

Tackling the *right* bull by the horns

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Some thoughts on exercising.

Humanity has never before been bombarded by so much information about exercise and the benefits thereof. This is a direct result of our predominately sedentary lifestyle.

Looking back, our ancestors ploughed fields and hand washed their cloths – they did not need Facebook posts and Garmin watches – their 10 000 steps was done and dusted by 10am . . .sharp.

Walking in the streets (after lockdown of course), I doubt that I would get anyone that thinks exercise is bad for them. We have been taught that: *“exercise is good for your physical and mental well-being”* . . . but when I look at the statistics, only 30% of South Africans exercise 2 - 3 times a week. About 66% of us struggle to balance work and exercise.¹ In other words, only 17 million out of the 57 million Saffers actually walk the talk and get into those tight sweatpants.

In the 21st century the *lack of exercise* has officially been classified as a major health problem. The evidence shows that physical inactivity is associated with the development of 40 chronic diseases.² This is crazy!

Considering this, my question regarding this issue would be: *Why don't we as a society exercise (or exercise enough) even if we know how good physical activity is? Or I can even ask: Why don't we exercise even though we know how bad the lack of exercise is?*

See, I can list the benefits of exercise and the risk of inactivity here, but I am not convinced that this will make a difference – would it change our behaviour? I doubt it. We are already overloaded with information, we know more about the human body now than ever before. Still most of us prefer to sit on the couch after a long day . . . of sitting.

What is the key then to cultivating a lifestyle of exercise?

I (and many other people) have come to the conclusion that in general our lack of exercise has got more to do with our motivation and our mind-set towards it. For most of us it's just physically too



uncomfortable (read: I am drowning in sweat, my lungs need life support, I am dying). Basically, we 'non-ironmen' see it as work, so we just avoid it.

This needs to change. We need to know why we are doing it. We need to set clear goals. We need to reprogramme our brains.

The *New York Times* posted a brilliant 'How To' article about the mental side of starting out and setting goals. If you are serious about this - please go and read it: *How To Start Working Out, By Anahad O'Connor*.³ (<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/how-to-start-exercising>).

In light of current events, with us as humanity fighting together against COVID-19, there is one benefit of exercising that I want to highlight – **EXERCISING BOOSTS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM'S RESPONSE.**

Now, if you read the whole article you would know that this statement in itself is not enough to get you moving . . . but I am hoping that you would tackle *this bull* head-on.

^{1,2,3} For list of references please mail me: info@physiofirst.co.za.

