

January 5, 2011

P.E. Midterm Assignment

McClure

Total Physical Fitness

The overall “book” definition of physical fitness is “the capacity to carry out the day's activities, pursue recreational activities, and have the physical capability to handle emergency situations.” My own overall definition of physical fitness is a variation of the one mentioned above. Overall physical fitness to me is the ability to carry out the day's activities **EASILY**, play sports at an **INTENSE** level and also the capability to deal with an emergency. The bolded parts are important and change the meaning of the “book” definition because it is possible to get through the day and play sports without being totally fit. The question is, can you do these things easily and at an intense level? The answer is usually no.

The paragraph above is just a brief definition of physical fitness. There are 4 main aspects of physical fitness though. They are: aerobic (cardiovascular) fitness, muscular strength/ endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Each one is important in its own way. Aerobic (cardiovascular) fitness is the ability to continue doing an activity over a long period of time (just endurance, in simpler terms). It is also the ability of your lungs to get oxygen into your blood and for your heart to circulate that blood throughout your body. The more work being performed, the more oxygen the body needs. You won't be able to continue doing an activity if your lungs/heart can't do their jobs. This is important because if you were in an emergency situation where you had to run and you weren't “aerobically” fit, you wouldn't be able to deal with the situation because if your lungs/heart can't get oxygenated blood to your body you

wouldn't be able to breathe. Having aerobic fitness can also lower your risk of osteoporosis, stroke, improve the efficiency of your immune system, strengthen your muscles, ligaments, tendons, joints, lower the pains of arthritis (if you have it), and lower your blood pressure/cholesterol. Some problems with having bad cardiovascular fitness include high blood pressure, a heightened risk of fatty liver disease, and lower back pain. People with good aerobic fitness also have better self-esteem than people with bad aerobic fitness. Ways to improve your aerobic fitness level are by swimming (also improves strength), bicycling, walking, jogging, and many other running-type activities. To get the best results from aerobic fitness you should train for at least 30 minutes every day.

Muscular strength is another important aspect of total physical fitness. Muscular strength is the ability of your muscles to output a significant (usually the maximum) amount of force in a short span of time. Another way of putting it is as the ability to generate a lot of power right when you need it or as a maximum amount of strength (or force) you can exert in one muscle contraction. Having muscular strength is important because it helps you perform everyday tasks, relieves joint pains, increases your metabolism, makes your posture better, strengthens your bones/ helps prevent osteoporosis (when you get older), and makes your ligaments and tendons stronger. It can also boost your self-confidence and self-esteem. Not having muscular strength can result in stress, anxiety and, according to some studies, is even linked to depression. It can also lead to a higher blood pressure, bad balance/posture, and also a high resting heart rate. Also if you did not have any muscular strength at all, things like picking up things (esp. babies), arranging furniture, and other

miscellaneous activities requiring energy “bursts” from your muscles would become real chores. To improve muscular strength you can do exercises like push-ups, sit-ups, and chin-ups every other day (you leave one day in between to allow your muscles to rest and recover which makes you gain strength faster). You can also lift weights (also with 24 hour rests).

Muscular endurance is another core aspect of complete physical fitness. It is defined as your muscles’ ability to do many muscle contractions(**at a sub-max level**) against resistance over an extended period of time. A simpler way to put it is that muscular endurance is just stamina. It differs from cardiovascular endurance because cardiovascular endurance has to do mostly with the ability of your **heart and lungs** to get oxygenated blood flowing throughout the body, but muscular endurance has to do with your **muscles**’ ability to continue to do an activity. Muscular endurance is important because if you had to carry things for prolonged periods of time you wouldn’t be able to because you would have muscle failure(when your muscles lose the ability to do work temporarily) and drop whatever you’re carrying. It is good to have muscle endurance because if you are carrying something somewhat heavy and it is valuable (i.e. a baby) you definitely won’t want to be dropping it. Health benefits of muscular endurance include increased metabolism (just like muscular strength), less fatigue, better posture (just like muscular strength), and a decreased chance of injury. Emotional benefits to having muscular endurance include greater mental discipline, higher self-esteem, and better socializing skills. Lack of muscle endurance can result in fatigue and anxiety. To improve your muscular endurance you can try

biking, running, rowing, basketball, tennis, soccer, and hockey. You should do 20-30 minutes of these types of exercises for several days/weeks for the best results.

