

CrossFit – Results Based Fitness

There are so many ways to work out these days; it can be hard to choose. Some regimens focus on calorie burning, some focus on endurance, some gyms just let you go at it alone with no guidance and on the other spectrum others supervise you're every move. With so many ways to work out, what should we do?

As always, and no surprise to the Lifebook crew, that depends on what our goals are. My fitness journey began with being strong like Ah-nold, how I looked and having “big guns” as my motivation, but after much pain, injury and little result, I started asking better questions. I started asking “how should I exercise to get healthier and feel better.” Much to my surprise the answer to those question made the BIGGEST change in my health AND my physique and has done so for thousands of others. As simple as this is, healthier people look better, feel better and are more fit. But how do we define fitness and how can we work out to feel better?

Enter CrossFit:

Essentially CrossFit was born as a way to quantify a person's level of fitness (all of you goal setting junkies should love this ;-p).

FITNESS boils down to WORK CAPACITY over a period of TIME in ALL DOMAINS. For example, if I ask you to move 1000 lbs. of weight a distance of 100 meters as fast as possible and timed you, we would be able to mathematically figure out your work capacity. Physics tells us that Force = mass x acceleration; and Work = Force x Distance. **The faster you move the weights = the more work you can do in a period of time.** Same goes for a 400m hill sprint, 100 kettle bell swings or 50 push-ups as long as you cover the same distance in less time, you are more fit.

Your Shape, looks, Body Fat %, triglycerides and cholesterol are the RESULT of your level of FITNESS and HEALTH, and the absolute best way to improve those things is through getting really good at increasing your work capacity. Whether CrossFit, Insanity or P90X training, **High Intensity Intervals are key**, so make sure you MEASURE AND RECORD your weights, distances and TIMES! They show improvement and maintain motivation well before the scales start to budge.

Again I want to emphasize that **Intensity and not Time** is the most important for getting results, CrossFitters will tell you they have done 6 minute workouts that have left them more spent and elicited more growth hormones and body shaping than a 45 minute jog ever did. Once you have your form down, working hard does equal results! Plain and simple to get the most bang for your buck (and beauty for your body) interval training is a necessity. This is the type of exercise that CrossFit excels at which is why when you go the CrossFit Games (super bowl of CrossFit) you see the most beautiful spectators of any athletic event, true story!

The other key to fitness I mention above is ALL DOMAINS, to really measure fitness we have to be balanced. CrossFit looks at 10 pillars (Speed, Strength, Stamina, Endurance, Agility, Flexibility, Accuracy, Power, Balance and Coordination) and creates workouts to challenge all aspects of a person's fitness which ensures excellent fitness and an excellent body (as long as we're eating and sleeping well too!). The broadest spectrum of movement is very important if you want that well defined body with the "V or hourglass" figure. The more varied your program, the better adapted your body will be for life and for looks.

This covers why CrossFit is so good at increasing fitness but what about the way you FEEL? Some of you may have heard that CrossFit can be dangerous...

Any workout regimen has its risks, but we need to understand Functional Fitness to understand why NOT partaking in CrossFit like activities is MORE dangerous. But, before we continue, there is something you need to know: **the healthiest humans that have ever lived are/were hunter gatherers** who moved (functionally), ate unprocessed foods from the earth and lived in tribes where community and contribution is/was an essential part of life.

Why is that important? Well, knowing that a hunter gatherer lifestyle produces the healthiest human beings gives us a reference standard for health and also answers the question: How should we move (exercise) for health? You may be thinking, how does this answer anything? Well, if we want to be an excellent basketball player, we should watch and learn from the greats, right?! The same is true for health, if we want excellent health, we should learn from those with excellent health (i.e. figure out what types of activities they did and do them).

Enter CrossFit again via FUNCTIONAL FITNESS as the best form of exercise for health.

Functional fitness (FF) is defined as movements using natural, universal motor recruitment patterns, in which there is a wavelike contraction from a person's core out to the extremities, eliciting a powerful neuroendocrine (nervous system and hormonal = muscle up, fat down) response and enabling people to move their body or objects quickly and safely. **Basically, although FF affects your muscles drastically, functional fitness trains movements NOT muscles.**

Functional Fitness is core centered, excellent at burning fat, building strength, is super safe and can be applied to everyday life, making YOUR LIFE EASIER and making you FEEL BETTER!

One of the hallmark moves of functional fitness is the SQUAT. Done properly this move strengthens knees, hips, low backs and is a tremendous abdominal workout. This move is so practical in everyday life that it is nearly impossible to go a day without doing one, but most people do it improperly wreaking havoc on all the parts listed above. By training movements, functional fitness programs make life easier because you learn to use your body efficiently while teaching you what you can and cannot do, which is super helpful when life throws something heavy to lift your way.

Speaking of lifting heavy stuff, that is also incredibly important for men and women for its hormone release and strength gains. Humans were created/evolved for life and life requires

lifting things. Sure science has engineered much of our required lifting out of everyday life, but that doesn't mean our body has benefited from that. Not lifting is a sure-fire way to ensure you can't lift. The strength gained from lifting heavy things will carry over to make your life easier and the act of lifting sends powerful messages to your body telling it to add muscle and burn fat. This is exactly what gives the figures that most of us want. You should be lifting to improve your STRENGTH to WEIGHT ratio that will ensure you look and feel strong but will not get bulky like a strongman.

One last note about safety, FORM IS PARAMOUNT FOR STAYING INJURY FREE, and not all CrossFit's are created equally. Whether a long time athlete or beginner, it is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT to look for a "On Ramp" or "Ramp Up" type program that are small group with an emphasis on FORM, FORM, FORM. This will ensure you stay safe and get the results you are after and the results will keep you at it for a lifetime!

Train Functionally and Intensely 4 Health & Fitness,

Dr. Nicholas Araza DC, CCWP, CFL1

Want more on CrossFit as the sport of fitness ?

http://library.crossfit.com/free/pdf/CFJ_Trial_04_2012.pdf