

Traditional Exercise vs. Functional Exercise...*What do I need to know?*

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Recently, the fitness industry has made a shift from the traditional methods of exercise to a more functional approach. For many years *traditional exercise* with bodybuilding, the use of performance machines, and prolonged cardio workouts ruled the fitness scene. Until recently we begun to see some of the *traditional exercise* regimes lose their popularity giving way to a more functional approach. Why the change in methodology? To answer the question we need to take a look at some of the basic differences between the two approaches. In doing so, we will be better informed when making the choice of traditional vs. functional exercise.

Traditional exercise with bodybuilding, the use of machines, and sustained cardio workouts focuses on specific body parts and muscle groups. Using this form of exercise has proven to increase muscle mass and strength. When performing strengthening movements the use of machines is generally recommended to lock into the correct motion in order to isolate the muscle groups being used. To lose weight or improve heart health and endurance, exercise for a sustained duration is recommended. While these forms of exercise have proven to be effective, they still lack an all around approach.

On the other hand, *functional exercise* is an often over used term to describe a wide range of practical exercises that focus on improving the ability to perform daily activities. Simply put, it is a combination of exercising muscle groups, isolating joint movements and use of the body's energy systems. Unlike traditional exercise, muscle groups are worked only if they are weak. The level of muscle weakness is determined by assessing the ability of the person to perform certain strength and movement patterns. In general, movement pattern exercise is done to improve joint health and stability. The focus on movement patterns vs. muscle exercise also helps maximize the body's performance in every day tasks. Another immediate benefit of movement pattern exercise is the activation of more muscle fibers, resulting in greater muscle mass. Functional exercise also incorporates an assessment of the body's energy system requirements to determine the intensity of the exercise regime based on personal exercise goals. This equates to less time spent on cardio exercise yet yields the same desired results...better heart health.

Knowing the differences between the two exercise approaches will help aid in the selection of the exercise program that's right for you. If your primary goal is to gain lean muscle such as an athlete preparing for competition, then a traditional approach will more than likely give you the results you're looking for. On the other hand, if you are trying to improve you're capacity to perform a specific job task or a full range of daily activities, functional exercise is by far the best approach.

In most exercise situations a marriage of both systems is needed to achieve optimum results. By combining these two systems, personal exercise outcomes can be achieved with greater efficiency. So when selecting an exercise program, a personal trainer or fitness center look for those who have an understanding of both approaches to exercise.

Functional Exercise

| <i>Functional Approach</i> | <i>Examples</i> |
|----------------------------|---|
| Calisthenics | Jumping Jacks, Mountain Climbers, etc |
| Body Weight Exercises | Push-Ups, Pull-Ups, One Leg Squats, etc |
| Dynamic Flexibility | Movement while stretching |
| Stability Balls | Any exercise performed in a safe manner |
| Medicine Balls | Throws, Chops |
| Bands | Any traditional exercise |
| Imagination | Common sense and science |
| Intervals | Sprints, Skips, Jumps, Hops, etc |
| Kettle Bells | Chops, Thrusts |

Traditional Exercise

| <i>Traditional Approach</i> | <i>Examples</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Machines | Lat Pull, Leg Press, Leg Extension, etc |
| Barbells* | Bench Press, Squat, Curls, etc |
| Dumbbells* | Curls, Shoulder Press, etc |
| Sustained Cardio | Treadmills, Bikes, Jogging |

* used by both

For additional information, visit www.functionalfitnessolutions.com or contact Blaine Gilbert at 309/369-3331