



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

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## Is there a level of intensity required to classify movement as “exercise”?

Saturday, February 02, 2013

I was thinking about this when I recorded my miles for the “Virtual Walk/Run Across America” which I’ve found to be a very motivational challenge. Sometimes I run. Sometimes I walk. Sometimes, when DH is along, it’s more of a stroll. Still I record it all. My feet were moving forward, so for me, it counts.

I know I’m in the minority since I like to exercise (cardio anyway). As I’ve written before, exercise was never my problem, excessive food consumption was.

Lately, I’ve been thinking about the effect of intensity level.

I know that the SP tracker records about twice as many calories burned when I run for 10 minutes (10 min/mile or 6.0 on the treadmill) vs. my standard walking speed of 15 min/mile or 4.0 on the treadmill. I can still burn the same number of calories. I just have to walk longer.

Some people put down those working at lower levels of intensity. At the end of a race of any distance I don’t like to hear the question, “did you RUN the whole way?” whether directed at me or someone else.

Depending on a person’s starting fitness level, what’s considered exercise to them may differ. I’ve written about my mother’s aversion to exercise. When she came to live with us after my father’s death, I was appalled that her idea of exercise was that she had to get up so often to go to the bathroom. With the support of her doctor I became a “geriatric personal trainer.” I had her “doing laps” that is laps around the house. Our open floor plan made that easy. Exercises with 1 and 2 pound weights were on the schedule too.

We’ve got to encourage people to start somewhere. As they become more fit, their intensity will increase naturally. At least I hope so.

I don’t particularly like strength training, but I know I have to do it. After a break I always start slowly so I don’t hurt myself. It may not look like much to a dedicated weight lifter, but it’s my starting point and if I keep it up I will improve, with heavier weights and number of reps until I regain or even surpass my previous level.

Of course, we shouldn’t deceive ourselves and complain about not seeing results if the level of exercise is low and stays low. Patience is needed. We can improve slowly, but we will improve if we keep at it. Fitness isn’t a race. It doesn’t matter who gets there first.

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## Member Comments About This Blog Post



**MELAYAHM**



It seems to me that if it warms you up, then it must be burning calories, the hotter you get the more calories, surely? I put down my work as some of my exercise, because 2 hours of Hoovering, cleaning and shifting tables, pushing chairs back into place with one leg (balance and inner thigh muscles), bending and lifting and stretching, gets me pretty warmed up. I actually am on my feet all my working day, and I probably go up and down stairs at least 20 - 30 times a day, but I just count the first 2 hours as they are the most intense. Saying that it's not exercise if it's not exercise for exercise sake is just...pedantic and being a fitness snob, IMO.

3051 days ago



**CD8634484**



I think that anything more than you would normally do counts as exercise. It's such a personal thing. The idea surely is that you build it up week by week, it's not a competition, who can burn most calories, it's a challenge with yourself. Besides people are not identical. My swimming half a mile probably burns off less calories, than a poor swimmer doing a couple of lengths, because my body has learned the most efficient way of doing it.

3051 days ago



**SENIMMO**



I think everyone defines exercise differently. I personally define it now as anything I can make myself do within my physical limits to burn calories. that includes my Therapy exercises for my joint replacements, and even the hours I spend knitting (which admittedly don't huge amounts of calories, but at least I am still moving and not eating).

I DID ask a dietician, and she said what I am counting as exercise is fine, because a calorie burned, is a calorie burned.

Judging who's way of burning is "better" just doesn't make sense to me. We should just be supportive of what works for each person. There is no single "right" way.

Do what works for you-just stick to it!  
3051 days ago



**LOLATURTLE**



Physical therapy has been a great reminder of this for me! I can do an exercise, and then as I am off on my circuit doing another I see the trainer set the same machine for twice as much weight - for a high school football player rehabilitating an injury. Another week I might see the trainer set the same machine for half the weight I used, or less - for a lady in her 90s who is walking with a cane.

Everybody gets what they need, and progresses when they're ready.

Of course, it's a lot easier when you have someone to choose the weight for you, and know when you should be adding more!  
3051 days ago



**CD13252816**



You have hit the nail on the head with this one. The perceived exertion level is always personal and every thing you do can add up. I don't like strength training but I have to do it anyway. Just keep moving and chipping away.



3053 days ago



**MERRYMARY42**



wow, you got a lot of comments on this one, I walk daily, and actually whether it is on the treadmill or outside (and I do prefer outside, I go at a 2 1/2 to 3 mile pace, for 60 minutes and that is exercise, when I work in the yard, bending pulling and hoing, that is exercise, when I just stroll around the yard or house, slowly with no thought of exercise, I do not call it exercise, I call it



getting in my steps  
but I am active and plan on staying that way,  
not a runner, hurts my knees and all parts of me, but I can walk with the best of them  
3053 days ago



**CELIAMINER**



Gotta disagree with DR. Chopping wood is hard work and a good calorie burner. And it is more "purpose driven" than mindless miles on the treadmill.  
3053 days ago



**DEBBY4576**



Just 10000 steps a day can lower your Blood Pressure. They don't say whether the person walks fast, is on a treadmill, or elliptical. Just that the steps work. Therefore, i say do what you can, but at least get in those steps.  
3054 days ago



**CD12629461**



When I first started walking I could barely make it to the corner and back. I felt like such a failure compared to all the healthy walkers and joggers in my town. But I didn't quit.

