

SUSTAINABLE FITNESS



ENABLING A PLAN FOR *YOUR*
LIFELONG HEALTH

by **BLAIR MCHANEY**



Sustainable Fitness

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Your Lifelong Health**

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Blair McHaney

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Sustainable Fitness

No one starts an exercise program with the idea that they are going to quit. But many do. Sustaining fitness is like sustaining healthy teeth. You don't say *"I think I will get my teeth really healthy and once I do, I will forget about them from then on!"* You want what we all want; to get healthy and STAY there! What if you could draw on the experience of thousands of others who have gone before you and take advantage of what they have learned for sustaining fitness? That's what this book is about. It addresses many of the reasons for fall-off and allows for some proactive thinking (if you are willing to be proactive!) for staying healthy for a lifetime.

I have not skipped a week of training in 37 years. I understand sustainability in a program. I watch all kinds of "new" exercise programs find their way into the fitness world and find their way back out again. Some stay. Programs that stay are just a piece of the puzzle but never the entire solution to having a sustainable, lifelong plan for your fitness. Most "new" programs are old programs being recycled. Most "new" programs talk about how quickly they *"get you in shape."* Few talk about a holistic approach to addressing a lifetime of fitness. These programs are just a tool and need to be recognized that way. **When you put together enough of the right tools into an entire program, you have a chance at sustainability.**



Sustainability is best addressed by broadening our look at how organizations, systems, and organisms *survive for generations*. They do so by not being too “greedy” when it comes to one area of interest. This is true for businesses, societies, even species. By applying this to how a fitness program survives for decades, we can uncover myriad stumbling blocks and hopefully find ways to sustain our programming. You will see 7 perspectives to consider for sustaining your program. Think of each of these as potentially requiring too much from you or not providing you with enough. For example, you do not want the cost (financial perspective) of your fitness program to be more than you can afford. If it is taking too much from you, you can’t sustain it. At the same time, you want to be in an environment that is energetic and from which you can draw energy and have support (emotional, motivational, and social perspectives.) If your program is not fulfilling these needs, it may not sustain you.

It might be helpful to look at each of these “perspectives” as areas that could either *benefit from*, or be a *victim of*, your fitness programming. I will maintain that if any of these areas “fall victim” to your exercise programming, you have a less sustainable plan.

This is about creating balance. “Balance” is probably an over-used word and one that has not really been addressed in a real practical sense but more of a philosophical sense. Here we

address it in its practical terms. Each of the “7 *Perspectives for Sustainable Fitness*” represent areas that should be considered when determining how one will maintain their fitness programming.

Fitness is really a relationship. A balance should be achieved so that it can sustain you and you can sustain it. It is a promise, an understanding, and an agreement with one’s self.

The Issue

How many times have you started and stopped a new exercise program? Maybe none. Maybe you are about to take your first run at it. If this is a repeat performance, your interest might be piqued by a late night commercial on TV or an ad in the local paper. Most of these programs offer the next great workout – P90X, Insanity, TRX, etc. Which of these is the right thing for you? Well, none of them and all of them. These are all great programs. But they only address one issue – the workout itself. That is fine if all of your other “perspectives” are in alignment. But remember – just having a workout plan is usually not enough for sustainability.

For the most part, keeping an individual engaged in a fitness program has been looked at simply from the perspective of the workout plan – *how do we provide enough variety and results to keep people engaged in their programming?* The idea being that if you really like your programming you will keep coming into the gym and you will stay in shape. This is not the only perspective from which to view sustainability as it only addresses in-gym exercise.

Moreover, fitness programs and in turn, an individual’s fitness level, will have *ebbs and flows*. There are times when one is fully engaged and highly aware and focused on their fitness, and times when other responsibilities encroach on the energy it takes to maintain that focus. The challenge for most is to find balance and

to recognize when to press and when to ease certain areas of fitness programming yet always maintaining your commitment. It is a marriage of sorts.

