

When we attempt to motivate change, we often make two mistakes:

1. Aspirational marketing
2. Sharing the facts and science. They are important, but they do not motivate people. Emotions do.

The fix? A true fitness leader discovers the emotional relevance of exercise – essentially, why someone cares enough to do it – and points people toward a reminder of this on a consistent basis.

Exercise makes you healthier in the future...but people don't care. Does it make today better? Our future success will be determined by our ability to powerfully answer this question for people.

Simple Yet Powerful Technique to Teach Someone the Transformative Power of Exercise

There is a simple technique you can use to capture the shift in mood and energy level that your next workout provides. If you use this for a few workouts in a row you can, in effect, teach your brain to get the immediate “reward” of exercise or physical activity.

Here's how to do it:

1. Use the “Voice Memos” app on your smartphone.
2. Immediately prior to exercise, record a very short statement describing how you feel physically, mentally, emotionally – or perhaps all three. (Just keep it very short.)
3. Immediately after exercise, repeat step 2.
4. Play back the recording from steps 2 and 3 right after each other.

You will notice immediately the effect from both the words you use and the tone and enthusiasm in your voice.

A few notes:

1. If you do not use a smart phone, then write down the before and after statements on a sticky note or perhaps on a paper calendar. This misses the opportunity to hear your own tone of voice, but it can be effective.
2. This works even if you decide to use the same words as the before statement. I once had a client that was skeptical of this technique and he claimed that using more positive words by itself would create the shift in tone. I told him to use “I feel sluggish” (his “before” statement) as his after statement, too. He was impressed that his tone sounded so much more energetic and positive in the “after” utterance.
3. Sometimes you start feeling pretty good too – but the participation in exercise will nevertheless improve your mood and mental state.

Take note of what effect the action has – no matter how small. Too often, people exercise because they “should” and as a result this strips away much of the perceived benefit from the positive behavior because the context of a chore or obligation removes much of the enjoyment around it. This technique changes that.

Why This Works

The shift in mood states becomes the motivator. Once you've done this a few times and listened to the recordings you have essentially taught your brain to chase the reward of feeling better after exercise or any physical activity. You have created a behavioral loop where you have taught your brain how to enhance mood and derive a powerful and positive effect from a single exercise effort.

A single action that leaves you feeling better emotionally or mentally expands possibilities and generates hope. And this will help you reframe exercise and change it from a motivational challenge to mood-transforming opportunity.

Getting Started with Exercise: Choose the Intensity You Prefer

If you are just getting started or currently dislike exercise and do it grudgingly, do not worry too much about how hard you exercise at first. One study found that people were in a better mood when they picked their own intensity level instead of using a prescribed moderate-effort workout. Some people love high-intensity, some low, and some moderate. (Brellenthin, 2017) When starting out on exercise, it is better to use the intensity you will find more agreeable as the

ensuing consistent participation will likely enhance not just your capacity for, but your willingness to participate in, other intensities than the initially preferred one. You can end up doing all intensities if you get consistent enough to build confidence and derive the fitness benefits of your initially preferred intensity.

Practical Examples

Walking: Never *Just* Walk Again

1. “Hard Way” Walk / “Long-Cut” Walk – take the path of *increased* resistance: walk while balancing on the curb for a few steps, weave around signs, utility poles, trees or benches.
2. Step on a crack (or don’t step on a crack)
3. Coin Flip Directional Movement – flip a coin to determine direction of movement (e.g., tails = right-left axis; heads = front-back axis) flip and move that direction (use any movement: step, lunge, shuffle, jump)
4. Ball Toss – toss a ball to yourself or a partner while walking
 - Bounce every third toss in the air
 - Toss quickly back and forth between hands or between yourself and a partner
 - Toss increasingly higher until you miss a catch
 - Toss over tree branches, off walls, signs, etc.
 - “Snowflake” toss – each toss is unique (behind the back, under the legs, around torso, etc.)
5. Numbered Ball Toss (write numbers on tennis ball with dark permanent marker)
 - Count up – start at zero, toss and catch, adding the number most visible.
 - Count down – start at a predetermined number (e.g., 100) and subtract the number most visible on each catch
6. Object Toss (stick, rubber chicken, reaction ball, etc. variable objects require more attention and focus to catch successfully) – toss to yourself or a partner
 - Stick – regular catch or try to flip it end-over-end then catch. Option to add one more flip with each catch (i.e., flip one revolution, two revolutions, three revolutions...once stick is dropped start over)
 - Reaction ball – hard rubber ball with bumps on it / also version with numbers on it
 - Rubber chicken (or similar fun, random object)
 - Foam Dice – toss/catch & add or subtract the numbers
 - Whiteboard Dice – make up your own stuff and write it on the dice

AVAILABLE NOW: **Alzheimer’s Fitness Specialist Course:** www.Funtensity.com/AlzFitCourse. Go deeper on the concepts presented today to find out what you can do to optimize the use of exercise to help prevent and slow the progression of Alzheimer’s Disease – now the 6th leading cause of death in the US. We have bodies that outlive our brains and it’s time we started protecting our brains too.

The course includes:

- Over 11 hours of video
- Nearly 100 exercise videos
- 200+ page manual with expanded information
- Interviews from people whose loved ones died from and are living with the disease as well as people who have used strategies from the course to avoid it.

The course is approved to provide continuing education credits from various education organizations (e.g., ACE, canfitpro, ISSA, NASM, AFAA).

References & Resources

Brellenthin, A. G., Crombie, K. M., Hillard, C. J., & Koltyn, K. F. (2017). Endocannabinoid and Mood Responses to Exercise in Adults with Varying Activity Levels. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, 49(8), 1688–1696. <https://doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0000000000001276>

Presenter Contact:

Jonathan Ross, AionFitness.com, Funtensity.com

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Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn: **@JonathanRossFit** and **@Funtensity**

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