



News

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Focus on Transitional Fitness: Focus on You

By Adam Milligan, President, EQUIVITA

I know that many of you who directly receive this newsletter have personal experience with Transitional Fitness, have an idea of what it is, and understand how Transitional Fitness Training differs from Physical Therapy and Personal Training. However, given the number of times we are asked about what it is that we do, I thought it appropriate to focus this month's newsletter entirely on Transitional Fitness. Our topic for July's Fit U class – and we only had one because at the moment, I am writing this from a beach miles away – was Transitional Fitness: Creating an Environment to Allow Change.

At first announcement of the topic I received lots of responses questioning whether we were using the best words to describe what we do. It seems that the word 'transitional' conveyed to people an idea about a progression from one area to another. "Exactly," I said. The words about 'allowing the body to change' created a belief that we weren't doing anything but setting the stage. "Exactly," I said again.

In our society we tend to believe that we can force the body to do things – to change. I have even heard people talk about "healing the body." How would you heal the body? Can we speed up the healing process? The answer, of course, is no. We can address those areas that we know to slow down the healing process: nutrition, hydration, and rest. We can remove stressors and problems that hinder healing. In essence, we can only create the ideal environment for the body to heal. When we apply this to making changes in your body from fat loss to postural distortions, we aim to create the environment to allow change. It should be stressed that the right environment is different for every body and every person. The process of how we find the right environment and how we came to develop Transitional Fitness was the primary focus of the July Fit U class.

Rather than go into more detail about the history of Transitional Fitness, I want to focus on a recent experience that will exemplify what it is that we do and the

importance of creating an environment to allow change.

As is not unusual, a woman who does not live nearby but was aware of what we do came into EQUIVITA for an Initial Fitness Assessment. This woman had a history of being fairly active, but had become increasingly more sedentary since retirement and was looking to regain some of her fitness lifestyle. From the assessment results we found some strength imbalances and reviewed those specific areas that we should target with a program designed to fit her lifestyle, goals and body needs. Once the program was established we went through each exercise to ensure she understood the proper form and sent her off to start her program at home.

As luck would have it, once at home this client felt very motivated and went to her local gym and signed up to work with one of the gym's Personal Trainers. She would send me emails to let me know that she was keeping up with the program and was also following additional exercises assigned from her trainer. She was very motivated.

After approximately 12 weeks, this client was back in town and wanted to get in for an Assessment to see how she was doing. During the reassessment, we also took time to look over the exercise plan that her gym's Personal Trainer had programmed. Now, for me, this is the point that things start to get a little more difficult and require diplomacy. On the one hand, I love that the client has been motivated and kept up with exercise. On the other hand, most Personal Trainers have little experience modifying programs for individuals and, unfortunately, her new trainer was no exception. She had been given a program that included exercises I was certain were more advanced than she could perform correctly and had been instructed to perform 3 sets of 12 repetitions for each exercise.

Trying my hardest to be supportive and not to have her feel frustrated that the time and money she had spent had been, at best, a waste and, at worst, harmful, I started to talk with her about the exercises she had been doing. I began by expressing my concern that by performing the listed exercises she might be placing more stress on her knees because we knew that her hip muscles weren't strong enough to do things like single-leg squats and she had been doing lunges and stairs that required strong hip muscles. She asked, "Is that why my knees have been hurting? I have never had knee pain and now they...well, I have been aware of them."

I assured her that there are too many variables and you can never really know causes, but we do know that the body will find the easiest possible way to accomplish the exercise. If the body is used to leveraging joints and not using muscle, then that is what it will do.

This is the biomechanical basis for Transitional Fitness. There is no universal ideal that your body should follow, but there are specific ways that your specific body will default to, if allowed. Typically, these default patterns are the easiest possible way and that means fewest calories expended. Since this is often the exact opposite of the reason most of us exercise, we had to create a method of finding these weaknesses and imbalances. Thus, the Transitional Fitness Comprehensive Assessment was created. Once these weaknesses and imbalances were identified, we needed a way to ensure that the exercises would be performed and tailored in such a way to strengthen the weaker muscles that had not been working. This is the fundamental basis for Transitional Fitness.

As the above example indicates, not all of the clients who use our Assessment services use our Transitional Fitness Training services, but the importance of a biomechanically-based comprehensive assessment cannot be overstated. If you are going to spend the time exercising, please ensure that you are doing the right things for you, your body and your goals. Be sure to set the stage properly to create an environment to allow change.

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