



Z-Health Newsletter - January 2008

Your monthly insight to Life in Motion

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Calendar of Events

Our current schedule is below. Check our [website](#) for updates.

Conferences & Workshops

- Santa Clara, CA: Apr 23-27 - Body, Mind, Spirit Conference

R-Phase

- Durham, NC: Feb 1-3 & Apr 11-13
- Chicago, IL: Feb 8-10 & Apr 4-6
- San Diego, CA: Feb 18-23
- Denver, CO: Feb 29-Mar 2 & Apr 18-20
- Minneapolis, MN: Mar 28-30 & May 30-Jun 1
- Edinburgh, Scotland: Sept 1-6

I-Phase

- Fremont, CA: Jan 24-27
- San Diego, CA: Jun 5-8
- Durham, NC: Jun 12-15

S-Phase

- Phoenix, AZ: Mar 6-9

Ask Dr. Cobb

We are introducing a new column with this month's issue: **Ask Dr. Cobb**. If you have a question you'd like Dr. Cobb to answer in a future column, send it to askdr Cobb@zhealth.net.

Q: *I've heard you say that performance is not your body's main concern, rather, survival is. What do you mean exactly and why do we need to know it?*

A: Great question. If you take a look at how the body is designed, it was built with certain "priorities" in mind. Our entire reflexive structure from the time we're born is actually based around keeping us alive at all costs. So, in reality the body is not about performance at all - it's a survival system, pure and simple.

Most people know that when you are under stress, and your adrenaline is pumping, that all of the body's "inessential systems" are shut down in order to pump up the volume of blood to the musculoskeletal and cardio-respiratory centers of the body - just in case you need to fight or run. This manifests with all of those things we associate with being "scared", such as an elevated heart rate, heavy breathing, butterflies in your stomach, etc.

What most people don't know, or more likely have just never stopped to think about, is that this same "survival-wiring" is present and operational all of the time - not just in moments of danger. It's just active to a lesser degree. In other words, when you're having a bad morning at work and had a fight the night before with your girlfriend, although you're not in real "danger" your body will respond as if it is. So you're constantly faced with subtle and not-so-subtle changes in your body as a result of this fact.

As for why the average athlete needs to know this? There are two primary reasons:

1. By understanding that reflexive, survival activity governs the functioning of the body, and learning how to "manipulate" these reflexes through nervous system re-training, your performance levels can increase exponentially. Many athletes have this nagging intuition that they are never able to reach their true potential. Ignoring the reflexive activity of the body is one of the primary reasons that athletes never "peak".
2. Secondly, if you ignore all of this, and train in such a way that you are constantly invoking "survival" reflexes in your body - your form, posture, joints and health will all suffer. One of the hallmark "survival" activities of the body is flexion. In other words, when we're "threatened" we try to get small. This chronic, low-grade excessive flexion activity in the body will eventually result in a whole host of training injuries as well as lousy posture and poor movement skills - none of which will encourage you to keep training!

Getting Your Reps In

It's January. Time of New Year's Resolutions and clean slates. It's a time when people often make changes.

In Z-Health, we spend a lot of time focusing on the SAID principle - the foundational, underlying concept in human physiology. SAID stands for Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands, or in other words, the body/mind system will become better at doing whatever it does regularly - or "**getting your reps in**".

To most fitness-minded folks this makes perfect sense - the best way to get good at the deadlift, roundhouse kick, downward facing dog, or the short game in golf is to do more of the same. Sure, there is some carryover

T-Phase

- Phoenix, AZ: May 15-18

from other activities, but anyone at the top of their game uses the SAID principle to get them there.

Now, if you re-read the definition for the SAID principle, you will see the word "**mind**" in the sentence. As you explore the basic tenets of Z, neurophysiology, and the SAID Principle, it is difficult to escape the fact that your mind and your thoughts have a tremendous impact on the quality and quantity of your life. The question always looms, "*Are you training your thoughts and emotions as much as you train your body?*"

There are numerous studies that show the impact of thoughts and emotions.

- A recent Harvard study showed that mental piano practice resulted in a similar reorganization of the brain as actual piano practice.
- Another Harvard study involved hotel housekeepers who were told that the work they do counted as exercise according to the Surgeon General. The informed group showed a decrease in weight, blood pressure, body fat, waist-to-hip ratio, and body mass index as compared to the "uninformed" group -- with no actual change in behavior.
- A UCLA study asked OCD patients to redirect their thinking when they had an obsessive thought. After 10 weeks, 12 of the 18 improved significantly.

Ultimately, taking everything back to the SAID principle, the simple question is, "***What kind of reps have you been accumulating in your life?***"

It's all about what you choose to do from here that counts.

Injury Lessons

I, like many of you, spent a few hours this weekend watching football. In addition to enjoying the game and watching some excellent athletes in motion, I also watch football to see what happens when things go wrong...

If you watched the San Diego/Indy game Sunday, you know it was very physical. A large number of injuries occurred and it was very interesting to try to keep track of them. I would say that at least half of the injuries sustained were "self-inflicted" non-contact injuries. In virtually every case, it was an athlete moving from unloaded (jumping, pivoting, turning, etc) to loaded while trying to change direction. These "instinctual" movements that form the basis of most "great plays" in every sport, are absolutely CRITICAL to train!

In S-Phase, we cover an extensive plyometric progression for these exact events. Just like everything else in our life as athletes, we must design, implement and enforce practice of ALL POSSIBLE BIOMECHANICAL TRANSITIONS if we want to maximize player safety and performance.

Nothing will make us bulletproof, but with a bit of imagination and diligence, we can prep our nervous systems far more effectively than much of what is being done in today's training field.

Keep Moving,

Dr. Eric Cobb