

Balance is the Key to Life

by
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Having played and coached baseball all my life I have been aware of the importance of balance for a long time. In baseball, a player's success is oftentimes due to their balance. Balance is vital for success in all sports. Lately, I have also begun to realize the importance of balance in every aspect of life. As a trainer there are several key areas where I try to stress balance. These areas include:

- Creating balanced workout programs
- Balancing length tension relationships in the body
- Balancing work and rest
- Restoring hormonal balance
- Balancing nutrient consumption
- Balancing the diets pH load

When I design workout programs one of the first things that I look at is balance. I try to ensure that each program has an equal balance or workload for all the muscles. There are six basic planes of movement.

1. Quadri-cep dominant
2. Hip dominant
3. Upper body vertical pushing
4. Upper body vertical pulling
5. Upper body horizontal pressing
6. Upper body horizontal pulling

My job is to ensure that my clients perform equal amounts of work in each movement pattern. Too many people perform workouts that are unbalanced. For instance, it is very common for guys to spend more time on horizontal pressing than on pulling because they want to develop the beach muscles. When unbalanced programs are utilized it leads to muscle imbalances and this is going to lead to pain, injuries, and a decrease in performance.

Most pain and injuries in the body are the result of length tension relationships that are out of balance in the body. Every muscle has an opposing muscle or antagonist that must be balanced. For example, many people struggle with back pain, but the root of the problem oftentimes is not in the back, but in the hips. When the muscles in the hips become unbalanced it causes the pelvis to tilt. The most common thing that I see is what is called anterior tilt of the pelvis. This means that the pelvis is being rotated forward. This condition arises from tightness in the front of the hips and weakness in the muscles that stabilize the back side of the pelvis. When the balance is restored in the hips the pain in the lower back often disappears. Throughout our bodies there are several length tension relationships that must be

maintained in order to keep the body pain free. A properly designed program is one way to help ensure that these relationships are in place.

One of my other tasks is to make sure my clients balance the amount of exercise that they perform with the proper amount of rest. Rest is critical for making gains in the gym. Overtraining is a real thing and it is something that I run into occasionally with clients. It is critical that our bodies have time to recover from workouts. If proper recovery is not taken then improvement will not occur. Many people that I train are often surprised when I start working with them and tell them that they are training too much. Remember there must be balance in everything and balancing work and rest is no different.

Balancing hormones is probably the thing that I spend more time addressing than anything else. The hormones in our bodies are made to function in a delicate balance and when that balance gets thrown off it causes many health problems and can make body composition transformations very difficult. The main problem that we run into today is with insulin. Our bodies are made to have a hormonal balance that has very low levels of insulin. The typical Western diet produces really high levels of insulin that wreak havoc on our endocrine system. When insulin is chronically high it dominates the body and causes the levels of other hormones to get out of whack. For instance, insulin and growth hormone are antagonists. Therefore, when insulin is high growth hormone is essentially shut down. Since growth hormone is a potent fat burner, it can become nearly impossible to change your body when insulin levels are chronically elevated. Restoring hormonal balance is essential whether your goal is to change your body composition or optimize your health.

To restore hormones to their proper balance, a balanced diet is needed. The typical diet that I prescribe is balanced in each macronutrient with about 1/3 of the calories coming carbohydrates, protein, and fat. This diet is lower in carbohydrates than most people are used to and slightly higher in fat. This diet helps to restore insulin levels in the body by controlling the amount of carbs that are eaten. It also provides the body with the essential amount of protein that we all need. If you over consume any of the macronutrients, it will lead to weight gain. Thus, a balanced approach is best when it comes to diet.

Another aspect of the diet that I address is balancing the pH load. Every food that we eat presents itself to the kidneys as either an acid or a base. Our bodies are made to function with a blood pH of 7.0 which is neutral (another case of perfect balance) and when the pH of our blood deviates slightly (usually acidic) our bodies begins to buffer the blood by leaching calcium from our bones which can lead to osteoporosis. Our bodies are always seeking a state of balance whether we like it or not. Foods that are acidic when they reach the kidneys are: sugar, starches, cheese, dairy, meats, processed foods and many nuts. Foods that are alkaline when they reach the kidneys include fruits and vegetables. The typical Western diet is very acidic because it contains many processed foods, grains, sugars, and very few vegetables. The acidic environment caused by this type of diet can lead to a number of health problems, including osteoporosis and cancer. Since I recommend that my clients eat a balanced diet with adequate amounts of protein and fat, this means that my clients must also eat a lot of vegetables in order to balance out the acidic load of the proteins and fats. This helps to ensure a balanced blood pH. Maintaining this balance is one of the keys to good health.

In my opinion we should strive for balance in everything we do. Whether it is trying to find the balance between your work life and your home life, or the proper balance between exercise and rest periods, it is a never-ending task to try and keep your life in balance. Finding the proper balance in your life and your training is something that takes some effort, but is well worth the time.