



Z-Health Newsletter - January 2009

Your monthly insight to Life in Motion

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Calendar of Events

Late last year we released the first part of our 2009 calendar. View it below and be sure to check our [website](#) regularly for updates.

Conferences & Workshops

- Santa Clara, CA: Apr 15-19 - Body, Mind, Spirit Conference
- Minneapolis, MN: July 15-17 - Essential Secrets of Elite Performance (sponsored by DragonDoor Publications)

R-Phase (Level 1)

- Phoenix, AZ: Jan 23-25 & Mar 6-8
- Durham, NC: Jan 30-Feb 1 & Mar 13-16
- Edinburgh, Scotland: Mar 30 - Apr 4
- San Diego, CA: Mar 20-22 & Apr 24-26
- Denver, CO: May 29-31 & July 24-26

I-Phase (Level 2)

Ask Dr. Cobb - Vision

Q: *Teaching Tai Chi Chuan I use several exercises where eyes are engaged either following a hand with the head still or turning the head and allowing the eyes to go further; changing focus as you taught in your "near/far" drills.*

Thanks

A: Thanks for the fantastic question. Vision, and its impact on performance, is a very deep subject with a growing body of work and research around the world. Let's begin this topic by looking at one of my favorite quotes about vision:

"Eyesight is simply the ability to see something clearly, the so-called 20/20 eyesight (as measured in a standard eye examination with a Snellen chart). Vision goes beyond eyesight and can best be defined as the understanding of what is seen. Vision involves the ability to take incoming visual information, process that information and obtain meaning from it."
- Dr. Donald Getz, OD

With this understanding in place, we are very clear that performance vision is much more than just being 20/20! As a result of this knowledge, and intense study of visual processes, in Z-Health we make a differentiation between:

1. The extraocular muscles that surround the eye and are responsible for eye movements, and,
2. The intrinsic eye structures and brain centers related to focusing the eyes and interpreting what is seen.

While each of these portions of the visual system can either inhibit or enhance performance, the great news is that each of these systems is trainable - often using very simple exercises and drills. This differentiation also allows us to accurately view the visual system and quickly assess its impact on our athlete's performance. Most importantly, as we are not optometrists or ophthalmologists, this understanding allows us to make immediate referrals for evaluation by key professionals.

If you are interested in exploring this topic more, let me make some recommendations:

1. Before undertaking ANY form of exercise (including visual exercises) you should see your doctor. In this case, we suggest visiting your optometrist or ophthalmologist to insure that your eyes are ready for training.
2. Once cleared, we suggest that you familiarize yourself with different visual performance drills. A great place to start with this are the simple eye movement and focusing drills found at the conclusion of both our Neural Warm-Up 1 and Neural Warm-Up 2 DVDs.
3. Next, we highly recommend the book: [SportsVision: Training for Better Performance](#), by Wilson and Falkel. It is an excellent introductory text on this topic and contains hundreds of evaluations and drill variations.
4. Once you begin working through these drills, we recommend that if you encounter difficulties, seek hands-on instruction immediately with an appropriate professional near you.

- Boston, MA: Feb 26-Mar 1
- Phoenix, AZ: May 14-17
- Edinburgh, Scotland: May 21-24
- Durham, NC: June 4-7

S-Phase (Level 3)

- Phoenix, AZ: June 25-28

T-Phase (Level 4)

- Phoenix, AZ: Feb 11-14 *NOTE: Wed-Sat

9S: Sustenance

- Phoenix, AZ: July 8-12

5. Finally, if you would like to read a bit more about how eye function relates to performance, particularly from a reflexive perspective, you can learn more [here](#).

Thanks again for the question. Have a great month!

Keep Moving,

Dr. Cobb

Announcing: Z-Health Master Trainers

Announcing the first group of Z-Health Master Trainers!

Last week, in sunny San Diego, California, four people earned the first ever designation of Z-Health Master Trainer. Six others earned Master Trainer_(p) status, indicating provisional standing.

