Sustainable Exercise

Our body is precious. It is our vehicle for awakening.
Treat it with care. *—Siddhartha Gautama—*

The purpose of this article is two-fold:

1. Demonstrate that the current paradigm of sports and exercise is tragically flawed and that adhering to this paradigm results in significant acute and chronic pain, financial loss, an accelerated morbidity curve, and premature infirmity.
2. Provide an alternative model of sports and exercise that supports maximum health, well being, and health, squaring the morbidity curve and, extend the full function of our minds and bodies throughout our lives.

How is the current paradigm of sports and exercise flawed?

1. A system based on life expectancies HALF of which currently exist and most likely a third of those soon to be born.
2. A belief that injuries are temporary and transient.
3. A belief that a compressed physical structure is healthy.
4. A belief that our thoughts and emotions are separate from the body.
5. The idea that if there is no pain, there is no gain.
6. It is a system designed by the mind — that part of our being LEAST aware of the body.
7. It supports the creation of subtle and not so subtle structural anomalies to the detriment of all systems of the body.

Most of us are born near perfect—then life happens.

The current paradigm of sports and exercise describes our physical body as a collection of pieces; Joints, muscles, bones, nerves, and organs. If one part is weak — we strengthen it. If something breaks, we sew, glue, screw, or plate it back together. This perception of our physical structure is naïve and dates back to the anatomy studies of Galen the Greek.

To understand why the current sports/exercise paradigm is flawed, we recognize that our structure is composed of a continuous matrix of interwoven connective tissue fibers. This meshwork permeates every bone, muscle, organ, and cell of the body—there is no separation of parts, just the one matrix. Subsequently, distortion or trauma, to any part of our body, affects the entire structure.

For example, a moderate sprain of the ankle results in 1-2 weeks of swelling, acute pain, and inability to weight bear fully, followed by 4- 6 weeks of rehabilitation to full usage. The traditional paradigm of exercise would say this return to function would be the end of the story.

Unfortunately, this is NOT the end of the story. Every aspect of our body exists in the matrix of connective tissue, including the ligaments of the ankle. An ankle sprain is a DEFORMATION of the connective tissue of the ligaments. The current paradigm would say that with time and exercise, these ligaments will return to their original state. That is incorrect. The strained ligament will never have the same integrity as it had before the injury—those of us with any history of ankle sprains will attest to this.

Before Right Ankle Sprain One Year Later

The PERMANENT injuries to those ligaments result in the inexorable deformation of the entire body. It is not difficult to imagine that after this ankle injury, the space between leg and foot would be diminished. Even a reduction of ½ of one millimeter at the ankle would send ripples of change throughout the entire structure. The hip would drop the same amount, which would cause us to lean to one side. The head, with its need to stay level, would move things around, rather than be tilted. Subsequently, to compensate for the drop of the hip, the shoulder on the same side has to rise, which in turn demands the neck to shift as well. This simple angle sprain, even after it is "not painful" and returned to "full function," has set in motion a series of permanent adaptions and compensations.

Each year millions of individuals suffer from sports induced injuries. The acute discomfort, disability, loss of income, and emotional stress from these events are significant. However, it is the long term accumulation of the sequela from these events, which will dramatically affect your middle and later years.

How do the subtle changes in balance demonstrated above have such an impact on our later lives? The force of gravity is the cause. This compressive force, acting upon our structure 24 hours per day, compresses our body. Over the years, our bodies shrink. Subjected to this relentless gravitational force, every curve, protrusion, imbalance in our structure worsens over time. The spaces between our vertebrae and limb joints lessen. What was once free movement is now impeded by bone or cartilage. This most subtle of imbalances from that ankle sprain in our youth manifests as bulging and herniated

discs, bone on bone hip and knee arthritides, difficulty breathing, and compromised neurological and cardiovascular health. For more details, please read *<<There was a crooked man>>*.

