MACRO Missionary

Top Factors in RECOVERY

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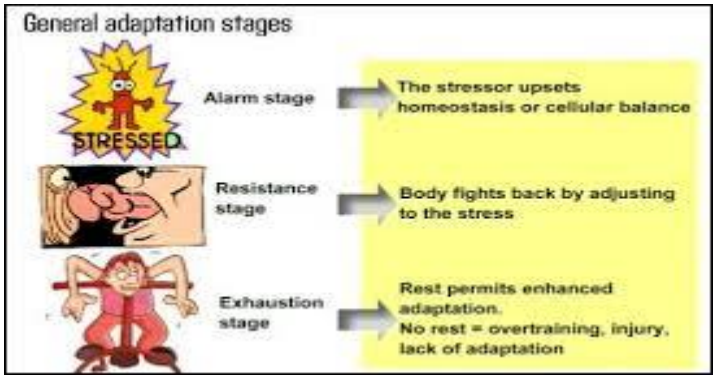
Macro Missionary

Recovery is probably one of the most least understood concepts in the fitness industry, particularly with younger, competitive, type A personalities like myself (well I guess you can take out the young part!) I like to go HARD and really do not feel like I accomplished much in the gym if I "leave reps or intensity" on the table. After all, go hard or go home right!?!

WRONG! Most of us are not exercising just to say we "went hard" or "destroyed it in the gym" first and foremost we are working out for RESULTS, we want to look our best, feel our best, or perform to our potential. The result is what matters.

Let's look at what exercise is actually doing. Exercise provides a STIMULUS to take our body out of equilibrium or homeostasis to create an ADAPTATION. Exercise+adaptation=results. Think of it this way, you go to the tanning bed and your body ADAPTS by darkening itself. Exercise is the same way, we science geeks call this the general adaptation syndrome.



So when people say they want to "change up" their routine to prevent adaptation they are essentially saying I do not want results. Your body ADAPTS to hypertrophy training by increasing the size of the muscle fibers, it adapts to speed/strength training by increasing tensile strength, it adapts to cardio by increasing the hearts stroke volume and cardia output potential etc.

What happens if the stimuli is too much or frequent? Go back to the suntan bed analogy, you're pale as a ghost and you get in max time on the level 1 bed (the one with the most UV rays) you burn to a crisp. Now picture your desire is so strong to get tan that you hop in the bed and do the same thing the next day despite the pain of the sunburn. Now you are in the ER from 3rd degree burns. Now if you waited 3-4 days and allowed your body to heal from the over stimulus of UV rays then you can probably get in the bed again and give it another go and adapt. Optimally you would have done 2-3 minutes on day one, then 2-3 on day 2 and allowed enough time for adaptation and recovery to take place. By now you are "getting it"; you cannot go hard in the gym every day and expect and adaptive response. In the GAS principle this is called the exhaustion phase or in gym rhetoric overtraining. Over training stinks! Sore joints, depressed hormones, muscle loss, lethargy and more. Picture racing your prized stallion every day, eventually it will simply refuse to walk

much less race. So now you understand that the magic of results is in the recovery; allowing adaptation to occur and then adding in a different or more intense stimuli (more weight, volume, duration, frequency) Let's dive into the top factors that help you recover in order of importance.

THE STIMULI (PROGRAMMING)

The body can handle A LOT! Look at WWII prisoners, elite athletes, and Olympians. We are built to last! However, one thing that will absolutely sabotage your ability to adapt and see progress is poor programming. HIGH VOLUME & HIGH INTESITY do not mix for extended periods of time. This is why after game day in most sports there is either not a practice at all or the practice is very light. CrossFit HQ does a great job balancing this out for the week however often times the individual person doesn't feel the workout is "enough" and adds additional intensity in despite the coach's instruction. You must balance high intensity with low intensity over time, that is periodization 101. CrossFit may balance a very intense day followed by a cardio day etc. There is no quicker way to the exhaustion phase in GAS then to combine high intensity & volume for long extended periods of time. It pains me to see people leaving CrossFit gyms to go to globo gyms because they are "burnt out" or want "to try something different" or even worse, hurt themselves. Leave the ego at the door and follow the coaches programming and instruction.

SLEEP

Sleep, especially REM sleep is by a landslide the single most key factor in recovering from intense training. Hormonal balance is restored, stress is reduced, inflammation is reduced, nutrients are transported to muscle for growth & repair and this is just for starters. 6-8 hours of sleep is KEY and even more importantly is REM (quality) sleep.

Nutrition

Adequate calories, protein intake and at times post workout nutrition are all key factors in our ability to recover. Check out our article on protein requirements for your needs and more information on this. If you are training for very long bouts or multiple sessions in a day then post workout carbohydrate feedings are important in replenishing glycogen stores. This is especially true if training more than once per day. Assuming that adequate carbohydrate and calories are present then your body will replenish glycogen stores with time to spare before your next training session however consuming a simple carbohydrate solution such as 30-50 g dextrose after very intense workouts is not a bad idea, especially if training the next day.

Stretching & Active Recovery

Foam rolling, massage, ice, stretching, and other forms of soft tissue work are vital, especially after very intense sessions. These are often the most overlooked and often times the best idea is to schedule these activities by joining a Yoga group 2-3 times per week or setting up a 10-15 minute ROM WOD after each workout or even starting your day off after a brisk walk. Active recovery (light sport or activity) is another great way to improve recovery. Studies have shown a light walk to normalize cortisol levels (our primary stress hormone released during exercise)

SUPPLEMENTS

Although there is not a magic solution or pill that can combat exhaustion there are a few research proven products that are very much worth looking into. Protandim will reduce oxidative stress, reduce inflammation, and improve REM sleep (HUGE) suggested dose 1 per day for normal training 2 for advanced or competitive trainees. BCAA's & L-Glutamine is worth looking into if you are exercising on reduced calories and training very intensely. 5-10 g glutamine and 1-2 servings BCAA during your session is a generally good dose. Omega 3 (fish oil) is key in reducing inflammation g EPA/DHA (dose varies)

Looking for help on your nutrition or have a suggested topic for us? Email.com
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