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Runners add an average of 3 years to their lifespan, but they will have spent them running.

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

That was a rather cynical reaction of a critic to a longevity study a few years ago. Other research has documented the longevity bonus of running and of other exercise as well. One concluded a 7 year differential.

So why the cynicism? Is it even true? Imagine a really dedicated runner. Running 2 hours a day, 5 days per week, 300 days per year for 40 years. Even at 10 min/mile that's 60 miles per week – 3 times my routine and way beyond the average for recreational runners. That does translate into 1000 days of running, about 2 years 8 months, but that wasn't really the point was it? The implication was that those who spent time working out, in this case running, were somehow missing out on life.

You could substitute any activity for "running" in the above example. Then you would have watched TV for nearly 3 years, or played video games for nearly 3 years, consumed food for 3 years or even spent that time on SP. How long has SP been around anyway?

Let's forget the 2 hour/day timeframe. That was only chosen to approximate 3 years over a lifetime. Consider 30-60 min per day, 3 to 5 times per week - quite enough to gain health benefits. If you hate running, then walk, or bike or swim or dance or try Zumba or any of the other activities that have sprung up to accommodate us. If you hate the activity, it's unlikely you could sustain it long enough to reap the benefits anyway.

Now returning to the original study, the benefits were more than longevity. Researchers (Stanford University) found that runners delayed major disabilities 16 years longer than non-runners and had lower instances of cancer, infections and other diseases. Also there was no increase in joint problems, knee replacements or osteoarthritis in the subjects studied. Yes, I understand that runners probably had other healthy habits that the control group did not have. However, Stanford does have a reputation for controlling as many variables as possible.

Hmm, - comparing runners who regularly consume junk food with those who don't? I wonder who would fund that research? "Little Debbie" perhaps?

I well understand the stress that life can put on us. No one advocates quitting your job or ignoring your family's needs, and there are certain extraordinary situations where one really doesn't have time for oneself. However, if those times are the norm and last for years, perhaps it's time to reevaluate. You count too, and you want to be around and healthy so you can continue to be helpful to others.

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CD12783562

When I read that title, I said, "Ah, but runners don't spend all their time running!" Cynics will never convince me that time spent in fitness is time wasted.
3152 days ago



KANSASROSE67

Even if I DID spend those 3 years running, I'd count that as a huge blessing! I enjoy it, and I also remember my dad and all those who lost that ability and would give anything to have it back.



Great blog!!!

3156 days ago



ROSEWAND

Actually, running within the context of High Intensity Interval Training has most of the same benefits in much less time and with less negative effects on the body.



Studies are showing that exercise does create oxidation. With HIIT less is more. I spend less than 2 hours a week doing HIIT of that time I am running only for 45 minutes or 15 minutes three times a week. And I am in the best physical condition of my life in my late sixties It is a small investment in time that has changed my life.
3156 days ago



MJZHERE

" You count too, and you want to be around and healthy so you can continue to be helpful to



others."

Sums it all up for me! Good reminder!!

3156 days ago



WILSONWR

Great blog! The cynics of the world may laugh themselves all the way to an early grave. Being fit not only has too many health benefits to mention, but it also feels good!! That should count for something...



3156 days ago



CD12758218

That's people trying to make themselves feel better for choices they know (somewhere in their hearts) are not the best for them. If you told me, "Your exercise will let you live 3 years longer but those years will be spent walking," I'd smile at you and say "Good! I hope much of it was on the beach." That is what the cynics are missing. We exercise not only because we know it is healthy to do so, but because we usually enjoy the activity and savor the benefits. Any exercise that is a burden to me is not something I do often or consistently
3156 days ago



SUZYMOBILE

I'd always rather read your blogs than whatever vapid SparkBlog of the Day we're presented with!



I figure I've wasted about a year walking since I started on this journey.

3156 days ago



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