Now I can walk with the best of them and enjoy every minute of it. I'm going to the gym, have a personal trainer and I'm doing Power 90 6 days a week.

If I ever see anyone who is trying and feeling rotten because their not as good at it as someone else, I will be there to cheer them on and let them know that every step they take, every weight they lift, every little extra movement will get them where they want to be and eventually they will be doing more and more.

3054 days ago



**WILSONWR**



I agree with you completely - the level of intensity depends on your fitness level. As far as some of the comments differentiating physical activity and exercise, I don't know if it matters that much or not in our efforts to remain healthy. Whether I'm chopping wood or clearing brush, I'm getting a workout! Those type of activities I choose to do, on purpose, for the health benefits I derive from them. I could hire someone on a bulldozer to clear the brush, but I prefer the healthy activity of doing it myself. I'm burning a lot more calories with all of the lifting, dragging, and throwing into piles than simply walking for the same amount of time.

3054 days ago



**DR1939**



The difference between physical activity and exercise is purpose-driven. Physical activity is any movement. Exercise is physical activity performed for the purpose of improving physical fitness. Chopping wood is physical activity as is getting up and turning on the TV. However, neither is exercise as neither is purpose-driven.

The question you asked is really related to "type" of exercise. The type that has been shown to impact health is aerobic exercise and that must be performed at a level that increases your heart rate to 60-80%.

3054 days ago



**MISCHAKEO**



I feel the same way. Let everyone exercise in their own way without judgement. I also call my walks with my husband, strolls. LOL.



3054 days ago



**WATERMELLEN**



So wise. Way too much snottitude about what we "should" be doing, directed at us by others. If we don't approach fitness at a pace that permits enjoyment, we won't keep it up or increase it . . . and that's not optimal, not at all.

3054 days ago



**SWEDE\_SU**



if you cover distance, you are exercising. whether it's slowly or quickly, it still counts and it still adds up. one foot in front of the other, whether strolling, walking, jogging or sprinting is still better than the couch - and counts! great blog!

3054 days ago



**SUZYMOBILE**



I used to put myself down terribly for not being able to run, but I have no choice any longer. If I jog, my knee gets worse and worse. I don't want to jeopardize movement completely, so I walk. I figure the calories count, no matter what, and I've stopped beating myself up over it.

3054 days ago



**-AMANDA79-**



My arms used to be sore after folding laundry. Guess I was pumping clothes!



3054 days ago



**HOLLYM48**



3054 days ago



**4A-HEALTHY-BMI**



Yes it really is all relative. I started with a 1/2 mile walk around the block with my elderly neighbor every evening.

Now if I don't burn at least 400 calories I really don't feel like I did my part for the day...

3054 days ago

Comment edited on: 2/2/2013 9:37:20 AM



**CAKEMAKERMOM**

As long as one is moving, one is exercising. It's simply easier for some than it is for others.  
3054 days ago



**CD13167855**

I usually walk. I walk at different speeds depending on mood, destination, companionship, etc. I only jog occasionally. I don't like the feel of jogging. Time isn't an issue for me. It doesn't matter unless I have an appointment if it takes me an hour or an hour and half to get there. Walking is not only great exercise; it reduces tension. A good walk relaxes my stiff muscles.

When I was younger before the media pushed walking as exercise, I didn't see walking as exercise, I saw walking as a way to relax as well as a cheap way to get from here to there. It's not uncommon for me to walk more than two or three hours in a day.

I don't track all of it. I track the parts on a track, the parts that I know the distance and parts that take a very long time. I need to walk even if it's only pacing because it's too cold to go anywhere.  
3054 days ago



**COCK-ROBIN**

You're doing great! Keep it up.  
3054 days ago



**HAYBURNER1969**

How very true.

This post also reminds me how I've heard people get bent out of shape when they hear a very fast runner bemoaning a disappointing finish... a "slow" time for them. People are like, "Well, geez, if you think THAT'S slow, what must you think of my time? I must really suck."

A fast person is allowed to be disappointed with a time that's slow FOR THEM. We all run our own race.

Whenever I'm asked if I have a goal in a race, my answer is usually, "to run a respectable time for my fitness level." We need to remember that everyone's level is different.

Good job on sticking with the weights! I'm determined to get back my buff arms... definitely in time for the recitals I'm accompanying this spring. I don't want to have the audience distracted by the flabby triceps at the piano!  
3054 days ago



**ONEKIDSMOM**

**AWESOME**  
blog!

I totally agree about starting where one \*is\*. When I first began to address my issues with weight and inactivity, I started with food, because I wasn't fit enough to even BEGIN an exercise plan. I learned to START with walking, and as a \*reward\* for walking 30 minutes a day for a month, start more/different forms of activity.

I did this based on reading books written by doctors who were preparing heart patients for surgery. But... it worked for me, too.  
3054 days ago



**CD7895805**

Good point, we all start at a different fitness level and work up from there. Walking is a huge effort for my husband after a knee and hip replacement where I have to jog to get the same workout. The important thing is to keep moving and getting stronger.  
3054 days ago



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