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PE Midterm Assignment, McClure

The Importance of Physical Fitness

Throughout life physical fitness is an important element in maintaining a healthy level of physical and emotional well being. In other words, a good amount of physical activity will keep you in shape and happier.

According to the USDHHS, physical fitness is “A set of attributes that people have or achieve relating to their ability to perform physical activity.” This can be a little hard to understand, so an alternate definition is “A state of well-being with low risk of premature health problems and energy to participate in a variety of physical activities” (The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports). The components of fitness are: body composition, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, muscle endurance and muscle strength. Body composition is the body’s ratio of lean mass (non-fat tissues) to fat mass; (Men’s Total Fitness). Aerobic fitness is the ability of the heart and lungs to supply oxygen rich blood to the working muscles, and the ability of said muscles to use the oxygen (Love to Know). Flexibility is the range of motion of a joint (Sport Fitness Advisor). Muscular strength is the amount of force a muscle can produce in a single effort, while muscular endurance is the ability of a muscle to continue to work without tiring out (Lifetime Personal Fitness).

It is important to improve and maintain fitness in all four components. Body Composition is directly linked to health, having a body composition of mostly fat can lead to injury (from the extra weight) and heart disease (Men’s Total Fitness). A body composition of more lean mass than fat mass is good because of the decreased chances of

the aforementioned problems. Another benefit is better athletic ability, due to the fat not weighing a person down. Cardiovascular fitness influences how people go about their everyday lives. Good cardiovascular fitness increases an individual's energy level, as well as their longevity and immunity to disease (Love to Know). While not as important in youth, as humans age their health begins to take a more vital part in their lives. As an example, people who had good cardiovascular fitness in their thirties are more likely to remain healthy when they become elderly. A person with a low level of cardiovascular fitness will generally be slower and have less stamina than a person with a higher level. Minimal cardiovascular fitness can also lead to weight gain, as those who don't participate in aerobic activities are more likely to be out of shape. Aerobic exercise will burn through excess fat and (along with a reduction of fat intake) will reduce stomach size (Love to Know). A flexible joint will have a greater range of motion than an inflexible one. This allows greater performance in physical activity and lessens the chance of injury (Sports Fitness Advisor). The greater range of motion makes general movement easier. Inflexibility can cause injury. For example a twisted ankle can easily become a broken one if it can't bend very far. As we age our muscles and joints don't function as well as they used to. Their flexibility decreases and makes the elderly more susceptible to injury. This doesn't happen if older individuals partake in exercises which increase their flexibility. While they have different definitions, the benefits of muscular strength and muscular endurance are the same. For example, both help people perform everyday activities such as carrying objects and climbing stairs. Correct posture, increased endurance, and healthy bone density all result from a high level of muscular strength and endurance; without it, individuals are more prone to injury, lower back pain,

weak muscles, and an un-toned body (Lifetime Personal Fitness). Maintaining and improving physical fitness keeps people healthy in the present and future. Good fitness makes injuries less likely to occur and everyday tasks easier. Along with this, it also keeps the body toned and in shape. This boosts self confidence, which in turn increases overall happiness and satisfaction with life.

Increasing physical fitness is beneficial to the health of an individual. All four types of fitness can be improved through various exercises and activities. Cardiovascular fitness can be improved through exercises such as running, jogging, bicycling, or cross country skiing (Love to Know). To benefit from the exercise it is recommended to exercise for thirty to sixty minutes a day, most days a week. Flexibility is increased through stretching (Sports Fitness Advisor). When first starting a person will become more flexible every time they stretch; after a while a joint's range of motion cannot safely be increased, and the level of improvement will plateau. Stretching every day (or even every other day) will help maintain flexibility, but a long time period between exercises will cause muscles to become stiff. Muscular strength will develop with exercises like weight lifting. A heavy weight with a short number of repetitions works best when improving strength. Weight lifting also will improve muscular endurance. Unlike muscular strength, a lighter weight with more repetitions works better for training endurance. Exercises involving muscular strength and endurance should be done three to four times a week to maintain their levels. Both exercise and nutrition play a role in body composition. Other types of fitness play a role in body composition. Muscle gained from strength and endurance training will help burn fat (Men's Total Fitness). Cardiovascular exercise does the same. Burning fat is not enough though; having a healthy diet plays a

role too. Too much fat intake will cancel out previous exercise. In contrast, not eating specific types of food (such as carbohydrates) can be more damaging. The body will start losing muscle, thus having no means of burning fat (Men's Total Fitness). A balanced diet along with exercise will improve body composition, reducing fat mass to increase the percentage of lean mass. All four categories should be improved in order to increase physical fitness.

The point of this paper is invalid if there is no way to participate in physical fitness improving activities. There are many places in Ithaca where exercises can be carried out. Gyms are places that provide machines that are used to increase fitness. Two such places are Planet Fitness® and the YMCA. The former, as of 12/30/10, has a gym-specific fee of \$10.00 per month, with a \$29.00 start up fee and a \$29.00 annual fee (Planet Fitness). The latter gym's single adult membership costs \$606.00 for a year (with a \$30.00 new member Joiner Fee) or \$195.00 for three months (YMCA of Ithaca and Tompkins County). The trails in state parks can be used for aerobic exercise, and some of the parks in New York run along gorges with swimming areas. The Robert H. Treman and Buttermilk Falls state parks are both situated in the Ithaca area. The entrance fee for both parks is \$7.00. This is a parking fee so it only applies if you drive there; it's free to walk in. There is also a swimming pool in Newfield which is free, but only open during the summer. The last venue is not in Ithaca, but is closer than any of the aforementioned locations to the school where this project was assigned. The gyms and parks in Ithaca can be pricey. Instead of paying fees to get into them, an individual could jog around the city itself. Some of the locations in Ithaca are expensive, some less so, but all are important in improving and maintaining physical fitness.

To keep physically fit I play volleyball. During the off season I'm not as active, so I run in the morning. In terms of fitness I have a higher level of flexibility than anything else. My cardiovascular fitness, muscular endurance, and muscular strength levels are not as high as they should be. The worst level of fitness I have is probably my body composition. Once I graduate from high school I won't be rushing to classes all the time, or playing sports. I'll have to change my habits and increase the amount of exercise I get.

Physical fitness is directly linked to the quality of life. A physically fit person is likely to live longer than one who isn't. They will also have more self confidence and be happier. To sum it all up: physical fitness is a big part of life and is imperative in remaining physically and emotionally healthy.

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