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Satisfying the Balance Scale: The Effects Exercise has on Individuals

My life was out of control. I could not focus, I could not smile, and I could not find a way to be happy. My stress level was at an all time high and I had reached my breaking point. Involvement in something I had always been passionate about had begun to slowly turn into something that I dreaded until I could no longer bear the thought of putting myself through it for another day. Each aspect of a person’s life can have one of two effects: a positive effect or a negative effect. Typically, the type of effect reflects that person’s wants, needs, passions, and overall personality. However, in some cases, it is possible that a person can be so passionate and headstrong about something that it slowly heats up and explodes in the end. In his article “Too Much Exercise,” Andy Soos proposes the idea that exercise can have negative side effects for people, particularly for big time athletes. From first hand experience I can affirm Soos opinion and agree that too much activity in a person’s life can cause damage not only physical but also mentally. Furthermore, with this insight, we can draw the conclusion that in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle in which both the physical and mental parts of our lives are stable, we must learn to obtain balance. All in all, exercise is one of the many aspects of a person’s life that can have large effects on a person’s overall health.

To begin, athletes always have a specific goal in mind and will do whatever it takes to obtain that goal. They will train harder, modify their diets, sleep less, and change any other aspect of their lives that inhibits them from attaining the one goal they have set for themselves. However, there is a time when this passion can turn into an obsession and the obsession can lean to a major downfall for an individual. Specifically, this downfall can pertain to the individual’s health. The whole concept of Soos article revolves around the idea that sometimes exercise can do more harm than good to a person’s body, particularly to someone who has dedicated his or her life fully to physical activity. First and foremost, “exercise is a stressor and the stresses of exercise have a catabolic effect on the body” (Soos 1). Therefore, no matter what type of exercise is practiced, stress will occur and consequently cause negative effects on the body. For this reason, it is important to note that exercise needs to be carried out at a steady pace so the body can adapt and solely benefit. Additionally, according to the article, in general, athletes who exercise more than the average person need to be aware of the specific health risks associated with this amount of activity. Particularly, issues such as unusual heart rhythms, otherwise known as Arrhythmia, slower muscle tissue development, and a wide range of circulation problems can result from an overload of constant activity. Moreover, “extremely intense, long-term cardiovascular exercise, as can be seen in athletes who train for multiple marathons, has been associated with scarring of the heart and heart rhythm abnormalities” (Soos 1). These facts are hard for some people to comprehend because exercise has been instilled in our brains to be a positive part of our lives rather than something that can hurt us. However, Soos article was not published to discourage people from exercising on all accounts. He knows that “exercise has long been associated with a boost in health, including lower risks of heart disease” but also believes “too much exercise can be harmful [and] without proper rest, the chance of stroke or other circulation problems increases, and muscle tissue may develop slowly” (Soos 1). Rather, he wants to warn people of the possible negative effects that can result from a constant overdose of physical activity. As a whole, Soos supports his argument with proven facts and concludes that it is possible for exercise to harm a person, contrary to popular belief.

Additionally, the negative effects caused by an excess of exercise do not solely occur physically, there is also a significant toll exercise can take on a person’s mental state. I have experienced this mental unsteadiness as well as the physical unsteadiness personally through my involvement in sports, particularly in high school. From the first time I kicked a soccer ball to the most recent kill I made in a Volleyball game, sports have always been a major part of my life. I started my first sport, soccer, when I was only three years old and I have continued to build up the list of competitive sports I have participated in ever since. However, as most people have to do, I had to make a choice as to which sports I wanted to focus on in high school because the sports seasons conflict with one another. I finally decided to play volleyball in the fall and swim in the winter. Still, I wanted to focus more on volleyball so I decided I would also join a club volleyball team to keep my skills improving during the off season. This meant I would be involved in two sports during the winter season. It also meant proclaiming dedication to two different teams and making a commitment to attending practices and all competitive events that each team participated in. Swim practice occurred every weekday and Saturday for two hours and volleyball was twice a week for two hours. Therefore, two days a week I would go straight from school to swim practice, and then drive from swim practice to volleyball, picking up dinner from a fast food restaurant in between. There was no time to rest and no time to be tired; I had to be ready to give one hundred and ten percent to both sports. During my first two years of high school, I was able to manage these sports without too much difficulty, but by the time I reached junior year something had changed. I remember the first week of swim practice that year, how hard it was to get back into shape and how sore I was each day because I was not used to exercising certain muscles. After days when I would have to go to two practices I would come home crying to my parents, which eventually led to arguments between the three of us. I could no longer focus on schoolwork, I had a harder time managing my relationships with friends, and I could not satisfy my coaches because neither was completely happy with my performances in my athletics. The mental part of my health was shot. I was always tired, always grumpy, and had lost the vitality I had in my life previously. Eventually, with much guidance and support, I sorted things out and made it through the seasons, but it was one of the hardest things I ever had to battle throughout my four years of high school.

Furthermore, my experiences not only reveal the mental instability too much exercise can cause, but I also relate to the physical injuries that can result. Right after my junior year swim season, I fractured one of the vertebrae in my spine. However, this was not an injury that resulted from one particular incident that occurred. My doctor told me that my condition was caused by the repeated action of bending my back forward and backward, a motion that I had performed heavily each day do to the fact that I swam butterfly stroke and was a hitter on my volleyball team. My constant dedication and involvement in sports had worked my back so hard that it eventually just snapped and I could do nothing about it. This is one of the effects exercise can have on a serious athlete. I never expected to break my back because I had always been told that the two sports were good cross training for each other. The difference is, sports are in my life because I enjoy them, not because they were forced upon me. However, as I have said, I have had my fair share of struggles and had to deal with them as they have come. I only got through my problems and found light at the end of the tunnel because I changed my outlook on things and was able to modify the work I put my body through in order to find the right balance between the passions I have in life.

With the information stated, we can conclude exercise in a person’s life is not positive one hundred percent of the time. There are both positive and negative effects that physical activity has on a person’s body. There are many factors that contribute to these effects including the type of exercise, the amount of exercise, the environment the exercise is practiced in, and outside factors such as family, friends, and schoolwork. With so many factors contributing to these effects, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint which factor is heavily effecting a person’s health. This is why balance is absolutely necessary in a person’s life. We as humans have to find a way to keep the different aspects in our lives in perspective to prevent a particular problem from escalating out of control. Once again, Soos stated an overindulgence in particular sports can lead to heart problems that most athletes would never except to encounter because exercise is instilled in us to be solely beneficiary to our health. To emphasize, I have experienced first hand the negative toll physical activity can take on a person both from a physical and mental standpoint. However, the point is not only to state that exercise can be harmful, but also to take a stance and try to prevent this from happening. With balance in our lives, we can steadily solve this issue. Instead of letting our lives revolve around one thing alone, we need to find other aspects that can create balance. I am not advising that a person should eliminate a passion from his or her life, rather the person should focus on that passion, but remember that there are other areas of life that can calm a person down when his or her passion may be too intense for a certain period of time. In conclusion, in order to combat the negative effects of exercise, an individual must learn to satisfy their own personal balance scale of life.

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Works Cited

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