The Healthy Hash

aims to simplify and make practical points from a very busy and confusing hash of world health information.

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What training intensity level is required to succeed?

Although this subject can be very complex, I'm going to take a broad brush approach when I talk about intensity.

There are many scientific ways to measure & express intensity like % of Max Heart Rate, % of VO2 MAX, rate of work... however, depending on whether you're training upper or lower body, in water or on land or even upside down, these measurements cannot be compared easily to one another & are confusing! I'm going to suggest you use a simple **PRE** scale of 1-10 to represent your **P**erceived **R**ate of **E**xertion, regardless of the type of training you are doing.

The **P**erceived **R**ate of **E**xertion **(PRE) 1-10 SCALE – A DEFINITION OF TRAINING ZONES.**

1-5 = Beginners or those returning to exercise or those returning from injury or illness. Stay in this training zone for at least 2-12weeks.

5-8 = Exercisers typically over the age of 50 & those with medical contradictions like high blood pressure, diabetes and those on certain prescribed medications.

7-8.5 = Exercisers with a solid base fitness under the age of 50 years.

9+ = Intermediate to advanced level of fitness under 50 years whom only train here semi-regularly. For example, amateur athletes use this zone for a maximum of once per fortnight. Immune, hormonal & central nervous systems etc. can become depressed if you train in this zone too often.

If your goal is to change your personal health for the better, you need to train progressively at as high a PRE as you can, on a regular basis. If your goal is merely to maintain achieved levels of strength & fitness you still need to stay within what we call the Training Zone or risk losing your health.

For example, as you become fitter, the heart rate at the same workload is reduced, so you need to increase your workload in order to maintain the same PRE. For example, after a little training you may find you need to run instead of walk to maintain the same level of intensity as previously. If 7/10 PRE is not maintained, no further increase in aerobic fitness will occur, only maintenance of the current level. To give you an idea, a PRE of 7/10 means you can talk, but prefer to avoid conversation.

To finish I'd like to visit a common urban myth that says, "Training at a lower intensity burns more fat." This statement is actually true in a sense but often gets taken out of context because the more important factor is about the total calories expended by the body. Here's why... say you trained at 5/10 PRE for 30 minutes & also again at 7.5/10 PRE for 30 minutes. Comparing the low & high intensity session, calories burnt from fat gives you the same result. However, during the high intensity 7.5/10 workout you spend 50% more total calories for the same period. As you know from my previous article, this means that you are more likely to cause a caloric deficit without having to workout for hours each day at a lower intensity! The extra benefit of the high intensity workout over the lower intensity session is that you get a bonus body energy deficit as you body works post exercise to return to its pre-exercise metabolic rate. This maybe an extra 2-3kg of pure fat loss per year for recovery alone!

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