

# Tomatoes Like Fear



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## **Overcoming fear leads to accomplishment, which leads to satisfaction.**

When you perform an activity that is satisfying and is fun, there is a greater likelihood of your engaging in that activity again and again. Staying healthy requires a person to engage in regular physical activity.



MResearch articles, news reports and journals are full of data supporting various modalities of exercise and types of training programs. Many of these articles are based on scientific studies conducted in safe, controlled environments

such as research labs. In spite of the supporting data that specific exercise is beneficial, keeping up with a structured fitness program continues to be a challenge for many people. For example, people make health-related resolutions once a year or enthusiastically begin a new fitness program, only to see their enthusiasm wane soon after. From a tomato's perspective, this is because no matter how much supporting data exists for exercise being "healthy," if it is not fun, it will soon lose its appeal.

That we keep making these resolutions points toward our desire to make an effort in the right direction; but, we lack the staying power. Why would we continue to perform an activity that does not inspire us? Well, we wouldn't. So, we follow the same pattern,

performing the same old uninspiring, scientifically proven, structured "labor" at the local health club.

## **Has your workout lost its fun and challenge?**



There are some people who really enjoy working out with weights, machines, or attending fitness classes and such. A multi-billion dollar

industry is in place to help provide everyday people the motivation they need to continue doing boring and uninspiring activity. In many cases, people pay thousands of dollars for nothing more than to be inspired by a trainer. In other cases, the fitness class provides an instructor to make sure that we're not going to hurt ourselves. The unfortunate fact is that much of the excitement is strategically removed from working out and it is presented as "safety."

Fitness machines must first and foremost be designed with the users' safety in mind (inadvertently

removing the need for the user to independently perform the movement). This is for good reason: if clients are getting hurt, they are not working out as much, and thus will cancel memberships; or worse, stop working out altogether. And while we are getting technically better at lifting, isolating, and performing various movements, the absence of personal challenge and fear diminishes the successful completion of a workout to simply the amount of weight we can move this week compared to last week.

Consider a typical gym member who is looking to work out. When going into the gym, he surveys the floor for something that doesn't look too intimidating on which he can work up a good sweat. Of course, having read that cardiovascular health requires continuous movement makes the elliptical machine a great choice. Last week was spent at "level 2" so this week, the challenge is "level 3." Plug in the headphones and away we go—from the day's activities, from the world around us and worst of all—away from the body! Yep, tune out from the monotonous drudgery that is being forced upon your body because it's good for you. The mental and physical challenge represented here has been reduced to pressing a different button on the machine for the week. The same scenario is played out by changing pins on machines or by substituting weights for performing various lifts.

## So, what does this have to do with fear?



Well, fear is a component of many activities we AVOID performing. And it is not always fear of bodily harm; we are afraid of looking stupid when we stumble or fall; we fear doing 'it' wrong, too loudly, too slowly; we are afraid of being judged. Children do not naturally possess these fears, but rather they learn them as they get

older, and they become well cemented in adolescence by peer pressure, later becoming a part of the everyday mindset.

If we add into our routines personal physical challenges, we have the opportunity to see real life gains and experience a sense of accomplishment. The person who is unable to leap with both legs up onto a bench, or who can't touch his toes or carry his luggage has the opportunity to see those things change almost immediately. Now we have a person who is more apt to gain satisfaction from his workouts and thus keep them going. This means our clients have a better quality of life and perhaps a smaller waistline.

## It's physical and mental.

To allow clients to challenge their own limitations that cause hesitation (the mildest form of fear), we need to begin our work with an appropriate assessment of the physical and mental aspects of the client. This may include a broad range of questions or even some physical tests designed to increase client self-awareness. Following are some sample questions you may want to include in your assessment. Feel free to adapt the questions to fit your own clients' needs. (These questions are directed to the general public and not a specific group.)

### Question 1

Is there anything physically you can't do that you would like to be able to do?

### Question 2

Why do you work out? Or, Why don't you work out?

### Question 3

What is your favorite activity? Do you have any physical limitations that may affect your ability to perform that activity?

The goal of any interview protocol with your clients is not to gain information for yourself, but rather to help the client gain understanding for themselves.

## There likely will be a different set of questions posed to athletes, like...

### Question 1

Is there a direction or side you cannot move to/toward?

### Question 2

Do you favor one leg or arm when you set up?

### Question 3

Do you gravitate toward certain conditioning exercises?

Again, the goal here is to open the door to the athlete's mind that they have limitations that need to be addressed. An athlete cannot afford to ignore and thereby accept these limitations and hope to be successful over the long term.

## Take the client out of their zone.

to assess the physical limitations of a client, we suggest you come up with a series of physical obstacles that take the client out of their normal activity zone.

### Things like...

- One-legged hops
- Two-legged hops
- Sprints for time - 100yard dash
- Skipping
- Inchworms
- Overs
- Handstand



These and other such activities will let you immediately recognize if the client has a physical limitation, coordination issue, or physical - combined with mental - hesitation. The "O" Course can really facilitate these types of assessments.

Of course, you will have to tailor the physical activity to your client, but it is important to find their perceived or real physical limitation(s). As they continue with Patch routines, the limits will decrease as their fun level increases.

## Avoid doing stupid things...

As we incorporate challenges designed to make a client less fearful and increase the FUN side of working out, it is important to avoid doing stupid things. There are some folks who always take it too far, and these "adrenaline junkies" use incorporating fear into an activity as the reason for the workout. Personal challenges need to be handled responsibly. Our goal should always be to assist clients in overcoming challenges, and not to de-condition their sense of fear. A healthy recognition of the things that make us afraid gives us the best opportunity to conquer those fears.

### Go Play!

## What are you afraid of?

Are you aware of any limitations of your own that may come up in the course of a workout? Take a minute to jot them down. Then, see if there is an exercise or movement you could do to begin the process of overcoming the limitation(s). If you are able and would like to share your experience, send us either a 2-minute video clip detailing the limitation and the way you are overcoming it, or email us the details. We will share your contributions On the Vine with your fellow FUNstructors!

