

Individualization for Fitness Success

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The effectiveness of an exercise program is directly related to how the principles which characterize exercise science are applied. Some people may not be interested in studying exercise science (or maybe you are) but if you are interested in losing more body-fat, building more muscle, increasing your strength, stamina, and flexibility and improving your health then you should at the very least be aware of these principles and have a basic understanding of them so that you can get the most from your exercise program. There are 7 principles: intensity, volume, frequency, overload, specific adaptation, diminishing returns and individualism. These seven principles interrelate with one another and thus must be properly applied and balanced so that your exercise program will be effective in helping you achieve your objective.

So where should you start? Well of the 7 principles, the first consideration in prescribing exercise (developing a specific training program) must be the individual.

We all differ in our goals and our physical and psychological abilities and limitations. Some people develop muscle and lose fat fast whereas others do so at a much slower rate. For some, exercising hard (intensely) leads to a feeling of accomplishment while for others the experience is very unpleasant. One person's goal may be to make a complete physical transformation in 12 weeks while another is in search of a long-term program for improved health and fitness. There is a wide range of differences among us from both a physical and psychological standpoint as well as from what each of us expects or wants from our training efforts. It is these differences which makes it absolutely necessary that each of us is following an exercise regimen that is right for us.

The first step in developing your exercise program is to state *clearly* what your goals are and your motivation for achieving them. From here you must determine your needs, abilities and limitations (physical and psychological) in order to properly prescribe the proper amount of exercise. And yes, exercise must be prescribed. It must be prescribed in the same way a doctor prescribes medicine for the fact that, "too much exercise can have negative consequences in the same exact way that too little exercise can negatively effect your health and physical development".

The level of intensity (effort), volume (how much) and frequency (how often) necessary for optimum development not only varies from one individual to the next but from one muscle group to another. Keep in mind that some of your muscles may develop with little effort whereas others it takes a great deal of mental and physical effort to make even the slightest progress. It is important to keep notice of these nuances so that you may determine the proper course of action for training a particular muscle or muscle

group.

An individual's ability to tolerate exercise stress varies tremendously from one person to another. Some may be able to train frequently where others may experience diminishing returns if training as often. This is why following a scripted or canned routine out of a magazine only works so long before it stops working.

[NOTE: exercise *is* a stress because the act of exercising temporarily degrades your body's functional capacity by diminishing your strength through the repeated breakdown of muscle fibers and depletion of your energy resources as well as placing strain on the joints and tendons]

Individualizing your exercise program takes time and patience. It is a learning process and the information you gather is invaluable. Too many times people mindlessly jump from program to the next without making a determination as to what worked or what did not work and more importantly figuring out why. Knowing and understanding these things can save you time in realizing your body's potential and helping to get you the results you want...faster!