

## The Joy Of Walking

Most people have heard about the “runner’s high” but few have experienced it. That’s because it only occurs under two conditions. To get high on running you have to push hard, which forces your body to secrete adrenalin and the other hormones that cause the high. This is the first condition.

Even avid runners get high on running only occasionally—usually when they do a race. The rest of the time—during normal training—they are fortunate to simply enjoy a run. This is because they are usually somewhat tired from heavy training, and with their energy low they aren’t able to push themselves without increasing their risk of injury, illness and exhaustion. Thus the second condition for the runner’s high is abundant energy.

Walking is different from running mainly in degree. Generally you walk at a lower level of exertion than you would as a runner. And since your heart rate doesn’t get as high, you don’t feel as high. You’re like the runner who’s too tired to push hard, except that walking itself limits your level of exertion because you don’t get airborne like you would in running. Thus, you can’t expect to feel exhilarated—even by a brisk walk—but you can aim to *enjoy* it. Enjoyment isn’t the same as the proverbial runner’s high, but even enjoyment can be elusive, because you can’t force enjoyment when your energy is low.

Remember, your energy is the key to feeling high on exercise. So pay attention to your energy during a walk. Do you have *no* energy, *little* energy, *some* energy, *ample* energy, or *abundant* energy? Notice how your energy changes during a workout. It usually starts off low and increases as you warm up. Meanwhile, the less energy you have the slower you have to go in order to enjoy the activity. Notice when your energy is low that mild exertion (very slow and soothing) enables you to be satisfied with the effort, and as you warm up your energy increases and you can go a little faster. You may even begin to enjoy the workout, because you were wise enough to coordinate your pace with the way you felt.

The most important part of maintaining a fitness regimen is harmony. Your pace and the duration of the workout must be in harmony with your energy. If you feel burdened or oppressed by the effort of a workout, you definitely aren’t in harmony with it. If you are tired, go short and slow and you’ll feel satisfied, which is harmonious. If you feel energetic you can walk briskly until you start to feel fatigued. If you stop at that point you will have enjoyed the workout which is also harmonious. But be ready to cut back on your walk the next day to give yourself a chance to recover from the harder effort. In other words, it’s harmonious to wait until you feel energetic again before you push yourself.

Let your attitude tell you when you’ve gone far enough for the day. In my system, we measure our attitude about the effort of a workout on the following scale: oppressed, burdened, satisfied, enjoyed, exhilarated. Remember, the potential is always there to be burdened or oppressed by a workout, depending again on your energy and your effort.

Thus if you feel little energy, go slow enough to be satisfied by the workout. In this way, you’ll increase the likelihood that you’ll stay with your walking regimen, rather than give it up because it seems so burdensome. If you aim to be satisfied, you may surprise yourself by occasionally enjoying a workout.