These courageous souls successfully completed six full days of testing on a variety of topics, including:

1. Public Speaking
2. Skills Teaching
3. Client Assessment and Evaluation
4. Client Program Design
5. Professionalism

These individuals achieved the following designations through hard work, drive, and preparation:

Z-Health Master Trainer

Leah Davison
Mike T. Nelson
Theresa Nesbitt
Zachariah Salazar

Z-Health Master Trainer_(p)

Alisha Toombs
Katie Bigelow
Kent Johnson
Lou McGovern
Luis Hernandez
Scott Peery

We will be sharing much more about this landmark event in a special feature newsletter next month. Until then, please join us in congratulating these outstanding individuals on their hard work and accomplishments. We are very proud of each one of them.

More to come next month!

Stress and the Body

The holidays are generally both a fun and stressful period for most people. Work tends to be a bit slower with a lot of people out on vacation, but there are gifts to buy, parties to attend, and the inevitable conversation over whose family you will spend the "actual" holiday with. And, in the current economic climate, there is the ever-present fear of layoffs.

All of this, even the fun stuff, leads to stress. Stress does a lot more to your body than keep you up late at night worrying. In fact, stress creates a systemic reaction throughout the body that we call the Hormone Cascade. Two hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, are responsible for much of the mayhem caused by stress, so these are the two we are going to look at.

Adrenaline. We all know what this feels like from "flight or fight". It's that quick burst of energy that you get when you nearly avoid hitting that car in the parking lot or get an angry email from the boss -- your heart rate goes up, your respiration (breathing) rate increases, and your blood pressure goes up. Additional reactions you may not be aware of include: decreased blood flow to rational part of your brain (which is never a good thing), lowered immune system function, and increased blood glucose levels. All of these things make you less able to process information efficiently, more prone to getting sick, and if you have or are at risk for diabetes, you are exacerbating that situation. Adrenaline is an extremely useful tool leftover from our caveman days when we were often fighting for our lives, but it was always meant to be secreted in short bursts. In our 24x7 society where stress is a constant, constant adrenaline secretion can lead to some significant health issues.

Cortisol. Stress also increases the production and release of cortisol (often referred to as the stress hormone) into your system. And, combined with adrenaline, it is a bit of a negative one-two punch to our bodies. Elevated cortisol levels lead to:

- Increased fat and sugar in the bloodstream (which is doubly bad when you combine it with the elevated blood sugar levels from adrenaline)
- Decreased protein absorption by the cells (this is important for building muscle, which is a key component of weight loss)
- Decreased immune system function (again, simply compounding what the adrenaline is already doing)
- Decreased dopamine levels (dopamine is commonly associated with the pleasure center in the brain, so decreased dopamine makes you less happy)
- Decreased GABA levels (GABA is a neurotransmitter for focus and concentration, so combined

with the reduced blood flow from adrenaline, your thinking, reasoning, and processing capabilities will noticeably decline).

So, stress can be bad, so how to get rid of it? A good, hard workout, right? Wrong!

Our bodies aren't smart enough to differentiate "good stress" from "bad stress" all the time. All our bodies know is that whatever we are doing is beyond our "comfort zone" – and we move in to the stress response. Since the goal of a good, hard workout probably isn't to make it more difficult to lose weight, depress you, and make you less able to focus, it's time to do something different.

When the rest of your life is stressful, do something that still involves movement, but is ENJOYABLE. Dance, around your living room go for a brisk walk, go play with the kids, do some light mobility work – anything that sounds like fun. During times of high levels of stress, all of these things will do more to reduce stress and get you to your health and wellness goals than three hours in the gym!

Newsletter Archive

Did you miss an issue of the Monthly Newsletter? Delivered on the 15th of every month, the newsletter is filled with interviews, articles, reviews, and all of the goodness that is Z-Health Performance Solutions.

Are you receiving our Weekly Training Tips? Delivered to your inbox every Sunday, these brief training nuggets will be sure to enhance all of your activities.

Catch up on all of our [back issues](#) on the Z-Health web site or click on the "Manage your Subscription" link on the bottom of this email to ensure you are getting the latest news.

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