Flexibility is also a key component of total physical fitness. Flexibility is the ability of your joints to move through a full range of motion. There are 2 main types of flexibility. They are static flexibility and dynamic flexibility. Static flexibility is how far a joint can flex in a stationary position (ex: someone doing/holding a split). Dynamic flexibility is how far a joint can flex while in motion (ex: someone throwing a high kick). Static flexibility is important because before you play a sport, start a jog, or start a workout routine, you have to stretch. If you didn't have good static flexibility, you wouldn't be able to stretch very well. A bad warm up session could give you a higher risk of getting injured when you start your activity. Also, stretching helps you pump blood better throughout your body. Dynamic flexibility is important because it helps you do your dynamic stretches. Dynamic stretches usually target the muscles you're about to use by mimicking a **specific** action of the sport you're about to play. Static stretching is less important than dynamic stretching because it doesn't loosen the muscles that are about to be used at the same level that dynamic stretching does. Static stretching is more like a warm up before your real stretch. Either way stretching in general helps to improve your overall flexibility. Benefits to good flexibility include a reduced risk of injury when playing sports/doing a workout, a better performance when playing sports/doing a workout, reduced soreness after exercise, improved blood/nutrient flow throughout the body, and reduced lower back pain. Lack of flexibility can ruin your posture and your body movement. People who don't stretch a lot and have bad flexibility are usually more stressed than people who do stretch a lot and have good flexibility. Yoga or a routine with

stretches that attack all parts of the body can improve your flexibility. You should do this routine for 30 minutes at least 3 times a week for results.

The last component to physical fitness is body composition. Body composition is the percentage of muscle, fat, and bones in your body. It is expressed as a ratio between lean mass (mass of your ***muscles***, bones, organs, skin and the water in your body) and fatty mass (body fat). When having your body composition measured, you will either get a measurement of the percentage of fat or the percentage of lean mass in your body. It is important to have good body composition (a lower fat-to-muscle ratio) because it lowers your risk of getting certain diseases. It also improves your mobility and self-esteem. It is harmful to have bad body composition (a higher fat-to-muscle ratio) because it increases your risk of heart disease, diabetes (type 2), lowers your metabolism and self-esteem and increases your risk of getting certain cancers. Too much body fat puts unnecessary stress on your joints and makes it more difficult to perform everyday activities. Sprinting, playing basketball or soccer, and brisk weight training are good ways to improve your body composition. You can also walk up and down stairs/streets. You should do these activities for 20 minutes at least 3 times a week for ten weeks to get results. Nutrition also plays a role in the maintenance of your body composition. Low calorie diets are great for cutting the fat percentage of your body composition. They also cut the muscle percentage of your body composition, but that's why you do exercises. Combined exercise and a good diet together can make your muscle-to-fat ratio outstanding.

It is good to know all about physical fitness, but that information is useless if you can't use it. There are a number of reasons why you wouldn't be able to pursue physical

fitness, but one of the most common reasons is because the materials/facilities needed aren't available in your area. Fortunately there are many places in Ithaca where you can go to work on your physical fitness. Some of those places are the Planet Fitness (Has a membership plan for \$10 a month. It is a gym), the YMCA (\$3 admission fee), Ithaca College (\$5 admission fee. You can go to the gym, play basketball, run on the track, play tennis, and go swimming once you've paid), Cass Park (free admission. Has enough space to play football, soccer, and baseball,), and the City Health Fitness (Has a membership plan for anywhere from \$20 -\$30 a month. It is a gym).

I would say that I am physically fit. I was not born fit though. There are many things that I have to do to stay fit. Some of those things include playing basketball, soccer, baseball, football, tennis, running, and doing an exercise routine at my house. I would like to consider myself pretty well rounded in all aspects of physical fitness. If I had to pick my weakest aspect out though, it would probably be my flexibility. I can't stretch very far. I am also not extremely powerful either. Not to say that I'm a weakling, but I'm definitely not the next Arnold Schwarzenegger. My best physical quality in terms of fitness would probably be my muscular/cardiovascular endurance. I never give up until my body gives up and I hate to quit. I think that I will stay on the same fitness path that I'm on now even after high school ends. I will always have brothers to play sports with.

I hope that you can now understand what physical fitness is (aerobic fitness, muscular strength/endurance, flexibility, and body composition) and why it is important (helps you complete everyday tasks, deal with emergencies, and play your best in sports). I don't know what else to say. This is the best way that can explain it to you.

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