

Variety Is The Spice Of Training

Q – I have been going to the gym for 6 months now, initially I lost weight but now don't seem to be getting any fitter or losing any more weight. Can you help?A –This is one of the biggest reasons that people give up on their fitness programme. It can be depressing thinking that all that hard work is getting you nowhere. Don't despair just yet though, as with some simple changes you can get your training routine going again and get back on the road to achieving your goals. When we exercise to improve our fitness, or to lose weight, we are putting the body under stress. Just like with any drug it has to be taken in the right amount, take too much and it does bad things, take too little and it has no effect. Similarly, if we never change the type or dose of exercise we use, the effects start to lessen as our body adapts to it. While all your effort is keeping you healthy and active, if you want to keep improving then varying your training is essential. You might remember the first time you went through your training programme and it felt challenging, does it still feel like that? I'm guessing the answer is probably no. So, how can you get that essential variety in your workout and restart your fitness campaign with a bang? Adding variety means more than just increasing how far you run or how much weight you are lifting. Remember what happens if you overdose on a drug? Here are some ideas you can apply to your training programme to add some variety, and more importantly stimulate some changes in that tired old workout routine!

- Never repeat a workout more than 6 times without changing SOMETHING in it (that doesn't include what you wear).
- Try doing your current workout in reverse.
- Avoid long steady state cardio routines and instead use interval training, which takes less time and is more interesting.
- Use heavier weights to target strength or higher repetitions to improve muscle endurance. You can do this on alternate days/weeks or months.
- Use a range of exercises, doing exercises on one leg or with one arm at a time can add increased challenge.
- Combine exercises into a circuit format with less rest, this adds extra work to the cardiovascular system, improves endurance, and is a great way to burn body fat.
- Every 12 weeks take a week off training completely to rest body and mind.
- Use a mixture of activities such as strength training, yoga, pilates or swimming rather than rely on one approach to get you to your goals.
- Consider using a trainer once a month to get new exercises and training ideas.

Remember, if you change nothing, then nothing changes. To keep it fun and to keep improving, mix up your training approach starting today!

About the Author

Personal trainers New York, New York personal training and New York fitness counselling service dedicated to those who want to improve their health.

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