



FITNESS HOMEWORK:

Pain Threshold

Group Exercise Affects Your Pain Threshold

If you're like most people, you find it easier to exercise in a group, whether it's as part of an aerobics class or a running team.

You might think that's because it's more motivating to exercise with others. But in fact, researchers have found another reason. People who exercise in a group can work harder before feeling physical discomfort.

In fact, when exercising in a group, your pain threshold can be twice as high as when you exercise alone.

The Study

Research conducted at England's Oxford university asked 12 athletes from the crew team to row for 45 minutes in a gym. Immediately after exercising, their pain threshold was measured by gradually tightening a blood pressure cuff until pain was felt. Two conditions were compared:

1. Measurement after exercising solo.
2. After exercising in a group of six..

Results

It was found that the rowers' pain threshold was twice as high when exercising in a group versus exercising solo.

Explanation

There are psychological reasons why people in a group can work harder before experiencing pain.

Being surrounded by teammates provides distractions from discomfort and provides the motivation of socialization and the sharing of group goals.

But, researchers believe there is also a physiological component that makes group exercise feel easier. It was their contention that exercising in a group triggers the release of extra endorphins, which are responsible for reducing the perception of pain. This is believed to be an evolutionary development in humans that encourages us to work in a group because of the survival benefits provided by group cooperation.

Implications

In fitness activities in which discomfort may be a factor in adherence, enjoyment or performance, it will be more effective if you organize students into groups. For example, have them perform movements together rather than allowing them to perform the exercises on their own.

The same is true for endurance activities such as cross-country running or fitness training for team sports. Students will be able to perform much more work with much less perceived effort if you provide training partners for everyone.