

Week Seven

“Is that really me I’m seeing in the mirror?”

Joe Ferry

I'll be honest. When I first started working with Fernando Paredes, a personal trainer and owner of Fusion Fitness Studio in Doylestown, it was difficult to wrap my arms around everything he was saying. Many of his concepts went against the traditional methods of exercise and nutrition most of us are used to hearing and reading about. In fact, some were the complete opposite of what I had come to believe.

No pain, no gain. WRONG!

You have to eat a lot of “rabbit food” to lose weight. WRONG.

You have to do endless exercises to see significant changes. WRONG.

At times, it was like he was speaking to me in some kind of foreign language...muscle imbalances, functional fitness, neuro-muscular communication, functional nutrition..

Individually, they all made sense, but it took some time for me to completely believe how they could work together. After all, we're talking about un-learning 50 years of bad habits.

As Fernando said many times, "I can't really explain it all, it's something you have to experience. Once you go through it and feel the results, it will all make sense. The results will speak for themselves."

And, now I see that he's right. It all makes sense, like a jigsaw puzzle coming together with the last few pieces. His concepts, the program, the type of equipment in his studio, even the artwork on the walls. It's all coming together and it feels GREAT.

Something amazing has happened in the last week or 10 days. It felt like



My Middle-Aged Journey To Physical Fitness

something inside me "clicked." My body is responding exactly the way he said it would. I'm feeling changes that I can't really explain, except that I like them.

All I can tell you is that I feel stronger and I definitely have more energy. Take the past two weekends, for example. With the nice weather, it's time to get the yard ready for spring...cutting the grass, pulling out weeds, trimming bushes, fertilizing, putting down mulch.

In the past, I would have wheezed my way through the day, taking frequent rest breaks just to get each chore done. And then I would feel extremely stiff and sore the next day. Getting out of bed would be a five-minute ritual. It was no fun.

These past two weekends, however, it's been totally different. I worked non-stop, took no breaks except to grab another bottle of water. I felt a little like the Energizer Bunny and when I woke up the next day...no soreness and my back felt great. It was amazing, really. That hasn't happened in years.

As if that's not enough good news, try this. My clothes are literally falling off me. I've pulled my belt in two notches since beginning the program. And I have to cinch the drawstring in my sweatpants a little tighter now so they don't fall down during my workouts.

It's all been done with two or three workouts a week and without going on some crazy diet. I'm not even counting calories.

As the fog has lifted and I am finally starting to understand how one needs to exer-

cise and eat in order to lose fat and get fit, it's clear that Fernando's functional fitness approach is the real deal. So I wondered why all trainers don't preach the same philosophy.

"The problem is the fitness industry is driven by marketing, not education," says Fernando. "People are tired of all the false promises that my industry gives them. People today want and need programs that will work and are based on real science and education - not hype and lies."

Warming up the topic, Fernando's passion for teaching fitness the right way comes through. Many of the methods typically used by trainers today are out of date, he says.

"They were based on people that were more genetically suited for exercise, like bodybuilders and athletes," he says. "They could basically do anything and



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Fernando Paredes watches as I do push-ups on an exercise ball, which forces you to use core muscle strength.

see results! They had a much larger margin of error. And years ago, bodybuilders were the only ones going to gyms and exercising."

The vast majority of people who seek the help of a personal trainer don't want to put on 30 pounds of muscle to compete in a bodybuilding competition, says Fernando. Like me, they just want to lose fat, look better, feel better, have more energy, be able to play with their kids and pick up a bag of groceries without hurting their back, knees or shoulders, he says.

"Most trainers today are still stuck on 'auto-pilot' using the same type of bodybuilding programs for this new population of exercisers, and it's not right," says Fernando. "People today need exercise and nutrition plans that are



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entirely different, more complete and a specific approach because they have a much smaller margin of error," he says. "We need to be more careful in planning our exercise and nutrition. We need to go back to our roots."

Before he gets into trouble with his bodybuilding friends, Fernando makes it clear that functional exercise works for them, too. Just the other day, he received an email from an old friend who added 40 pounds to his incline

bench press -- to 455 pounds -- after he consulted with Fernando about how to overcome the plateau he had been stuck at for a few years. After following the suggestions for strengthening his core, Fernando's friends experienced a breakthrough.

"What I'm saying is that if John or Jane Q. Public wants to lost 20 pounds, drop a few sizes and sculpt for themselves a healthy, fit and energetic body in the most effective and safest way

possible.....a good trainer shouldn't put them on the same program as a competitive bodybuilder," says Fernando.

Fitness programs should be designed with the individual's unique goals in mind, he says.

That is why the functional methods Fernando teaches are working for me. The functional approach is the original method of exercise designed to work for anyone.