Consider the following perspectives as possible elements that address sustainability in your fitness programming, and in turn, your fitness:

FINANCIAL

- Cost to learn
- Ongoing costs

EMOTIONAL

- Peace of mind
- Enjoyment

MOTIVATIONAL

- Purpose for starting
- Purpose for maintaining

SOCIAL

- Time with family
- Connection with others

NUTRITIONAL

- Fast start plan
- Ongoing plan

LOGISTICAL

- Days per week
- Hour(s) per day
- Convenience

PHYSICAL

- Alignment with objectives
- Intensity/difficulty variances
- Safety
- Variety
- Results

I am not suggesting that one needs a written plan that details every point above. I am suggesting that you consider whether your thoughts about your own programming reflect sustainability as we

briefly cover each of these perspectives. Simply being aware of these perspectives may be enough for you to recognize what you need. It will vary for every person.

As you read the descriptions that follow ask yourself the question -

From this perspective, can I maintain my program and does it supply me with everything I need for the long haul?

Financial Perspective

If you are looking to join a gym or buy a program from an infomercial, stay with something you can afford and that you will use for weeks, months, and years...YES, years. There are a lot of affordable options out there. Gym memberships and Personal Trainers are excellent options! If you are considering a gym membership, call the gym and see how friendly they are on the phone. Visit the gym during a time when you would most likely be exercising. Ask them about their programming and how it might fit you. Make sure it is easy to cancel if it doesn't work for you. Once you are paying for services like a gym membership or personal training, **be sure you are on a plan you can afford for the long haul.** For personal training, you and your trainer should have a plan to either keep working together for the long term or a plan to help you become self-sufficient. We love it when a client has expressed the desire to "become their own expert about themselves" in the gym. Good trainers are good teachers and will put your interests ahead of their own.

You will find tremendous value in having a trainer and you will need to determine what level of trainer involvement is sustainable. If hiring a trainer for every workout is not sustainable or desirable, consider a program where you have a session with your trainer 1, 2, 3 or 4 times each month to check-in



and get new programming and coaching. This makes the pricing very scalable for different income levels.

Is my current plan sustainable from a cost standpoint?

Am I learning enough to become independent?

If not, what do I need to do or learn in order for this to be a “yes”?

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Emotional Perspective

Emotional? Really? YES! If you are going to keep your program going you need to feel good about it. You need to feel like there is more to the exercise than just the exercise. You want to be able to look forward to this as much as possible. Here we are looking for two things – fun and peace of mind. I am not normal. I openly admit that! I like to train. Always have. In my world, not working out is weird. Not lifting weights is unthinkable. Here's the thing – I love it. I enjoy training. The journey holds a good deal of reward for me. I find short term gratification in the effort that is required to do the work. What a freak. You may not be the same as me. Most people aren't. That's okay. Most people didn't spend class time in Jr. High and High School drawing layouts for the gym they wanted to own either.

It is vital to find those things that you enjoy. If you like riding bikes and like being around people, ride with a group or do a bike class in the gym. They're a lot of fun. That is good emotional support!

In this perspective you are always biasing your exercise toward those things that you like to do. If you just don't like to lift weights, do them anyway but do exercises that you find more



favorable and keep the weight workout brief. If you just don't like to do cardio exercise, do it anyway but find ways to pass the time doing the exercises you most enjoy.

I am not qualified to address what gives one peace of mind but I do know that exercise always gives me a perspective adjustment and makes challenging days easier. I think that regular exercisers sort of discover their "inner warrior" and are able to call-up that feeling when dealing with other areas of life. We also get tremendous feedback from members who use exercise such as Yoga to become more "mindful" of their own thoughts and create awareness about negative and destructive thoughts they may have during the course of the day. To find sustainability in this perspective, you should have an *absence of frustration* with the actual exercises you're doing and immediate results should include feeling great about your daily accomplishment and about the people with whom you come into contact for your exercise. This leads to looking forward to a return and not "dread."

Does my current exercise plan provide me with the kind of emotional support I need to stay on task?

