval nature of our first two weeks, regular clients can regulate their own effort to upgrade or downgrade their intensity level, a process that tends to occur naturally. Every eight weeks, The Fitness Camp integrates a “forced” week off, a week designated as complete or active rest for our clients. During this week, clients are encouraged to go for a few walks or play Frisbee with their dog. Or they can do nothing. Just like finding a healthy, maintainable way of eating that includes favorite foods, a periodic week off to recharge and refresh is crucial to long-term success.

SUMMARY

With universal, adaptive fitness the goal, and Intensity, Variety, Consistency and Maintainability the avenues to that goal, our exercise philosophy makes The Fitness Camp a sound long-term choice for a wide range of exercisers. Combined with a customized, maintainable nutrition plan, our program helps people from varying backgrounds with different goals feel better and (improve their self-image) while achieving their fitness objectives.

**Intensity**—How hard are you working?

Getting results—not just going through the motions.

220-50=170

170

60

10.2 0

80

81.60

Perceived Exertion—Heart rate is important

How do you perceive yourself

How you feel?

1. Must be an athlete
2. Gauging something physically

How you maintain intensity.

Sustaining effort—without red lining