

Types of Training: The Benefits and Pitfalls of Each

Nearly all exercise has been shown to improve your outlook on life, think more clearly, stave off disease, and boosts our confidence. This isn't an argumentative cheat sheet as to why you should or shouldn't exercise, but rather, a chance to learn about a few of the different exercise options available to us and pro's and con's of type of exercise. This isn't conclusive, as the industry and available information is constantly being updated. Here are the Pro's and the Con's of some of the most popular forms of exercise today.

Heavy Weight Training: "Heavy" is a relative term, but weight training wherein you are fatiguing yourself substantially on a regular basis, in an effort to gain strength, is what we're referring to here. 2.5 lb dumbbells may not be quite enough to count here, but you don't need to bench press 600 lbs to qualify either. So, weights can help you lose the right kind of weight, you know, the fat kind. It can help reverse obesity and resolve metabolic disorders because of how it affects your metabolism. Training for strength won't build bulky size like most women think. That takes lots of work, some extreme eating, which some you are doing anyway, and sometimes some PED's as well. Weight training for strength can help improve performance in endurance based sports improve coordination and you can replicate most of the health benefits of running, swimming and walking. You can increase your base metabolic rate and thus improve your body's ability to control blood sugar. Strength training with weights can be great for the elderly as it helps prevent loss of muscle mass that usually starts in our 40's, it's great for preserving joints and improving bone density and range of motion improving balance and cardiovascular function. Weights can equal stress relief. Tufts university even completed a study indicating strength training can decrease osteoarthritis pain by as much as 43%. (cdc.gov).

It's not all positive though. Some of the negatives include the fact that exercises must be performed with proper technique and programmed properly over time. Progression and proper rest are huge factors. If done improperly, progress stalls and lack of motivation occurs. This generally means you need to have a gym membership or purchase your own equipment and often should have a personal trainer and most don't know what they're talking about so it'll take some work to find a good one. They aren't cheap, but are worth the money when you find a good one. We would argue that weight training has some of the greatest potential, but also has some hefty requirements to get the most out of it. Plus, some people find it boring. So is being unfit and unhealthy.

Cycling is easy way to exercise and site-see at the same time. Is a low skill-level activity (don't need to be great to reap the benefits), it builds endurance and cardiovascular fitness and can even help build muscle, thus improving resting metabolic rate like we discussed in weight training above. Improved coordination and balance are also benefits of cycling. Cycling can also be a great stress reliever.

Light impact on joints is a benefit for those struggling with joint issues, tendonitis and repetitive use injuries. You can even get a stationary bike or go to the spin class and enjoy some team spirit group motivation.

The pitfalls of cycling are the following, beginning with the need to purchase a bike. There is some risk of injury/crashing, but this can be fun and exciting too, right?!? Cycling is a lower-body centric, so to maintain a proportionate body, aesthetically speaking, you would need to do some compensatory training for the upper body. (your legs are going to grow more than your pecs, and

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massive guns aren't built by a spin class). Repetitive cycling can create tightness in your back from the posture assumed by biking, so there is a need for exercise to counterbalance that. It's tough to make cycling into a complete training system, but it is a great start and is a very fun sport.

Crossfit: Ok, let's just get this out there- Crossfitters are bad A! Tough for sure. Good for overall health in the short term with all the benefits of weight training, including increase in EPOC, meaning you burn more calories at rest. The variety keeps things fun and the camaraderie is huge.

However, you may be surprised at how negative I am towards crossfit. The biggest two strikes against crossfit is that it is so poorly "quality-controlled" that there is an undue risk of injury. With the variety of movements taught by many untrained (two day course and a test) the risk of injury inherent with weight training is amplified with Crossfit. The choice of movements aren't focused or designed for anything. Some of the movements put the shoulder girdle, back, and elbows in such precarious situations that the risk for me is just too much. Secondly continuous testing, rather than training creates an ever building level of fatigue, both physically and mentally, which again leads to injury. Optimal progress comes from consistent training and periodic testing, not from continuous testing. That being said, it's better than sitting on the couch, and with a good coach that can program workouts appropriately, there can be some great benefits from crossfit training and a solid base fitness level can be achieved.

Running/jogging/marathon training is one of the most common and also probably the least expensive. Get some good shoes, and ladies need a good bra, then you're good to go. Cardiovascular conditioning has a myriad of health benefits that we probably don't need to review. Running can improve your bones, is a great stress release and there's no new skills to acquire. Running is pretty easy to have decent form and not cause injury. As far as cardio work goes, you will burn more calories than a stair stepper, rower, cross country ski machine or stationary bike.

On the flip side, repetitive use injuries are very common in the running world and is limiting to those with joint issues. Excessive running can cause a decrease in muscle tissue over time, leading to a decrease in our ability to burn fat. We can actually trigger our body to hold onto fat stores as well, since we're going for long jogs the body wants to make sure we have enough fuel to last. This is especially common in those training for marathons. If it's a treadmill you're running on, boredom may be an issue as well. Simply put, this may not be your best solution for the long term, though there are many health benefits that can be enjoyed.

Yoga/Pilates: Bodyweight exercises can promote musculature as readily as working with weight machines initially, but yoga is something more. It's almost like a medicine as well as a workout. As with most forms of exercise, Yoga and Pilates can be a great stress reliever. Lest we be judged as uninformed, we do understand, and want you to understand yoga and Pilates are not the same thing and there are varieties of each. They all work towards flexibility, balance, and have a low incidence of injury. It is also has a low cost to start. That being said, it would be wise for beginners to be coached by an experienced instructor. Beginners will need to modify a lot of the postures and positions until ability increases. There isn't a huge calorie burn or a serious generation of power and strength built through these types of programs, but you might be surprised just how much you can accomplish with them. Coming from a world record holding powerlifter, this stuff is hard!

So, now you are probably thoroughly confused and trying to figure out what our stance is on which training type is the best. Well... it depends on your goals and what makes you excited. The ideal training set up would be a blend of strength training, cardiovascular training (this can be done with weights too, if you'd like) and some flexibility training. So, assuming you like soccer you could play

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soccer once a week, have 1-2 weight training workouts during the week with a little running or agility training at the end of those workouts, and some yoga, even if it's just the yoga Ipad app, once a week. If you aren't really into anything, go jog twice a week and lift weights twice a week, mixed in with some stretching twice a week while you watch some TV. If crossfit is your passion be smart and cycle it on and off. Maybe something like 2 months of crossfit and then a month or two of heavier, low-rep weightlifting with some relaxing trail running or hiking to keep up your conditioning. Most importantly, get with someone who knows their stuff. I prefer those that have excelled in a sport in their adulthood, or have 10+ years of practical experience. We have the saying "I am not going to learn how to bench 405 from someone who only benched 185." Surround yourself with successful people and you will become successful just keeping up.

Next week you get to put this in practice and write your own plan! Get ready 'cause here you come!!!