Am I around people that are supportive?

Is it an inclusive environment that has me wanting to return?

Motivational Perspective

Motivation comes from motive; something that causes a person to act in a certain way. A motive causes action. In our experience motivation is felt at different levels. The deeper the level the greater the purpose. The first is the motive to look better or to start living a healthy lifestyle. Those that sustain that lifestyle often, but not always, find different motives, and deeper purpose, for sustainability than the motives that enabled their “launch.” In our world there are “Seekers” of fitness and “Believers” in fitness. Our mission is to inspire and support both. The Seeker sees fitness as a goal while the Believer maintains fitness as a value. The Seeker might have a wedding, doctor visit, class reunion, grandchildren, divorce, or myriad other motives to seek fitness. The Believer may have attached deeper “meaning” to their fitness and holds fitness as a valuable part of who they are. **Meaning provides the Believer or Seeker with significant purpose for their action.** Think about your own motives for taking action and whether they are sustainable or whether they will simply provide the “launch.” It isn’t hard to discover the next layer of motives once you look for them. You might find your personal fitness holds more meaning if you look through the eyes of your family and friends. This is when motivation (a reason to move today) can become inspiration (a reason to still be moving in 3 years.) You can become the influencer



and inspiration for others to find their own reasons to pay attention to their health. In his book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith suggests an exercise for finding motives to change behavior. He recommends a "sentence completion" exercise such as – *"If I get myself into shape, one benefit to me is _____."* The exercise requires that you keep finishing the sentence until you exhaust all benefits. What typically happens is that the more sentences you complete the deeper the meaning you attach to the behavior you wish to change. Your first sentence might finish with *"...I will be able to fit into my expensive pants."* Your sixth sentence might finish with *".....I will be a better role model for my kids."* Try it. I think you will see that the early reasons support short to midterm gratification ("for me") and the later reasons support the long haul ("for others"); the sustainable. After all, fitting into your pants has a finish line. Being a good role model lasts forever. You wouldn't say *"...I will be a better role model for my kids for a couple of weeks."*

I love this line of questioning as it moves a person from thinking about what they can *have*, to what they can *do*, to what they can *Be*." This moves from motivation to inspiration.

Listen to yourself and your stated goals. It is quite okay to have goals where you will receive something either tangible or intangible. For instance, by losing 40 pounds you would get a better body and perhaps more self esteem. You might even get a greater sense of belonging. The "better body" is something tangible. Self esteem and belonging are the intangible. In our experience, the

most sustainable goals will cover both of these but will include a third layer – giving the intangible. This is what we mean by a “Be” goal. I want to “be” a better father. I want to “be” an influence on my family. In both of these statements the person achieving the goal is defining something intangible they are giving to others.

What is motivating me to take action today and will that be enough for me to have continued action tomorrow?

How can improving my health and fitness not just benefit me, but be something that can help others?



Social Perspective

Don't be a hermit. Get out and do stuff. That is why friendly gyms are so great. You go and see others doing the same things you are doing and it can be fun. This is a big part of staying on top of your game! When you know that there are other members and gym employees who look forward to seeing you, you will be more likely to show up. People are meant to connect with one another. We are social beings and our ancestors spent most all of their time together while hunting, harvesting, and playing. Being with others in a positive environment is partly what gives us a sense of contribution. It helps us feel fulfilled. Every year we review market studies done on the fitness industry. In one of the sections the researchers ask – “*which features would you rate the highest when considering a gym membership?*” One of those features is “*sense of community.*” This never rates high! It is the lowest score and is way behind “*no annual contracts*” and “*group exercise classes*” when it comes to items of importance. But there is a catch. We have also learned that the gyms with the highest customer satisfaction ratings have an authentic community environment. So while most don't identify with “community” as an important feature for purpose, once experienced, it becomes the most important *benefit* once they belong. **It is through people who care about other people that support flourishes.**

This is achieved not just through the staff interacting



with the members, but the members having the opportunity to interact with one another. Guess what? The gym is “Facebook” except you interact in person.

