

# Preventing Exercise Burn Out



# Simple ways to eliminate physical and mental exhaustion

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**A**nyone who spends any significant amount of time in the gym or exercising on a consistent basis knows how easy it is to get burned out. This is the same concept as getting bored with anything you do day in and day out - your job, your commute, your diet, your chores, etc. When it comes to exercising, there are two main types of burnout: physical and mental exhaustion.

Physical exhaustion generally pertains to the cardiovascular system, muscles, bones, joints or ligaments. This exhaustion sets in when one or any combination of these become over used. Mental exhaustion induced by exercising occurs when one becomes tired of repetition and extended durations. Although it is a beautiful occurrence when your body and mind are in sync, for the most part it is difficult to get them on the same page. Both physical and mental exhaustion have very distinct causes, which if properly prevented, can lead to a much healthier, productive body and mind.

Physical exhaustion is a feeling that most anyone can relate to. Not only is it a very recognizable form of exhaustion, but also it is very common. The bright side of physical exhaustion is that if your body is resilient, it can be pushed to its limits and recover in a relatively short duration. However, repeated physical exhaustion can break down the body's resiliency, which often leads to more severe consequences than just soreness. Whether it's simple lactic acid build up or a more severe injury, the best prevention is to avoid continuous over physical exertion.

One of the best ways to prevent physical exhaustion is to pay close attention and stay in-tune with your body. No one knows your body better than you - only you know what feels right and what feels wrong. Another important part of paying attention to your body is having the proper form and mechanics when performing exercises. If your movement feels wrong

or awkward when performing an exercise, you are most likely doing something incorrectly. This is a situation where you should seek assistance from a certified personal trainer. Just because your local gym rat gives you advice does not mean it's accurate. Trust a professional; you cannot go wrong with credentials.

Another predominant way to prevent physical exhaustion is to use visualization. You don't have to possess the power of Jedi mind tricks - all you need to do is use your imagination. Visualization involves syncing your mind and body so that your muscles do what your mind wants. If you see yourself performing the correct movement or emphasizing a certain muscle, then you will most likely do it. Visualization can also be good for particular muscle usage. If while you are performing a set you feel that one side of your body is dominant in the movement, then try to visualize using the other side. This will help evenly distribute the muscle tension.

Possibly, the most common occurrence of physical exhaustion is caused by over training. There is a very fine line between pushing your limits and over training. The difference between pushing yourself and over exerting yourself can be somewhat unrecognizable. And there is a very real difference between mental boredom and physical fatigue. Sometimes physical exhaustion can be confused with mental exhaustion; it becomes your job to educate yourself and stay in-tune with your body so you know the difference between the two. A lot of this confusion has to do with the individual's pain tolerance and attitude. If someone has a high pain tolerance and a do-or-die attitude, then they might very well be over-training without even knowing it. However, someone with a low tolerance for pain and/or a lack of motivation could be short-changing themselves and not making adequate progress.

So how do you ensure that you are making adequate progress without over-training? Well, there are several signs that



will tell you how to adjust your workouts accordingly. If you are consistently working out and not feeling sore the next day, then that is a good indicator that you are not pushing the limits of your body. However, just because you are not sore the next day does not mean your workout was a complete waste - it just means that there is room to increase intensity. If you find yourself taking long rests between sets, say sitting on a machine or bench for more than 90 seconds, then you should work on shortening those breaks to increase intensity.

A good guide for your break time between sets is your heart rate; wear a heart rate monitor and begin your next set as soon as your heart rate drops below 65-70% of your max. On the other hand, if you find yourself sore for several days and the soreness is more severe than you are used to, then this is a good indicator that you could be over-training. If you find yourself sleepless at night, constantly battling injury, light headed, weak while

walking around with low energy, then over-training is a very good possibility. Finally, an obvious sign of over training is illness - if you get sick often, limit your exercise as much as possible until you recover. A good way to correct over-training is to take a few days off from exercising and then redesign your workout plan by either reducing intensity or by decreasing duration.

Mental exhaustion can be very different from physical exhaustion. Mental exhaustion pertains to exercise usually caused by a repetitive, consistent workout routine or a strict diet. Any time when someone finds themselves doing the same workouts every week with the same exercises every day and eating the same foods, it will get old, no matter how strong the motivation is. There are several ways to prevent or limit mental exhaustion, and believe it or not, they can be pretty simple. One way to limit mental exhaustion is to find new and consistent motivations. This can be done by reading articles, watching videos, chatting with other fitness enthusiasts or

just adding new music to your MP3 player.

Another way to prevent this kind of exhaustion is to periodically switch up your workout routine. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean changing every exercise in your workout, but may be something as simple as adding one new exercise each workout in order to help maintain focus and prevent psychological burnout. If you find that this works well, you can even change your muscle groupings for your workouts to keep your mind and body focused. Instead of devoting one workout to legs, break it up into quads/glutes and hamstrings/calves over two separate days. This can be a very effective method of keeping your mind focused and your muscles guessing what you're going to put them through next.

After trying these options, if you find yourself still lacking the motivation and experiencing increased mental exhaustion, try finding a workout partner. This can be somewhat risky and I would be very particular about whom you choose to exercise with. Yet, if you find someone with similar goals, dedication and work ethic, then it can be incredibly beneficial. If you are all business when it comes to exercising (for the sake of this article I am going to assume you are) then I would choose someone who is focused and limits their talking when working out. If you are struggling for motivation the last thing you need is a "Chatty Cathy" workout partner.

Finally, one of the hardest aspects of training is getting your body and mind on the same page. Especially, when putting yourself through intense training, it is not uncommon to feel completely different than you look or vice-versa. The best way to correct this imbalance is to try the above methods and find which works best for you.

If you can look good and feel good, I believe that little else will contribute to your happiness in the same way. You will be surprised how the little things can contribute on a much larger scale in your workouts and consequently your life. Take the time to take care of yourself and your body will reward you by not breaking down and your mind will reward you by staying alert and vibrant. Remember you are only going to get as much out of your workouts as you put in. 