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## Myths and Tips for Exercising your Recovery

by Batista Gremaud



You probably already know that alcohol and drug abuse changes brain chemistry over time, which affects judgment, memory, emotional states and perception. These side effects last long after an individual has stopped using. Although people tend to think of exercise as just good for the body, it also benefits the brain by the creation of new neurons.

Did you know that exercise increases the flow of oxygen in the brain? It also promotes the formation of blood vessels, enhances repair of neural tissue, and generates new neurons in the areas of memory formation. This is exciting news as it has become scientifically proven that exercise isn't just good for occupational therapy. Exercise actually has the potential to repair brain cell damage and assist in mood elevation and stabilization by increasing the production of mood-boosting neurochemicals such as dopamine and endorphins. Other studies indicate that it even has the added benefit of potentially tempering impulsive / compulsive behaviors with the increased production of serotonin. This could mean fewer relapses resulting in an increased recovery success rate.

Does every exercise produce the same results? No! The general belief is that cardio promotes weight loss, yoga creates lean sculpted bodies or that a local personal trainer will give you the discipline and tools to achieve the body of your dreams. While these statements may hold some truth to them, the notion that all exercise provides maximum opportunity for brain health is a myth. In this issue, I want to address the first and most commonly misunderstood exercise modality, cardio.

**Cardio Myth:** Aerobic activities facilitate burning calories for only the duration of the chosen activity; it produces a large amount of cortisol in the body (stress hormone) that suppresses the immune system. This also can provoke weight gain and inflammation. It is hard on the joints. Cardio does release endorphins, so you will have a feel-good sensation, but a better and more efficient way to go is to change the composition of your body by replacing fat cells into muscle cells through strength training.

**Alternative Tip:** Weight lifting enables you to burn calories up to 72 hours after your training and is just as beneficial for heart health as cardio. Weight training also releases massive amounts of mood boosting neurochemicals faster.

We will address the remaining myths in the next issue. If you have missed the article on the role of the nervous system in recovery visit the May/June 2015 issue. For more information visit Dr. Fitness USA at doc@DrFitnessUSA.com

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