Group exercise classes might be the strongest bond that we see in exercise. This is also found in small group personal training sessions of 4-6 people. This fulfills two important aspects for the social perspective; it applies positive peer pressure and it is interactive and fun.

Training partners can also create the social support for many. Having a workout buddy makes it harder to not show up for your planned program. It also provides accountability. It always helps to find a workout partner that is at least, but not less, disciplined than you!

You should also consider your family and the kind of time that you get to spend with them. It may be that you exercise with them. For me, having my boys learn to exercise at an early age and setting that example has made believers out of both of them. They both choose to stay fit and exercise is a regular part of their lives. My youngest son was my training partner for a good deal of his last two years in high school. What an incredible experience for me! But it is also likely that you will not have them exercise with you and finding time away from your program to spend with family is critical.

Does my current plan provide the level of social connectivity that fits my personality and temperament to support a long term commitment to my exercise?

Nutritional Perspective

Some areas of sustainability have ebbs and flows. **Besides exercise, how one eats is where we see the greatest delta between the ebb and the flow!** There are many factors to eating healthy; meal frequency, calorie count, macro-nutrient balance (fats, protein and carbohydrates), micro-nutrient balance (vitamins and minerals), enjoyment, etc. Each of these can be “dialed” up or down to be more or less “healthy.” Just don’t turn the dials off! Look at how you are eating to reach your goals and admit whether it is something you are willing to do for the long run or not. If it is ... great. If it isn’t, that might be okay as long as your plan for transitioning to a more sustainable plan is in place. If your current plan is to go from what is not sustainable from a *nutritional standpoint* (perhaps it is too strict to maintain) to what is not sustainable from a *health standpoint* (capitulating to a diet of junk calories) then you do not have an overall sustainable plan. I am never opposed to a fairly strict nutritional “launch-plan” for someone who is highly motivated to make progress. They work. What I am opposed to is *not* having a plan to transition into something more suited for one’s lifestyle.

Other nutritional ebbs and flows will occur around the holidays, summer BBQs, vacations, and entertaining. That is okay and you might be fine with a bodyweight that fluctuates a little bit during



the year. 5% fluctuation is something you can live with. But remember, that means if your weight goes up 7 pounds it also has to come down 7 pounds. I am not talking about fluctuating upward by 5% per year!

Is my healthy eating plan something that I am willing to do forever?

If not, where do I need to “ease” this current plan in order to have peace of mind about its sustainability?

Am I having to depend too much on willpower to maintain my current program?

If so, what help do I need for developing something that will maintain both my sanity as well as my health?

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Logistical Perspective

Do you have, or have you had, a few kids that are near the same age and are active in music, sports, etc? Then you qualify as a logistics expert! In fact you qualify as a logistics expert who recognizes sustainability! Have you ever said something like this – “Okay, Billy has soccer after school, Susan needs to get to Beth’s house for their team study project, Charles has to get to drivers education at 4:00, and I will let Molly walk home from detention. It is only going to be like this for a couple of weeks. I can do it for that long...” Yes, but not for much longer without going crazy. You get the picture? If you are doing the same thing with the logistics of your exercise program, you will need to make adjustments – BUT DON’T QUIT. *Not doing* your exercise will not sustain your health.

Your plan needs to be done at a convenient location (we have 2!) at a time that you can devote, and for a duration that works consistently. If you are on a “launch-plan” that you know you won’t be able to maintain for more than 3 months or so, **start planning for sustainability**. Determine what you CAN do and ask for help building a plan to maximize the logistics that work for you! Your plan should include ways to utilize your whole environment (not just the gym) as part of an overall fitness strategy.

Are the logistics of my current plan realistic for the most part, and something I can do even after I reach my first stage goals?

What do I need to change in order to keep from feeling so much pressure but still be able to exercise?





