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Inactivity Inertia

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By now, we all know that there are no shortcuts or magic bullets to physical health. Sure there are common-sense tips and strategies that can aid the journey down the path but we must all still persevere down the road, we must all strive to feed our bodies the right kinds of food and in the right portions, and we must also get the right amount of exercise that our bodies need in order to sculpt out the shape and muscle development that we strive after. Despite knowing these truths however, there are still some who just can't seem to get lasting results – or any at all – and upon closer inspection and questioning these people, there is always one common thread among them: that is inactivity inertia.

Simply put, inactivity inertia is the force or feeling of constantly being at rest, without the desire to move or change from the current status-quo. It is what keeps us planted in our recliners and couches and what causes us to indulge in unhealthy activities and plays a part in poor eating habits. So in this article, we will be looking at recognizing inactivity inertia when it is present, and also steps that we can take to change to active inertia and to stay that way.

Recognizing inactivity inertia

When you awake in the morning, how do you feel? Do you feel rested and energetic? Or do you feel groggy and tired? A staggering number of people when asked this question said that they felt groggy and tired in the morning. In-fact, that feeling has become so common-place that we tend to actually dismiss it as normal! Well, please allow me to bring you this earth-shattering statement... While it may be *normal* in this modern-culture, it is certainly not normal or natural for us humans; and more than that, it is a sign of an unbalanced physical life.

Perform this experiment if you will, assuming you are getting at least eight hours of quality sleep per night (and if not, then you should start examining why that is), you should not still feel tired when you awake, if you do feel tired then inactivity inertia may be rearing its ugly head in the morning for you. Try this: Next morning when you awake, slowly (but steadily) get out of bed, take a deep breath through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth and then proceed to turn on some bright lights, or if the sun is already risen, take a moment to catch some morning sunlight. How does that feel? Do you suddenly seem more awake? The reason is that doing those things sends chemical signals to your body, telling it that it is morning and time to wake up. Most people today, jolt out of bed at the sound of the alarm clock and rush to get going without catching any morning light and relying on coffee or other stimulants to stay awake. The truth is while, jolting out of bed and rushing may make you feel energetic for a short period, it is

“nervous energy” and it doesn’t stay with you. The body will use up adrenaline for that energy and you will crash afterwards and it is not healthy because your body never gets the “morning signals”.

Another sign of inactivity inertia is what I call the “sleeper”. This is a constant feeling of tiredness throughout the day, usually accompanied by yawning (at any time in the day), especially after a meal. This sign is usually related to a “bad morning start” such as outlined above. The truth is, the more we stay at rest, the more tired we will be because we are sending our bodies the signal to rest. More on this...

Stopping inactivity inertia and staying active

Our bodies are very receptive to signals. We send our bodies signals all day every day through our actions and inactions. Soon our bodies develop rhythms based on our actions and these signals and that is how inertia (active or inactive) begins. This will work in our favor because the more we send our bodies the signals to stay active, the easier it will get as we progress, and soon we will be the energetic individual that we desire. Also there is no age barrier to any of these principles; they work equally well for those who are 7 or 70... so don’t let anything try to discourage you, you can do it!

First thing’s first....Start the day right. If you haven’t already done so, perform the experiment in the previous section of this article. Although we have split or days up into logical blocks of time, to our bodies the day is one long chain, and if the day is started badly (with nervous energy for example) it is much harder to recover. That being said, there are some things you can do now to begin sending active signals to your body at any time of day...

- **Soak up some rays actively.** This does not include sunbathing! What you want to do is spend some quality active time in the sun, whether taking a morning or noon-time walk, or simply having your office shade opened while you work. Letting sunlight in will not only raise your energy level and send “active” signals to your body, but often times it also serves to improve a persons’ mood. We were never meant to live in darkness.
- **Rev your engine in the morning.** The best time to do cardio exercise is in the morning. This is one of the best ways to send your body the “morning start” signal. I personally like to do squats, followed by pushups and crunches, however if you are just starting out, I would suggest starting with 10 pushups, and work up to a comfortable morning routine. Do not overwork! It won’t help, it will hurt. Also, a morning pre-breakfast exercise routine should not be weightlifting. That would be damaging for reasons outside the scope of this article.
- **Don’t eat and sleep.** One of the most detrimental things we humans do is eat a big meal and then rest and/or fall asleep afterwards. This sends giant “inactive” signals to our bodies and it’s a huge fat builder. The truth is, unless we eat a big meal, we only need an average of 30 to 40 minutes to digest the food and then we can (and should) be active again. Anything beyond that, will start to tell your body to store up fat reserves, and promote inactivity.

- **Stay active, even while resting.** There are a lot of exercises you can do to stay active even while sitting in a chair or lying down. I have listed a couple of my personal favorites below, and all of these will send active signals to your body any time.

By doing these things, you will begin to break the cycle of inactivity and stop the inactivity inertia in your life. The more diligent you are in doing these things regularly, the faster your body will pick up on your new lifestyle and the sooner it will change the daily rhythms that our bodies develop. You will also find that over time you will become more finely tuned to recognize inactivity inertia when it tries to set-in and you will be more apt to stop it before it starts.

Exercises for anywhere

Here are my personal favorites for exercising in a chair or lying down. There are plenty more, but these should get you started.

Chair crunches

Sit-up as tall as you can with good posture, arms at your sides with feet flat on the floor. Inhale with your abdomen and then exhale as you raise your knees to your chest. Exhale as you slowly lower your legs back down to the starting position. Start with 5-7 repetitions and work up when it feels comfortable. This exercise works your lower abdominals and core.

Grabber

This one can be done sitting or lying down. Extend your arms out in-front of you all the way. Open your hands with palms facing outwards and fingers pointing towards the ceiling. Now rapidly close your hand making a fist and open it up again to the starting position. Do this for 30 seconds, and gradually increase time. You'll know it's working because as you fatigue it will feel as though you are squeezing peanut butter. We affectionately call this one the "peanut butter test" around here. This exercise works your hands, wrists and forearms.

Shoulder shrugs

As the name implies, start by sitting up straight, arms to your sides, and pinch your shoulder blades together. Now slowly shrug your shoulders upward and roll them forward and back down in a smooth motion. Repeat 5 times and then reverse the motion; rolling from front to back. This exercise when done slowly will also relieve tension/stress in your neck.

Conclusion

There are no magical fitness shortcuts, and no fancy exercise equipment or drugs are truly necessary. While there certainly are other factors for complete physical health and balance, this is definitely a step in the right direction for those who are truly committed to stopping inactivity inertia and becoming physically healthy. If you have made the

commitment today, congratulations! Rising to the Challenge is an honorable deed and I commend you for taking charge and making positive change in your life.

James