

Ask Joe Weider: Jamming in the gym

by Joe_Weider

Tip of the Week: It's better to feel good than to look good. Yes, I said it.

Now, don't get me wrong, I have made a career of encouraging people to look their best. In fact, achieving a physical ideal has been a cornerstone of my life since I was a boy.

That being said, however, there is no point to having a primed physique, or much of anything else for that matter, if you don't have the health to enjoy it. You know the expression, "Well at least I have my health." Wise words.

Unfortunately, I've seen a fair number of athletes risk their health in order to achieve a goal, be it a better physique, a faster sprint or a farther hit. In the end, all we're left with is our bodies "and when you get to my age, the condition of what's underneath your skin becomes all the more important.

Take care of the interior of your body as you sculpt it, and you'll achieve what I consider an ideal balance in your physical life.

Q: What are your thoughts when it comes to listening to music while working out? An old timer I know says it destroys concentration. At the gym where I train, they often play "light" music, which really kills my energy. I often ask them to change it, and when they do I feel my energy rise. Could this really be happening, or is it my imagination?

Joe: To answer your question, I'd have to say that whether or not one listens to music is a very personal thing. Back when I was a young gym rat, there was no such thing as music at a gym. Of course, that's if you don't include the "music" of the clanging of plates against one another as we lifted.

Of course, nowadays every gym that I know of plays music. Indeed, recent studies have shown that music can boost a workout. Researchers have found that music with a beat-per-minute range of 120 to 140 can help drive cardio workouts. Maybe not coincidentally, that is also the range at which the average adult's heart beats during a cardio session.

Athletes in a variety of sports "from basketball to swimming to powerlifting" can often be seen rocking in their seats with a pair of headphones over their ears in the moments before a contest. Certainly they already know the power of music to affect performance.

If the gym where you train plays music that lulls you to sleep, I suggest getting yourself a personal audio player with good sound isolation so you can block out the gym's ambient noise and listen to the music that inspires you most. They say "music soothes the savage breast," which is great almost anytime, except when you're working out.

Q: Should I be taking an amino acid supplement? I see so many of them on the shelves of the health-food stores, from BCAAs to individual aminos like arginine, glutamine and carnitine. I exercise five days a week and eat a healthy diet, so do I really need to buy amino acids?

Joe: Generally speaking, I would say that you don't need to buy amino acids if, as you write, your diet is good. Of course, that also means that you are an omnivore. Meat contains all nine of the essential aminos, as opposed to vegetation, which does not. It's believed that ancient cultures such as the Aztecs combined legumes with grains instinctively, as a way of achieving a complete amino acid profile in their diets.

Of course you could always see a registered dietician who could assess whether or not you may be deficient in a particular amino acid. Certain conditions, such as angina, pulmonary disease and even cold sores seem to have shown a positive response to treatment with certain aminos.

Nevertheless, if your diet contains even a minimal amount of animal protein, you probably don't need to worry about supplementing with extra amino acids.

Joe Weider is acclaimed as "the father of modern bodybuilding" and the founder of the world's leading fitness magazines, including Shape, Muscle and Fitness, Men's Fitness, Fit Pregnancy, Hers, Golf for Seniors and others published worldwide in over 20 languages.

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