Physical Perspective

This gets right down to the tactic of the workouts themselves. This addresses the details. Your program should address your objectives, any physical imbalances, it should yield results, be safe, incorporate some fun, and you should feel good when you're done! It will also need to change at times. You will get stronger, more flexible, and in better cardiovascular condition. What works for you when you first start may not be enough to advance your fitness level (if that is what you want) once you have been doing it for a few weeks. Moreover, what worked when you were younger may not be what you should do when you get older. In fact, your objectives are likely to change and your program may need to change to align with your new objectives. This perspective is about sustaining alignment with your goals and your social and emotional needs. It also ties closely with the logistical needs.

Here too you will discover factors that can be "dialed" up or down; frequency, intensity, variety, duration. A sustainable plan will set minimums for all of these things well in advance. I am an advocate of taking advantage of one's motivation and applying a fairly aggressive "launch plan", as long as there is a transition plan to something that is more sustainable. Don't go from what is not



sustainable for your lifestyle (too much time!) to what is not sustainable for your health (I quit!). Adjust your training to maintain your enjoyment but never, ever, ever, quit. That just won't sustain your health.

At first, you may find that the physical and motivational perspective drive the logistical perspective. In other words, I may be highly motivated to lose 40 pounds in 12 weeks. Therefore, I will do whatever you tell me to do for my workout and I will make the rest of my life work around the logistics and physical workout level that it takes to get it done. That is okay for the short term but it may not be sustainable.

At some point, the emotional, social, and motivational will drive the logistical and the physical perspectives. But they all need to work together! Your motivation may change. Your family might need more of you. Your work might become more challenging. Think ahead. We can help you design plans that will fit into the many economies of your life.

Do I have a plan in place for maintaining my exercise routine when my environment changes?

Do I have a commitment to make that change in order to maintain my schedule?

Commit Big by Committing Small

I want you to commit to 100 consecutive days of exercise starting now.

“WHAT!? All this talk about balance and sustainability and now you throw this at us!?”

Bear with me for a moment on this. This will involve two things; setting your daily “minimum” and committing to 100 days in a row.

We have listened to thousands of people say roughly the same things about starting or re-starting an exercise program. The sound of their voice expresses exhaustion just thinking about the task. They are busy people who are already tired and the thought of an hour a day is mind-numbing. You can tell by the tone of their voice that even if they did start, they can’t see themselves being successful. They would like the results but the work to get there is just too much right now. Sound familiar? Well, let’s change that.

You don’t need to do an hour. I want you to reframe success. I want you to have your very own personal description of “exercise success” and we will call it your “daily minimum.” You decide for you. Can you commit to 10 minutes of brisk walking as your minimum? How about 15? 20? Am I getting close? You need to stop negotiating with yourself when the time commitment starts to make

you squint and wonder whether it is too much. Stop at a commitment in which you feel confident you can accomplish. That wasn't so bad was it?

Now tell yourself that you are quite welcome to do more and anything more is a bonus. You may want to go to the gym and do weights and cardio there. You may want to go for hikes on the weekend. But no matter what, promise yourself that you will do your minimum, you will accept it as "success" and if you do more, all the better.

Now commit to exercising for 100 consecutive days.

In their book *"Switch: How to change things when change is hard,"* Chip and Dan Heath talk about a "no-wiggle-room-goal." These are goals that have no room for negotiation. That is what our 100 consecutive days is about. That is why we want you to reframe success. It is about creating your "no wiggle-room" goal (NWRG)! You agree to daily success on your own terms. Then you commit to having that daily success for 100 consecutive days. This is all on your terms. This is making a big commitment by using a small commitment. This is doable and you can start....now.

Empowering isn't it? That is because you know that 100 consecutive days is possible now. You know you have control now. You did it on your own terms and in a way that is sustainable. You won't believe how good you can feel with your first day knowing that you can make it for 100 days. By day 20 you will be experiencing a lot

of changes. But what if you miss a day? Start over the next day. What do you do after 100 days? See if you can do another 100.

