

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

100 Curls a day & you're still not seeing Tracy Moore arms. What gives? Daily, I hear people complaining about how hard they need to work to finally see progress. If you're exercising on a regular basis, it's easy to get frustrated when you're not seeing results. After all, consistently going to the gym is a big time and financial commitment. Several things could explain why your weight hasn't changed, your arms are as noodly as ever, your butt isn't any tighter and your shoulders any more sculpted, and most of them are in your control. If this sounds like you? Then keep reading for a few surprising reasons you're not seeing results and simple ways to fix them so you do.

Numero uno - You're not comfortable with getting uncomfortable. Most of us are very comfortable with our usual ritual. Well, ritual is linked to steady performance, and that can make complacency an easy fallback. As you may or may not know, group ex is my passion. When I was in university I fell in love with fitness and spent several of my waking hours in a gym or studio. For years, I watched this one man do the exact same exercises, in the same exact order, with the same exact equipment. I'm not kidding you, it was ground hog day every day! He never changed a thing. So, it's no surprise that he looked the same on day one as he did a few years later. He never lost weight, gained muscle, or seemed to improve cardiovascularly. Now, I'm not insinuating that you need to change your program drastically every day or even weekly to see results. The exact amount of time it takes for your body to fully adapt to an exercise varies. You should typically switch up your workouts every four to six weeks and to see real fitness results, you may need to put a new spin on a few old favourites.

Our bodies are smart, but it's also pretty easy to trick them with slight modifications. Love crunches? Do them on a stability ball or a bosu (the wobble factor will target your abs in a unique way). Lift weights? When was the last time you grabbed the next set up? Or tried adding a squat to your bicep curl? Even just for a few reps. If you can easily do more than 15 reps, it's time. Get into your most difficult yoga pose and challenge yourself to hold it for even a second longer. Oh, and don't forget to breathe. When it comes to cardio there's more to it than switching

from the treadmill to, an elliptical. Try varying your activities and your environment, your intensity, and the timing of your cardio workout. It is the best way to improve your overall conditioning burn sufficient calories and ultimately see results.

As a bonus, switching it up will prevent injury. You don't want to overuse certain muscles by doing the same thing repetitively. You want to try to incorporate new strength, mobility, and flexibility exercises. I guess my point is, if you haven't changed your workout routine since Richard Simmons was shaking it to the oldies? then it's a fair assumption that you need to change things up. We tend to get comfortable with what we're good at in life, but the body does a damn good job at adapting to whatever stress we place upon it. When you ask your body to move in ways it hasn't moved before, you challenge your muscles in new ways and stimulate muscle growth. If you can't remember the last time you felt the burn? It's time to get uncomfortable.

Ever struggled to get through a silent workout because you left your headphones at home? Or felt a surge of strength and energy when your favourite song comes on in a group ex class? Then you know that when it comes to exercise, music matters. You don't start your workout at a sprint, so don't start your playlists that way. Building a scientifically sound exercise playlist requires more than just setting your iPod to shuffle and pressing play. The same songs that you rocked out to in the car driving to work, are not the same songs that are going to help power you through a tough workout. It is important to arrange songs according to their BPM (beats per minute) in other words, a song's overall speed. There's a fascinating phenomenon that occurs when moving to music. Our movement patterns synchronize to the beat. Therefore, choosing songs with the wrong BPM can deflate your workout like a wet noodle. Helpful hint: So how do you determine which songs fit which tempos? You could always just move and see how you react to the music. Does it motivate you and get you pumped up? Depending on how involved you want to get there are online resources like audio keychain that offer a database of songs, information about the song (e.g. the artist) and its BPM (tempo). You can

also add your own tracks. Make sure you find a database that includes BPM information when creating your playlist. Chances are you'll be overcome with additional, strength and intensity when "Eye of the Tiger" blasts through your head phones.

Another reason you may not be seeing the results you so desire is boredom. After a while, your old reliable workout routine can start to feel less like a routine and more like a rut. Suddenly you've become less of a gym rat and more like a gym robot. Sheer boredom is also a cue that it's time to switch it up. A large part of exercise is maintaining the enjoyment factor. When you lose that, you're going to lose the motivation to push through the last few sets, or the last K of your run. Not only compromising your strength/cardio gains, you are at risk of losing the motivation to stick to your overall fitness routine.

Fitness is a beautiful thing that can change every facet of your life in a positive way, but most never take the time to figure out what it is they want out of it. It is important to set goals. Goals are dreams with a deadline. If you don't have a specific goal, pick one. It could be to complete a 10K run, maybe it's the number on the scale, fitting into your favourite black dress again, adding more reps to your strength training program, or even adding an intense crossfit class to your weekly routine. Having an objective will focus your workouts and change them systematically so you reach your goal. Wanna run a 5K? Start with a training plan. Join a running club and learn how to gradually meet your goals. You may even meet some new friends along the way. I recently read an article in "Health Magazine" about making "SMART" fitness goals.

SMART:

Specific

Measurable

Accountable

Realistic

Timeframe

Check in with your personal goals weekly referring to the SMART process. And above all, find things that are going to motivate **YOU** to stay interested so you can achieve your goals. With a little motivation,

imagination and a few simple modifications, you will be seeing results in no time.