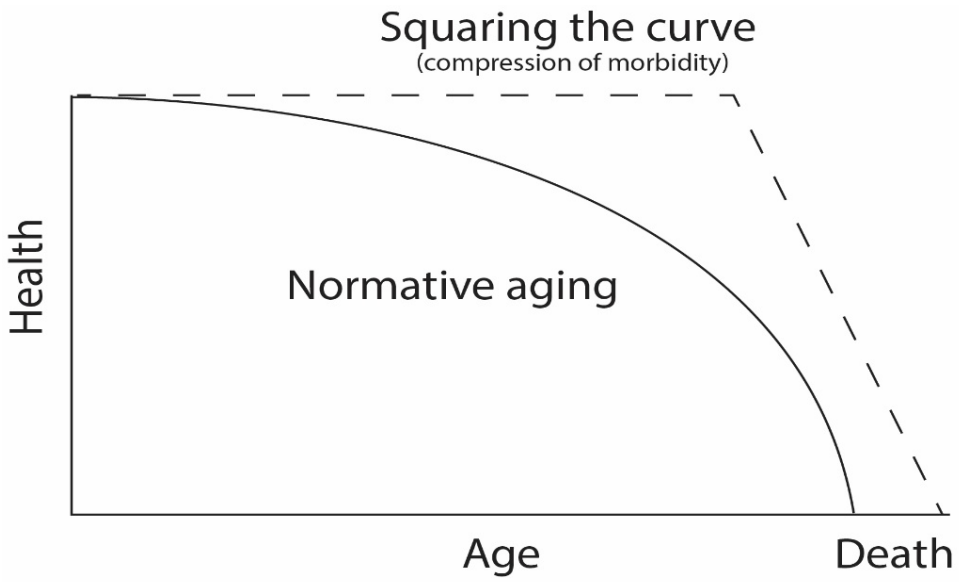
To summarize why the current paradigm of exercise and sports is NOT sustainable:

There are no "do-overs" with regarding our physical structure. EVERY trauma, over time, will eventually manifest as reduced function and pain.

Sustainable exercise is a paradigm for the care and maintenance of our physical structure. A model to minimize trauma and its inevitable sequelae.

Living within the paradigm of sustainable exercise, we create an environment for our physical structure that will significantly reduce the previously considered inevitable pain and suffering of aging. Reducing traumas and imbalances to the structure, we decrease the distortions and compensations that are the cause of most of the muscular-skeletal complaints and surgeries of our later lives.

Perhaps even more importantly, by maintaining balance and space throughout the body, not only does our mechanical nature stay intact, but those systems that travel through the muscular-skeletal infrastructure will ALSO function far better and longer. Whether it be the veins and arteries, the



Morbidity Curve. The accumulation of disease over time.

gastrointestinal tract, or the pathway through which nerves travel, SPACE is what is needed for them to work well—and compression will inevitably reduce their function

The basic premise of Sustainable exercise is that through optimizing and sustaining length and balance in our physical structure, we can reduce or eliminate many of the ailments associated with aging (the morbidity curve).

Sustainable Exercise guidelines:

1) Keep whatever you are doing bilateral—not favoring one side or the other
   a) Learn to use your mouse with both hands
   b) Play sports that are not one-sided — or learn to use both sides equally well.
2) Exercise needs to be both anaerobic and aerobic
3) Keep things low impact—EVERY impact on our structure is *remembered* by the body. Twenty years from now, when the cartilage of your knees and hips give out after running for many years—your mind will remember as well.
4) Stop doing things that put your body in jeopardy:
   i) Sky Diving
   ii) Ski Jumping
   iii) Hang Gliding
   iv) High dives into shallow pools
   v) All the other dangerous things that no other living creature on this planet would even conceive of—worse yet enact.
5) Exercise the full range of motion of All joints.
6) A sustainable exercise balances flexors with extensors as well as the core with the superficial.
7) Expansion in all movements. Length in all exercises. Create space for breath and life!
8) Moderation in all things.
9) Examples of sustainable systems of movement if done well, with joy, and NO pain.
   a) Arica pyschocalisthenics
   b) Traditional yoga—Power Yoga is an oxymoron.
   c) Pilates
   d) Elliptical trainers, backward and forward
   e) Dance
   f) Aerobics
   g) Ballet (pay attention to the "no pain" part)
10) Inherent in sustainable exercise is recognizing the mind-body connection. Every negative event, whether internal or external, creates compression in your being. This compression, much like the force of gravity, amplifies the sequela of your prior traumas. Every positive thought, feeling, and perception, whether internal or external, creates expansion, reducing the sequela of previous injuries, and generates a state of relaxation for your body to heal.
11) Perhaps most importantly, whatever exercise/sport you choose must align with your spirit—that part of you that KNOWS (not thinks) what is best for you at any instant. *Read more about intuitive living here.*
12) If you don't have access to that information, then make sure at least that whatever exercise you do makes you happy—truly happy. NOT the false joy of climbing a higher mountain, lifting a heavier weight, running a longer race, or surfing a north shore winter swell. The pleasure from these events is transitory at best and false in so many ways. Perhaps worst of all, pushing our physical limits as a source of happiness demonstrates an addiction that will, almost inevitably, result in severe trauma as you keep searching for the next big thing. If your actions stem from the mind/ego, they will almost always end badly.

13) Be mindful of your body in all things. It only takes a microsecond of not paying attention to fall off a ladder, get hit by a surfboard, take a wrong turn down a ski trail, or lift a weight incorrectly. Be mindful and PAY ATTENTION!

Being in touch with our bodies, or more accurately,
being our bodies is how we know what is true.

—Harriet Goldhor Lerner—