I have my own daily minimum. It is “20 minutes of cardio and I have to break a sweat.” I use this on travel days or on days that just start to get away from me. In 2010 I did miss some days. I missed 7 days of exercise out of 365.

Your “100/100” Report

We want you to tell us how you’re doing. We want you to see what others are doing. Go to 100daysofexercise.com and get started. We aren’t selling anything here. It is just to help people succeed. You can also go to facebook and search 100 Days of Exercise and “report” there. A “report” looks like this: 3/100. This means that you have completed your third consecutive day! Pretty simple huh? We suggest you use it at work, with your family, or anywhere else that you want to help inspire others to get off the couch. Teach them to set a minimum and commit to 100! Have them “report” to you and you to them. You might be surprised what happens when you send an email to your friends that reads; “Hey! Today is 11/100!” They will ask what you mean and they may likely want to join you. Look what happens here; you become the influencer. You are the catalyst for creating change in others. Nicely done.....

Lastly

There is a lot that goes into maintaining a program. Be aware of the different areas that can help you sustain your program and know that we are here to help. For many people, every single one of these perspectives naturally adjusts to seek its most sustainable level simply because the person doing the exercise is a Believer in exercise. Remember that for the Believer, exercise is a value. Values are standards of behavior that we adopt as “ours.” If exercise is just part of my value-set, like spending time with my family, then I will naturally make the adjustments that are required for me to live my values. Beware when all of your motivation to exercise is only centered on a single goal. Goals are “out there” and represent a finish line that we wish to cross. Values are “in here” and represent our daily behaviors.

Make your training fun for you.

Make your training fit your life.

Encourage others to get up off the couch.

-Blair McHaney

About the Author

Blair McHaney is President of Confluence Fitness Partners, Inc., which is a small fitness company working hard to be the best on earth. They own and operate two Gold's Gyms in Central Washington which have consistently held the highest customer satisfaction ratings of any Gold's Gyms in the world. They are known for their friendliness, their intense focus on constantly improving, and willingness to help customers, employees, community and other businesses.

In the fitness business since 1983, Blair was the first to introduce Personal Training to the Wenatchee Valley and to see the entire community as a benefactor of fitness. He served as the President of the Gold's Gym Franchisee Association for three years and on the Board of Directors for seven years.

The Wenatchee Valley Gold's Gyms are the birthplace of the Gold's Gym Challenge which is now the largest collective promotion for Gold's Gyms worldwide. They have had more winners in the Challenge than any other Gold's Gyms in the world. Their work on turning Gold's Gym Challenge Participants into lifelong exercisers has created innovations that have spread to many other gyms and are quickly becoming industry "best practices." Blair and his

team spent over a year studying behavior change, watching those who were successful, asking trainers for their “best practices” for sustainability, and putting what they learned into a systematized “Strategy Session” for their members. With help from the good people at Visual Fitness Planner, a Texas based company specializing in health club software, they were able to make the Strategy Sessions come to life and are now teaching many other gyms how to help their members develop individual strategies to create sustainability.

This comes from a base belief: buying a gym membership is not a good strategy for getting in shape. It is a powerful tactic but it should not be your entire strategy. Blair’s team decided to take the lead and to systematize a way to co-develop simple, executable, strategies with the member, based on successful behavior change principles. When developing their methodology of strategic planning, the “7 Perspectives” came into focus. Each were either enabling, or disabling an individual’s ability to keep going.

Blair is dedicated to helping people lead proactive and purposeful lives and is very thankful to those that have supported this vision.

Blair McHaney

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290 9th Street
East Wenatchee, WA

Welcome to Gold's Gyms of the Wenatchee Valley, the most customer-centric, results-oriented gyms in the world. We build fitness strategies that help you achieve sustainability with your fitness program.

WV Gold's Gyms Online



Wenatchee Fitness Blog

www.wenatcheefitnessblog.com

The Valley's resource for fitness and nutrition tips.



Blair's Biz Blog

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