

Progress: Keeping A Healthy Perspective

By Fredrick Hahn

All people have the ability to improve upon themselves physically, primarily in the form of increased muscular strength. An increase in muscular strength causes benefit to every other system of the human body that is capable of improvement. Depending upon one's genetic potential, the level of improvement will vary from person to person. Not all people can become extremely muscular or run marathons. In fact, most men and women will never attain or even come close to attaining the muscular strength or cardiovascular endurance of the "champions."

But no need to fret. Winning a gold medal at the Olympics isn't everything. The typical person can, however, significantly increase his or her muscular strength and endurance to a great degree, perhaps as much as 200-300% in a few years time. But in order to make these changes occur the intensity of effort while exercising must be extremely high.

Most people looking to improve themselves physically fail to attain the kind of health and fitness they desire because they are misled that exercise should be fun and easy. Due to this misleading information, they also misunderstand the difference between physical fitness and physical health. Though both are important in the overall scheme, they are very different. In other words, it is possible to be a champion marathoner and suffer from severe coronary artery disease or a sedentary office worker and live to be a heart-disease-free Octogenarian. Again, there are limits to how fit (or healthy) one can ultimately become. Keeping these limits in their proper perspective is an important part of a successful exercise program. Though the supplement companies and other for-profit entities would have you think otherwise, there is no such thing as "super health."

After a certain point, maintaining a given level of strength is the progress – the only progress one can or should expect. Keep in mind that, though strength training enhances muscle strength, endurance, cardiovascular efficiency, flexibility, metabolic rate, gastrointestinal transit time, lowers blood pressure, increases bone mineral density, improves serum cholesterol, etc., the natural aging process is working "against" us. It's sort of like walking up a down escalator to reach the next floor. For a time you are able to walk fast enough to make progress. After a time, the best you can do is keep at a standstill. But after a while, the best you can hope to accomplish is to keep the downward movement as slow as possible. Though strength training is a sort of "fountain of youth", it's not the Holy Grail.

In short, we cannot continue to physically improve forever. We are all getting older. Most adults (30 years plus) who train intensely and consistently will achieve all they can physically in approximately 2-3 years time. Afterwards, maintenance becomes the primary goal. And, since



obstacles such as illnesses, vacations, life's stresses, etc. will always arise progress may be even slower. It's unrealistic to think that you can improve every time you exercise. No one is a "perfect machine."

Serious Strength's advice to everyone is to do the very best you can each time you train and don't worry that you did a little less of this or a little more of that on any given day. You can't appreciate a Rembrandt by looking at it from 2 inches afar. You need perspective. Know that if you are strength training properly you are engaged in the safest and most productive form of physical exercise currently known. At the end of each session, mentally pat yourself on the back for a job well done simply for doing it! Change, if it is of any worth, comes via hard work and proceeds slowly but surely. As the adage says "Slow and steady wins the race."

Copyright ©1999 Serious Strength, Inc. All rights reserved