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## Fitness, Performance Tracking, and Goal Setting

So, you've been weight training, performing some form of cardiovascular exercise and still not having the results you are looking for? This is a common problem for many men and women, especially for those over the age of 40. You want those results, but are unwilling to sacrifice any more of your personal time/and or family time to achieve those results. You feel frustrated, your energy level is low and you do not know what to do next. We have the solution for you! This solution, while simple, will require diligence, planning and perseverance. Let's get started!

We believe in a multi-faceted approach to fitness involving nutrition tracking, exercise tracking, body tracking and goal setting.

If you are currently not tracking your nutrition, you should be! Nutrition tracking is easy and it won't require more than 10-15 minutes per day, but will provide you with a wealth of knowledge that will allow you to optimize your results and provide for an effective means of modifying your current nutrition, and exercise plan. You can choose to track your nutrition with pen or paper or you may choose to use a digital nutritional tracking device. Some of these include daily burn tracker; calorie counter and diet tracker; map my fitness; livestrong.com fitness tracker, etc. Run a search to see what app works best for you. With many of these applications you will be able to track both your nutrition--macronutrients, micronutrients and calories as well as calories expended.

Exercise tracking is important as well. Some variables that we can consider when tracking our exercise is number of sets per exercise, weight used, our max weight lifted on that particular exercise session, calories burned (found on chart or even better, through heart rate monitoring), max and average heart rate (HR) and for crossfitters, the time it takes us to complete the WOD. The reason to record these variables is to make it easier for us to increase the stimulus on our bodies by revisiting current records and trying to improve upon them workout to workout. This can include lifting heavier weight, doing the same weight for more reps, decreasing the time to completion for a specific number of reps, burning more calories, attaining a higher average HR, etc. Some apps include JEFIT, Workout Log-fitness and exercise tracker, Fitness Buddy, Fitocracy, MyFit Fitness-Workout Log, etc.

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Body tracking includes our weight; our measurements—neck, shoulders, chest, waist, hips, thighs, calves, etc; our body fat percentage—calipers testing, underwater weighing, DEXA, Bod pod, bioelectric impedance analysis (BIA). The most accurate and reliable of these methods is the DEXA scan, but it is costly, so it is probably best used every 3 months or so. Caliper testing offers reliable results for an affordable price. Combining a caliper test with body measurements and body weight should give you a good idea of your muscle gain/fat loss efforts. If you need any information regarding this method, please ask a member of the CrossFit LaSalle team. Another valuable method that I find many of us neglect is photo tracking. Every month or so, put on your favorite bathing suit or underwear and take photos of yourself from the front, the back and the side. You may also take flexed photos if you like. Try to take these pictures under the same conditions every month. Doing this will allow you to have an accurate representation of the changes your body is undergoing, whether they may good or bad.

Ok, so you have begun to track your nutrition, exercise and body and have a greater understanding of how your body weight and appearance is affected by what you eat. You begin to wonder what you should next. Although this tracking will allow you to further your results, it is pretty much useless without proper goal setting. The main points that will allow you to further elucidate your goals are:

1. **Be specific:** You can't just say that you want to lose 10 lbs. This is not specific enough. Would you like to lose 10 lbs of fat; of muscle; of water; etc. For a goal to be achievable you need to specify the time frame as well. An example of a more specific goal is I'd like to lose 10 lbs of body fat over the next 6 weeks. This can be estimated through body fat, body weight and measurement testing. Another goal might be—I want to squat 400 lbs by March 31, as opposed to I want to squat 400 lbs (this is more of a dream than a reality).
2. **Be realistic:** Looking at the above example, losing 10 lbs of body fat is realizable over a 4 or 6 week period, but probably not realizable over a 1 or 2 week period unless you have an extreme amount of weight to lose or you are exercising excessively. This applies to performance numbers as well. Looking at the goal of a 400 lb squat by the end of March; this is achievable in a 4 week period if you are currently squatting 380 or 390 lbs, but probably not achievable (except in the most extreme of circumstances), if your squat is only 200 lbs.

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3. Set short term, medium and long term goals: A short term goal can be I want to lose 10 lbs of fat over the next month; or I want to lose 30 lbs of fat over the next 3 months. A medium term goal might be I want to lose 50 lbs over the next 6 months. A long term goal can be I want to lose 80 lbs of fat over the next year. These are just arbitrary numbers and will largely depend on the amount of fat that you have to lose. Same thing can be applied to performance goals. If we look at the example of our 200 lb squatter—his/her short term goal may be to add 20 lbs every month to his squat for the first 3 months, and his/her long term goal may be to add 150 lbs for the year. This 400 lb squat can then be achievable within the next few months if the behavior continues to support the goals and if the person's genetic limits allow for a 400 lb squat. The importance of short term goals is that they allow us to break up otherwise large chunks into smaller, more discrete units, allowing us to take action on these smaller pieces and then accomplish a larger, more difficult goal. If I've never lost 10 lbs, how am I supposed to focus on a fat loss of 100 lbs. If I've never run more than a mile, how can I expect to run 26 mile marathon? Focusing on the short term goals will allow you to eventually accomplish larger, almost insurmountable obstacles.
4. Understand that setbacks are inevitable. If your goals are specific, realistic and you have set different time frames to achieve your various goals, and your behavior is in line with your goals, you will find that most of your goals are realizable. There are times however, that your physiology will not cooperate. Maybe you are eating well (quality/quantity), exercising, sleeping well and you still failed to achieve your goal of losing 10 lbs this month. This 10 lb goal seems achievable given that you have more than 70 lbs to lose. At this point, you must understand that your behavior is what is the most important and not the outcome. The outcome is a function of the behavior, but sometimes the behavior is not enough to accomplish the outcome. Be happy with the results that you achieved. Take pride that you are now able to run 2 miles in under 20 minutes, whereas before you were not able to even run a mile without stopping. Be happy that you lost the 6 lbs and concentrate your efforts to do the same the next month or modify your exercise or nutrition plan to achieve the 10 lbs of weight loss the next month. Enjoy the journey, not the destination.

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If you need help with setting specific, realistic, and time appropriate goals, please contact the CrossFit LaSalle team through our website [www.crossfitlasalle.com](http://www.crossfitlasalle.com), or call us at 514-368-1010. We'd be happy to set you up with the tools to achieve your goals.