

# EXERCISE vs RECREATION

## WHY YOUR LIFESTYLE DEMANDS TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

*Fitness Issues*

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BY: MICHAEL HINTZ — OWNER of ABSOLUTE FITNESS

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The most destructive as well as the most misunderstood concept in fitness today among researchers, the commercial health facilities and the general public alike is the confusion of exercise and recreation. All of us can probably agree that both exercise and recreation are important in the overall scheme of health and fitness and that both overlap to some degree. However, to reap the maximum benefits of both or either, these terms must be well-defined and be segregated into practice.

In recent years many of the national health and fitness organizations have been inappropriately lowering the standards of exercise and telling people to: “relax”, “go at an easy pace”, “stop if you feel discomfort” and “exercise should be fun”. In addition, newspapers, television news programs, magazines, books and health and fitness professionals have been singing the same tune. We are constantly being told that activities such as gardening, grocery shopping, cleaning the house and taking the stairs instead of the elevator, all qualify as exercise. However, an active lifestyle does not replace the need for a structured exercise program. Exercise and physical recreational activity are two completely separate entities. Simply stated, exercise is a process whereby the body performs work of a demanding nature. The initial reasons for performing exercise are purely physical. Exercise is a requirement to improve the physical condition of your body. Recreation on the other hand, can be defined as activities that are diversions from your daily routine. The initial purpose of recreation is to enhance your mental health. It is something that you choose to do because it is fun. A mistake that most people make is to condition themselves through recreational activities. A person may experience some fitness benefits from physical recreational pursuits, but they will be marginal and incomplete

### **Effective Exercise –Vs– Exercise Effect**

A proper exercise program has immense potential physical benefits – probably more than most people even suspect. Therefore, why are so many people not reaping the full benefits that exercise has to offer? Could it be that we are not being correctly informed about what constitutes a result-producing exercise program? Just because an activity increases your heart rate, elevates your blood pressure, makes you feel fatigued, induces labored breathing, makes your muscles sore, or makes you sweat, do not assume that you have meaningfully productive and worthwhile exercise. You can have all of these exercise effects without qualifying for exercise. Exercise effect does not assume effective exercise. The essence of exercise assumes a purpose of physical improvement. If you choose to participate in an activity that you feel improves your fitness level and the results are little to non-existent, maybe you are not involved in a productive exercise program.



## **Assumed Objective –Vs– Real Objective**

Most people assume that the main objective of an exercise program is to discover how much weight they can lift, how many repetitions they can perform, how far and fast they can walk, run and swim, or how long they can keep their heart beating within the “target heart rate” zone. Many people are led to believe that just by participating in an activity that involves movement, using a specific piece of exercise equipment, utilizing a unique training method or becoming involved with a new type of exercise class, they will automatically reap physical fitness improvements. This misguided approach can often lead to poor results, over-training, injuries and frustration.

The most important question to ask yourself before beginning an exercise program is, “What does my body require to maximally improve its physical capacity and appearance?” The answer to this question leads us to the real objective of an exercise program. The real objective is to correctly utilize the tools of your exercise program (exercise equipment, training method, amount of effort and concentration, level of relaxation, etc.) to provide a sufficient stimulus to your muscular system. The greater the stimulus, the greater your exercise results. Therefore, your body will produce physical fitness benefits, if and only if, the stimulus of exercise is present and the body is then permitted adequate rest, nutrition and perhaps most importantly time, in order to produce improvements in the body. (Stimulus + Recovery = Results)

If you confuse and mix exercise and recreation, you will grossly compromise any forthcoming physical benefits of exercise; you destroy a large degree of the fun that recreation should supply; and you will make both more dangerous than they need be. If you can place exercise and recreation in the proper perspective, the quality of your life will markedly improve.